
HURONTARIA 1999-A

Jan B. Hurych

English part
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12

Note: Click on. Some pictures were removed to keep the total length of files reasonably short.

SEARCH IN PART A - 1999

Copyright Jan B. Hurych. Copying of this material is not permitted. For reprinting, republishing or any other reproduction of this material, in whole or in part, the permission from the author must be obtained first. All names of persons or institutions are fictitious except where stated otherwise. Write to/ Pište na: hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

**POKUD SE VÁM TATO KNIHA LÍBILA, NAVŠTIVTE "KNIHY OFF LINE",
ke stažení zdarma, pro PC i te ky: <http://hurontaria.baf.cz/KNIHY/>**

BOL-37-3



HURONTARIA - 1A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

Well, we finally got it: because of our good work, we were promoted from tri-weekly to a monthly magazine. OK, OK, it's only a joke, but Hurontaria *will be* now issued monthly. This way, I will avoid the last minute rush when sending the issue to main server and three mirrors as well. On the other hand, you do not need to feel cheated, I added one extra section to each part. It is rather simple: I am trying to switch from quantity to quality.

We are not going to add the pictures to individual issues however: sure, it would be easier to fill the issue, but the reason against is quite simple. The Net is getting crowded and loading of pages in general substantially slowed down. Because of minimum of graphics, we were not harmed too much and we do not want to lose our advantage in the future. We have fast loading and high reliability on our mirrors as well and if you have problems, just switch to another location. They have different time of the day, that means different traffic - and besides, the electronic delivery time is negligible compared to waiting time. It works like this: you probably noticed, that very seldom you get the page loaded as "a whole", but rather in sections. The reason is that the data are transmitted in smaller parts, so called "packets" which are picked by the rule of FIFO (first in, first out). So, when your first packet was sent to you and while it is being displayed on your screen, the other people's packets are being served. If there is no traffic, your second packet is sent almost immediately after the first one, so it may look like the whole thing is being sent together. The real time eater is not the text, but the pictures. Just for comparison: We have only four tiny pictures on the *Title Page* (plus one for background), but together they take five times more bytes than the whole text there. Some of you who do have more time are invited to see our *Photogallery*, you get there from our Title Page. We will be updating it time by time and every update will be announced here.

I would like to use this space also to point out to some software which really impressed me. Last time, it was Freezip©, the copy of which can be still downloaded from our *Title*

Page. In this issue, it is another freeware, Irfanview©, the fastest picture editor and viewer I ever saw. It is obvious it cannot do everything, but it is incredibly short and therefore works like a lightning. It recognizes all picture formats (no, not vector graphics) and animated gifs are really moving there. The changing of picture size, intensity, contrast or even format conversion (say bmp to jpg) is just a cinch.

It can do much more: anybody can create the slide show or loop audio or videoclip. If you have a scanner, the program will find it and do scanning directly. It will not occupy all your screen, just the real size of the picture (or less if you reduce it). You can download it from <http://stud1.tuwien.ac.at/~e9227474/> And while you are there, click on mail and pls say Hello to the author, Irfan Skiljan from Bosnia, who is also the student in Vienna.

INDEX: A - ENGLISH PART

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH DAVID B. HARRIS.
Life:	THE FIGHT FOR LIFE WE NEVER KNEW BEFORE
Short Story:	THE OLD HEROD
Bits:	PET A BYTE
Inclinations:	FLOWERS

Note: Click on left column. Part B (or C) is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

" I have better taste than my wife. You may judge for yourself: I married **her** while she only married **me**."

SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcement of the new issue by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE**. Novelty: we can send you English issue by e-mail, you can then read it by browser off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from

author. All the names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster Jan
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH DAVID B. HARRIS

DAVID B.HARRIS

dave@techined.com

is the Corporate and Higher Education Specialist and an owner of **Technology In Education Institute**, Seattle, Washington (USA). This Seattle based company specializes in Using Technology To Enhance Learning. He and his partner *Margo Harris* (School and Community Specialist) specialize in:

- designing, developing, and delivering online training and education
- supporting learning organizations
- supporting knowledge management
- integrating technology into classrooms
- creating alternative learning opportunities
- supporting coaching, mentoring, and informal learning opportunities.

Mr. Harris' primary interest in knowledge management is applying the principles of knowledge management to training, education, and learning. Currently, he chooses to concentrate on online learning. With the help of 40 participants, he is testing a new online workshop, *Designing Online Learning Workshop*.

Mr. Harris received a Masters of Business Administration degree from Western New England College. He is pursuing a Doctorate of Education at Nova Southeastern University. His area of specialization is Instructional Technology and Distance Education.

The company homepage is on <http://www.techined.com/>

Mr. Harris professional profile is on <http://www.techined.com/DBH.html>

From: David B. Harris

To: Jan Hurych

Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria

Date: December 17, 1998

JAN:

*In your interesting article "Creating a Knowledge Centric Information Technology Environment, 1996" you are discussing **the knowledge centric approach**, where the Information Technology environment would be characterized by a conscious effort to "transfer knowledge rather than transferring information. To transfer knowledge, the receiver's context and experience must be taken into account" (Quote, Mezirow, 1991). You define knowledge as " the combination of information, context, and experience". In other words, both sender and receiver have to be aware of the other's context and experience. The real crux is the application of knowledge for different environments, conditions and time, simply for different problem. That's where the context is most important. How do we go about providing the information with the proper context?*

Mr. HARRIS:

A good start would be to document the problem and the resolution. Particularly in the Information Technology arena, we seem to have a propensity for discussing a problem, arriving at a solution, and implementing the solution. We fail to document the problem or the resolution, we just implement it. Later, when a maintenance team or someone else is trying to figure out why a system works the way it does, there is no documentation.

This "just implement it" approach has two critical drawbacks. The first is anyone looking at the system at a later time can easily misinterpret what has happened. Required functionality might be removed and unnecessary functionality might be kept. The second drawback is we miss an opportunity to evaluate our decision making processes, to learn from the processes themselves, and to get better at making decisions.

The next step is to start documenting the "why" of the problem solving scenario. This means go beyond documenting the problem and the resolution to documenting the rationale for making a particular solution. By documenting the *why*, we start to build a knowledge base that can be used to understand a particular set of decisions and we can use the knowledge base to help us learn how to make particular types of decisions.

By the way, documenting the problem solving scenario does not necessarily mean keeping a text database. We could also use video tapes of meetings, sound recordings, emails, documents, and any other media that capture part of the scenario.

JAN:

Another interesting idea of yours is that "an IT environment that encompasses a knowledge centric approach will have an emphasis on knowledge transfer rather than

problem solving". Many times in my engineering experience I was offered "the solution" which simply didn't fit. More fruitful was the approach of "case studies" and analysis of the situation at hand as well. The main obligation of interpreting those case studies and weeding out the bias of information providers is of course always on the problem solver. It would be more constructive if the "senders" could do it for me, that is before providing such information - but is it always possible? Namely if they do not know my context?

Mr. HARRIS:

I do not think it is possible for someone else to provide a solution to your problem that is in your context. In order for that to happen, the solution provider would have to be you. And, even you will come up with different solutions at different times based on the criticality of the problem, the information you have at hand, what other priorities you have right now, and what you had for lunch. Everything you are experiencing right now makes up what we could call your current context. Your current context then is dependent on current conditions and will change as conditions change.

What the solution provider can do, is provide an interpretation of their solution that will help you develop your own solutions. To do this, I like to use checklists and templates. A checklist is a list of the information that needs to be considered. A template is a form that allows me to fill in the information I gather including the problem, resolution, and rationale. Now, even a checklist or a template is going to be designed within the context of the designer. So, if you are going to use a checklist or template that I designed, you have to evaluate the checklist or template and modify it to fit your context, experience, and information. You have to add the checklist or template to your knowledge base. Only then can you use the checklist or template effectively.

In addition, if we are to complete the knowledge transfer cycle, you must let me know how you used the checklist or template. I will then make your experience part of my knowledge base and will gain new knowledge from that activity.

JAN:

I took few courses of "Problem Solving and Decision Making" by Koepner-Tregoe. I have found their methods very useful, namely for elimination of large amount of useless data, simply by cross examination. Their system of basic questions "What, where, when, how, etc." could be actually considered as the basis of a primitive information context. From the viewpoint of the "sender", how much context he should actually provide? Are there also systemized methods for context description?

Mr. HARRIS:

I am not familiar with Koepner-Tregoe's methods, nor have I looked for a systemized way to share context, so this is a difficult question for me to respond to.

My suspicion is that it would be difficult to develop a systemized way to share context. I think any such way that was developed would carry the bias of the developer. As we are more and more open to global communications, I cannot envision a way to share context that would work in every situation.

I think it is more important that the sender and receiver share an understanding of the need to share information, experience, and context in order to achieve knowledge transfer. If the sender and receiver understand this, then they will understand the importance of dialog. It is through dialog that context is shared and the sender and receiver can come to know each other well enough to share knowledge.

JAN:

With the dawn of the teamwork and the definition of manager's work becoming more fuzzy, the decision making will acquire new form, probably even more efficient. More participants in the process however means also a great number of different interpretation of the facts, due to variety of personal experiences. The value of context will become crucial, maybe as crucial as information itself. There comes the third factor in the play: the bi-directional communication, namely the discussion. On the other hand, it is my experience that in decision making, more heads is not necessarily the added bonus, if it requires collective approval. How do you look at collective decision making?

Mr. HARRIS:

I am not a fan of collective decision making. There are two major problems with collective decision making. The first you already mentioned; it takes too long. The second has to do with the quality of the decision. Collective decision making usually means compromise or consensus needs to be reached. By definition, this means the chosen solution will be a blend of the ideas of the members of the team. I believe this tends to eliminate the best ideas and eliminates ideas that could be really progressive. The progressive ideas can be the ones that help the team break through significant barriers. Collective decision making tends to reduce the chances of breakthroughs occurring.

I am, however, a fan of collective discussion. The difference is you can have collective discussions while the decision still resides with one person. Now, to make this work, there are two things that have to happen. The first is decision making authority has to

reside with the person most qualified to make the decision. This, many times if not most times, is not the manager. If you are selecting a database engine, should the manager make the decision or should the database architect make the decision? The second thing that has to happen is the team has to have enough trust in each other to accept the decision of the decision maker.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: THE FIGHT FOR LIFE WE NEVER KNEW BEFORE

There is quite a fight going on, the fight we do not know too much about. It is a secret fight all right and I even allowed myself the ambiguity in the title of this article: it is the *fight* we never knew before, but also for the *life* we never knew before. It is a fight for the *artificial life* (shortly Alife or AL), something also called "silicon life" to distinguish it from the "carbon" based life.

I am not talking about the lifeforms which were once also contemplated, the forms where the carbon atoms in carbohydrates are replaced by silicon atoms. It didn't work, because (as I was told by chemists):

- carbon based organisms are derivatives of carbon dioxide, which is a gas, while silicon dioxide - well, you have seen quartz already - is pretty solid,
- long chains of silicon molecules are not mechanically strong enough,
- silicon is not so stable as carbon, thanks to its bigger molecule

No, we are talking about the life created in the environments of *silicon chips* - therefore its name. But the hardware itself is not important - artificial life is realized via software and it is called "life" only because it has all basic characteristics assigned to our, biological life. Well, maybe with some exceptions, listed here:

- 1) Instead of some "material" objects, we rather talk about "**the kind of existence**",
- 2) It has capability to **multiply or replicate**, similarly to DNA, either by cloning or fusion, or any other way, thus creating new, separate identities,

- 3) It can **store and access information** - even it's own, the *genetic* one,
- 4) It uses its own, shall we say *metabolic* process of **energy or information exchange**, needed for its existence - for its life,
- 5) It **interacts** functionally with its environment and has ability of independent (i.e. self-controlled) expression of its existence,
- 6) Its **whole depends on individual parts** and vice versa,
- 7) While it is **dependent on its environment**, it has certain endurance i.e. resistance to the harmful effects of its environment,
- 8) It has **capability to change**, to procreate, to mutate and maybe even evolve,
- 9) It can **grow, expand and virtually move around** the given environment,
- 10) It also has **some other features**: it can perish, die, simply cease to exist. It can attack the other living forms or adapt to them,
- 11) While I admit, that our professor of biology mentioned to us only four of the above, I cannot stop here and add also one rather disputable feature: it's intelligence. Yes, **it can learn**. That would lead us to Artificial Intelligence, which is the related subject.

After reading all that, you may still be asking how much is the artificial life similar to our "everyday" life. I won't keep you in suspense: it is not. So why are we calling it *life* at all? Well, why not. We do suspect there are another forms of life in our universe, some of them not at all similar to ours. Just imagine creatures, which will perceive thermal spectrum as we perceive our visible spectrum - pretty scary, isn't it? Well, with all our success in cosmic travel, we are still like grasshoppers trying to jump to the top of the tree. There is only a slim possibility, that the present generation will be ever able to study those cosmic forms of life in its own lifetime - not unless the visitors will come to us. On the other hand, the silicon life is already here. It lives in the cyberspace of our computers, is crawling on the surfaces of our disks, vegetates in the memory and it even multiplies. .

Yes, I am talking about computer viruses. English scientist Stephen Hawkins was talking about them when he said he was sorry the first forms of artificial life appeared to be - to his disappointment - the harmful ones. We know that some viruses already created their mutants, mostly by error, but dangerous nevertheless. And you may bet somebody is already teaching them how to procreate with certain purpose "in mind". Sure, you may claim that all this is only a "virtual" life, but we all know that the results are very real and their consequences are affecting our "real" life as well.

Fortunately, the scientific research of A-life is not interested in computer viruses, even if we can learn a lot from them as well. The laboratories are trying to create "organisms" who could procreate and evolve as well. One of these days we may even prove Darwin

theory in our laboratory and maybe even predict where are we, mankind, heading to. well, you don't think the evolution will stop today, do you? The application of Alife systems will be probably unlimited: not only we could increase the speed and capacity of our thinking, we might be able to make them smarter then we are - well, some of us, anyway :).

What do we know about artificial life so far? The answer is rather uncertain: we know only what is allowed to be published, probably only half of the progress, per my estimate. It is quite understandable: one of the users of the Alife is the army. In one of the places I was inquiring they simply told I do not have enough security clearance.

Let me compile then the incomplete list of known forms of A-life:

a - cellular automata (CA), promoted log time ago by John von Neumann, the famous mathematician and computer scientist, also known as the "father of A-life",

b - the game of Life by Conway, which is also using the rules of CA,

c - polygons (e.g. from Polyworld by Larry Yeager), actually A-life creatures,

d - creations (e.g. Tierra by Tom Ray), populated by predators, victims and parasites - not to be confused with Discworld© by Terry Pratchett, populated with wizards, elves and deadly reapers :),

e - fractals (say L-systems with natural growth),

f - neural networks (NN), able to do their own learning and forecast (i.e. stock exchange trends),

g - fuzzy logic (FL), we may talk about them more sometime,

h - genetic algorithms, simulating DNA behaviour,

i - evolutionary algorithms (Biomorphs by R. Dawkins - oh, hello Mr. Darwin!), and

j - some applications of the theory of chaos.

If you want to see more details, try to search Internet for "A-life". The authors may however differ in their opinions about *what* should we called truly *artificial forms of life*; some claim there is still missing the main component.

The interesting question is what are the possible *applications* of A-life. To sum-it up, they are unlimited - they may encompass all areas of our life. The first who succeed will reap financial rewards - that's why there is so much secrecy everywhere. As we may expect, not all applications will be beneficiary to mankind, there will be some misuse, but that may be said about everything.

As usual, the researchers are galloping forward without considering all possible consequences, but it is quite understandable: this is a race for time and besides, how much can we guess? As far as we are concerned, there are three possible approaches: we can wait what happens or just keep dreaming - or even better, we can join the race . . .

Note: *The interview about A-life is in Hurontaria 1998, Issue 8, English Part.*

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE OLD HEROD

When they told me somebody killed old Herod, I was not surprised. Even as a child, I used to hear the others talking about the mean nature of that man. For instance, he used to run children from his orchard while cracking his bull whip and screaming on the top of his voice. There was no question about it: he simply hated kids, that's why they called him *Old Herod*.

His real name was - but it does not matter anyway. Not now, when it is only good for his tombstone, the one keeping old Herod down so he could not get up again and do his evil deeds. Around fifty people gathered for his funeral and I bet you they all came because of their curiosity only. And when the speaker, Terry Guttenbrot, said his "Good bye" to him, many of the spectators mumbled "and good riddance, too!"

One thing was sure: Herod knew how to make enemies. And he was not discriminating, he seemed to hate everybody. Even those who tried to be friendly with him, were disgusted with his offensive behaviour. Twice he was married and both wives left him pretty soon after the wedding. The third woman, who used to live with him was apparently driven to her death thanks to the suffering she had to go through. Other people tried to ignore him but only with very little success. I know, I was one of them.

When you passed him on the street - there was no need to say hello, he never answered - you had a strange feeling that there is something evil in that man. Some people may harm you unintentionally, because of their stupidity or because they do not know any better, but Herod was always doing it with purpose. What purpose it was is hard to tell: he was not an ordinary pervert or sadist. You could see he didn't enjoy it too much either - it was more like he was performing some duty, some punishment. He was punishing us for the sins we didn't commit.

That was of course the most puzzling question. He was an educated man; true, he didn't finish his studies at the university, but that did not prevent him to make a decent living. He was a painter and most of us, who could at least recognize the value of the painting,

had to admit he was rather good. Even more than good, as I was told by his art dealer, who made Herod and himself quite rich.

He was found shot in head, sitting at the table in his kitchen. The coroner estimated he was dead eight, maybe ten hours, when he was found. His was a solitary life, no wonder nobody noticed anything - nobody missed him. Of course, we didn't miss him after he was put in rest either, but that was normal, considering all he did to us. What we were not able to put in rest was the fact that he was murdered; the law expects the punishment for a crime and it has to be satisfied. And he was killed all right: there was a lot of indication for that - the broken furniture, some stolen paintings, no fingerprints on the gun and what's more, the gun was missing. There was also some antique watch on the floor, the vest pocket type, so cheap that it had only sentimental value for somebody, who was already dead. It was also broken, as the killer stomped it under his feet, broke the glass and destroyed the mechanism.

The body was found on Monday, at six o'clock in the morning, when the milkman noticed the door to Herod's house was unlocked and slightly open. He entered the house and found him dead - very much dead, since the part of Herod's head was shot off. The gun must have been fired from very short distance, maybe when touching his temple.

Detective sergeant Phil Krausek was a friend of mine; we were schoolmates once. We still went bowling together; after all, we were in the same club. He shared with me some information - nothing more that was in the local newspaper, but then again, he didn't find too much anyway. More interesting was to observe his way of thinking. The possible motives were rather simple: the robbery, revenge, even possible blackmail, which turned ugly. Of course, the robbery could be traced - there were some of Herod's paintings missing, but that didn't get police too far. They were not found yet and they just had to take the art dealer's word for it. After all, they were insured and were supposed to be delivered to dealer the very same week. It was a joint insurance, covering losses both for Herod as well as for his dealer. There was no close relatives either - one of his ex-wives was dead and the other one already re-married and had no claim. That made art dealer the suspect number one and guess what: he had an alibi, too.

Still, police was able to establish the time of murder accurately by the broken watch - it showed 8 o'clock, which more or less agreed with the doctor's estimated time of death. It apparently dropped on the floor, when Herod was accosted by the murderer, who later accidentally stepped on it. What was strange was the fact that the robber didn't wait for night, until the old man was sound asleep. He would probably had no need to shoot him

either. Such murder looked rather useless, even superfluous, for a skilled robber. It simply didn't look professional, that's all.

While the pictures were not found either, it was believed that one of two things probably happened: either the dealer lied and there were no pictures, or he let somebody steal them for him and he hired rather incompetent thief.

Both options looked more like a dead ends however, so Krausek's boss came with another hypothesis: the revenge. He didn't need to think too hard: as I said, everybody hated the old man. Police picked four guys, who either had a quarrel or fight with old Herod and tried to fit them into the pattern.

Now as you probably know - and Phil took pain to explain it to me, since he likes giving lectures - in order to have a case, you have to have a motive, means and opportunity. They did have got four motives, one better than the other, very colourful, very convincing. But that was actually all they had: no gun was found. True, one of the suspects owned the gun, which was lost or stolen some time before, but it was far from proving that it was the same gun which killed old Herod, because his gun was not found. What's more, old Herod also owned a gun, but that one was never seen and probably never used since he registered it twenty years before. And it was highly unlikely that the intruder would get hold of Herod's gun and then kill him. Besides, there was nothing suggesting the fighting.

That was another strange thing: it did not look like the old man was putting too much fight. There were no bruises on his body and he was still sitting in his chair as he most likely was when the bullet hit him. Or so it was suspected - there was of course possibility that the intruder ordered him to sit down so it would be easier for him to shoot him. Either way, it looked like the victim probably knew his murderer but did not suspect his intentions, because he didn't put up too much resistance. Or did he know from the beginning what the intruder had in mind and that he had no chances?

But why did he then let the killer in? After all, if he knew what would happen? Of course, the killer might force his way in, but why was not Herod screaming for help? Maybe he did - but his house was rather remote and if nobody could hear the shot, how could he possibly hear his screams? Still, important thing was that all suspects knew Herod well and all held some grudges against him. Except maybe the dealer, but who knows - he may have had one and so for good measure, they threw him in with the other suspects.

Phil was discussing with me only some general stuff, but it was obvious that he was worried with the outcome. After all, one month passed and no other suspicion surfaced.

They were rather guesses not even supported by circumstantial evidence. The first suspect, *Brownfield*, was a chartered accountant and Herod once sued him for deficient income tax declaration which apparently cost old man some money. The judge then ruled for plaintiff and Brownfield had to pay Herod the whole difference, not a small bundle of money. One can only speculate why Herod didn't fill the revenue form himself, if he was smart enough to spot the error. There was a simple explanation, of course: he wanted to entrap Brownfield in his web of intrigues, but why he did it, nobody knew.

The second suspect was a town clerk *Charlie Paulus*, short fellow with a short fuse, and he, together with Herod created rather explosive combination. They started the fight which ended with Herod having broken arm and Charlie spending some time in local hospital. He suffered a concussion. When he was released, he brought with him one unpleasant souvenir: he could not speak properly. He was stuttering ever since. His injury was probably more serious and affected his thinking too, since he was once heard to proclaim: "I - I - I am go-go-go-ona ki-ki-ki-ill th-th-that so-so-so-nova bbbb-bitch!" That of was brought up during the investigation and as you probably guessed, it didn't help him too much either.

Now the third person who could have had a motive was another painter, *Ignatius Drock*. He lived in the neighbouring village and was mostly freelancing, doing some illustrations for books and magazines. There was a talk about his professional jealousy - Herod was obviously earning much more with his paintings while Drock's illustrations didn't pay that well. The real motive however, as I was told by Phil, was more personal. Many years ago, they did use the same model, a girl, and both fell in love with her. Unfortunately, the girl chose to live with Herod; she was the one who later died, presumably due to her unhappy life "with that monster". This was told openly by Drock who made no secret about it; actually he might be the one who started the whole rumour. And rumour it was since Herod's girlfriend died by natural causes. On the other hand, her life with him was quite miserable and one can assume that Drock had two good reasons to hate Herod: first, that he stole his love from him and the second, that he caused her to suffer.

Fourth suspect was local bum, called *Bruno*, a pickpocket, frequently arrested for small theft and jailed several times. He joined the group of suspects after he was intercepted on the street and the search had shown he had in his pocket a knife which somebody identified as the one belonging to the dead man. Bruno claimed he found it on the street, few months ago. While it was not a murder weapon, it did link him to old Herod and police was obviously hoping to find more objects in his possession, maybe even some of Herod's paintings.

To play it safe, they didn't lift their suspicion from the *art dealer* either. If number four

would prove to be false alarm and if there were no pictures stolen, then there was a pretty good motive for art dealer to pacify old man who apparently didn't want to go along with the fraud. Of course, Phil was leaving him alone, since he hoped he'll make a mistake and will provide some leads. Police even cooperated with the private eye who worked for the insurance company, the fellow named Boucheron or something like that. He looked like a smart fellow, but either the reward was not that big or the dealer was too smart - nothing substantial was found yet.

The time was flying and while the rumours never stopped, neither did the police investigation. And people of our town started slowly to change their minds: suddenly it looked like Herod was not all that bad and our town had to catch the murderer, punish him and go on with its own life. Some pressure was already put on mayor, who in turn passed it on the police chief. In desperation, they have found some old lady and showed her the line-up. For good measure, they put those five guys together with Phil and another officer, both of course dressed in civilian clothing - this way they usually check the credibility of the witness. The idea backfired, because the old lady picked Phil and since she was the only witness, they were back on the square one. Some newspaper reporter of course asked Phil what he was thinking about it, but he laughed and told him he's got alibi.

To open all avenues, they even came up with the poster with some reward, payable to anybody who would lead police to the killer. Many claimed they had some information, but nobody could earn the money. All leads proved to be false, especially those, which incriminated those already suspected. In this stage of the game, the lawyers for suspects came into the play as well: one for Brownfield, the other, of course, for the art dealer. Both pointed to the contradictions in some statements: the dealer had an alibi and Brownfield's lawyer proved that the informant was not in town - in the night of the murder, that is. Both suspects, being rather distinguished citizens of our town, were not bothered any more, but at the same time, they were still kept on the list.

After six months, the chief of police decided they gathered all they could possibly get and told Phil to prepare the case against the town clerk, who looked to him like he had the best motive and what's more, didn't have any alibi. So they concentrated on the gun which killed old Herod. They eventually found it, in the fields, but without fingerprints. Phil send it to county laboratory for ballistics and then the fax message came back and it was positive: yes, it was the gun that killed the old man. The important thing was then to connect the gun somehow to Paulus. And since he already claimed he was innocent, they decided to try their luck and give it another go, another interrogation.

(Continues in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

BITS: PET A BYTE

Pet a what? Well, let's start from the very beginning. You are all familiar with the metric (or if you prefer - *decimal*) scale of units, namely:

1 000 - *kilo*

1 000 000 - *mega*

1 000 000 000 - *giga*

1 000 000 000 000 - *tera*,

and here comes one not so familiar: 1 000 000 000 000 000 - *peta*.

We might go even higher, but who really counts? Well, we do. In his December issue of RCFoC magazine, at <http://www.compaq.com/rcfoc> Jeff Harrow (Remember? That's the same fellow we had an interview in Hurontaria 9A/98) is discussing the possible increase of terrestrial Internet traffic. Judging by the increase since the year 1990 (from hundreds of gigabytes per month) till 1998, we come with the number 2000 fold higher and the traffic in the year 2001 will be reaching hundreds of petabytes per month. Amazing? So why should we "pet our bytes", or in plain English: why should we really care about few additional megabytes here or there?

I am sure that if you have one gigabyte on your hard drive - nothing unusual, that is only 1000 megabytes (not counting resident "fat boy", the Windows), you don't need to care. Now you can easily buy 10 or more gigabytes drive, which - if you convert it all in text, double spaced, will give you almost *half a kilometer* long stack of printed pages. Impressive number, isn't it?

Wow, not so fast! It takes more to impress *me*. First, I could not possibly write nor read that much text in my lifetime. Oh no, you may say, most of the memory is occupied with programs and data, right?

Of course, now you can easily fill your disk with only few programs - my Windows take more or less 300 megs already. Then come the other "hot air balloons", like one wordprocessor, which swallows 20 megs to let you write your 10 kilobytes long article or letter. The wordprocessor which - if I remember correctly - did few years ago the same work with 200 kilobytes only (for you, who are not so good with zeroes, that is 100

times less memory). And guess what: it was also much faster, too.

Of course, now you can easily fill your disk with pictures. One with size of normal letter paper, with rather average quality or resolution, takes around one megabyte. So you take 1000 pictures and your giga is no more. Sure, the backup floppies (around thousand is needed) will take space of the whole shelf. You can print them and your "*half a kilometer*" will now shrink to thousand pages only, little less then *twenty centimetres*. Of course, if you put them on microfilm, hundred pages a slide, we are talking about ten slides only, the package thinner than your checkbook and easily carried in your pocket.

And of course, you can easily fill your disk with audio or video clips. But you will be much better off with one CD's. And who thinks I should be impressed with the storage capacity of one CD?

Sure, the capacity of hard disks will go up, and one day we will probably replace all of them with writable CD's, who knows, but the point is somewhere else. Since the new versions of popular programs will grow, or rather inflate with the *similar ratio*, as the past shown, I will be lucky to put on my *terabyte* drive one solitary, slightly oversized browser. Ridiculous, you say? Just wait and see. . .

Future capacities of our memories, be it magnetic, electrical, optical and lately even the *nanotechnical* or biological will surely store and deliver more information to our dinner plate. But are we actually able to digest all that? And even if we do - what will happen to us? Will we be really getting smarter?

Hardly. We are already trying to shift most of our work - and more importantly, our responsibilities - on computers. Yes, we blame them for anything we did: choosing the poor program, inputting wrong data, ignorinig the marginal cases we never thought about, and now we even blame that stupid year 2000. The computer is of course only a tool in our hands. Clumsy hands cannot do to much even with the best tool ever. The only solution is to develop more and more intelligent programs that will make up for our errors in judgment. And that will move people even more backwards, since with intelligent programs, who wants to think at all?

Similar criticism applies for Internet traffic: some communications are still trying to deliver accurate and up-to date information, but the junk content grows much faster. Where my search engine was giving me tens of references on particular subject, now it delivers hundreds. Am I supposed to read them all in order to pick few golden nuggets of valuable information?

No, I am not happy with the increased communication traffic on Net. Correction: with

the *contents* of the increased communication traffic. It makes my life miserable: there are congestion, delays, and more then often - after sifting through tons of junk - a desolation. Ninety percent what we read is only superficial information, be it so called "news" (mostly robberies, rapes and killings, both on individual and corporate level), promotional ads, pseudo science, spam, push and various pet corners. Give me a break, please! Or give me an intelligent browser, who will read it for me and discard the bull. In the meantime, I would rather settle for slower delivery but richer content.

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: FLOWERS

She brought me flowers.
I was stunned,
surprised,
then shocked
and puzzled, too.

For just a moment,
maybe few,
I wondered what it was.
What I have ever done
to deserve that?

Such offence, even ridicule!
I took the bouquet,
still quite mad,
I looked at her
and asked the simple question:
Why?

She smiled and gently touched my hand.
"It used to be a privilege of men,"
she said. "Not any more.
I also want to tell you
I'm in love."

[Back to index](#)

[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 2A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-ěeský měsíčník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

Finally! Hurontaria has completely *new mirror, located in Prague, Czech Republic* and residing at <http://cement.fmi.cz/hurontaria/>. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Stepan Frohl as well as to Jitka and Vlasta Splitek from **Zelos**, our friendly web pal magazine, the address of which is in our links on Title Page.

As soon as I finished rather impertinent article about proverbs (in this issue, Czech Part) the just punishment swiftly followed. Do you know this one: "*The apple a day keeps the doctor away*"? Not only it does not work - the responsibility of the proof dropped heavily on my shoulders: I broke my tooth eating the apple! When I told my dentist what brought me to him, he just laughed his head off . . .

This month, I am recommending to your attention shareware program called **EditPlus**. It is the combination of text and HTML editor in one, very thorough program. It has many useful functions and in such convenient combinations that I immediately erased other four editors I kept only for that purpose. It checks spelling and intelligently suggests the right word (when you make a typo), you can search multiple files in one operation, send mail from it, has color coded tags and pull down list of tags to save the space on your screen, you can strip HTML tags, can set different font for screen and for print. You can even build your own menus according to your preferences. And see your HTML page without even opening your browser. I liked it so much I have written this whole issue with Edit Plus only! It even takes Czech diacritics and it is the best editor I ever had. By the way, you can find it at <http://www.editplus.com/>

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH Ing. PAVEL SUCHMANN
Life:	ILLUSION OR VISSION?

Short Story:	THE OLD HEROD (continues)
Bits:	WINTERIZING
Inclinations:	TOO MUCH OF LOVE

Note: Click on left column. Part B (or C) is in Czech, and the content is different. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"We are what we eat. Does that mean the best people are *cannibals*? And who are those who eat *pork*?"

SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE**. Novelty: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster Jan
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH Ing. PAVEL SUCHMANN

Ing. PAVEL SUCHMANN

(with Czech fonts it spells Šuchmann and his pen name is *BVer*)

suchmann@i-topp.cz

is the graduate of *Technical University of Prague*, Electrical Faculty. He is the co-founder of Czech electronic magazine *Amberzine*© <http://amber.i-topp.cz/amberzine/>, one of the first ones in Czech Republic, where the science meets with fiction and both can benefit from it. Beside his PhD studies at the faculty, he also worked (1994 and 1996) for *Hewlett-Packard Laboratories in Bristol*, UK. He is involved in information technology, creator of Czech Internet servers www.mapy.cz and www.firmy.cz.

He published several papers about *Speech Recognition*, and some other articles, mainly in magazines devoted to readers interested in computer technology, *Softwarové noviny* and *Telnet*, but also in those which deal with science-fiction or futurology, such as *Ikarie* and *Živel*.

His technical interests are many, some of them really bordering with science-fiction, namely the *nanotechnology* and you can read all about it on <http://amber.i-topp.cz/amberzine/extropy/nano.htm> (Czech version only).

Still, he spends most of his free time with *Amberzine*, which I suspect is partly his obsession and partly quest for intellectual satisfaction. That he is making the best of it is more than obvious, in spite of the fact that his modesty would not admit it.

From: Pavel Šuchmann
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria
Date: January 17, 1999

JAN:

*You are the founding member and chief editor of enzine **Amberzine**, which is now probably the most popular Czech net magazine, mainly among students and Net enthusiasts. The real reason may be that the magazine has - like the Roman god Janus - two faces, namely **techno-scientific** and the other, **science-fiction** oriented. How do you guys manage to look both ways at the same time without having double-vision?*

PAVEL:

Frankly, I do not know *why* and even *if* we are popular. :-) *AmberZine* was born in 1995 when a few points in Czech Republic were connected to the Internet, mainly universities, research labs and big companies, and perhaps only a dozen or so of 'visionaries' could guess it's potential here (in CR). We had been lucky of being in the right place in the right time - well, maybe ; we were trying to make our PhDs at the *Faculty of Electrical Engineering*, had a leased lines in our lab, some spare hardware and the time for fiddling with that new and amazing WWW stuff. Our *technology focus* is one eye of AZine's double-vision :-) - it explains why we are still read by students, scientists and net-fanatics.

The second eye is a *science fiction* and it was opened suddenly when we guys (Tomas Svtil = *TopSecret*, Pavel Krynicky = *MaCicEK* and me = *BVer*) attended our first SF

(sci-fi) convention - *Bohemiacon'95*. We always liked reading *Gibson, Dick and Herbert*, watching *Blade Runner*, etc., but never before crossed the line separating passive consumers of SF from active SF fans. The man who helped us to open our eyes widely there was one of the leading personalities of Czech SF - *Ondrej Neff* - now the chief editor of famous WWW daily *Neviditelny Pes*.

Ondrej gave the AmberZine it's initial momentum. We showed him the Internet - he was zealous at the very moment - then we shared our dreams with him and he was not hesitating and contacted contributors from Czech *fandom* (a SF community), prepared first materials and taught us some journalistic tricks.

But there is no double-thinking or double-vision required when one is to create AmberZine. Both sides of AmberZine - *technoscience and SF* - are in perfect sync. The science is the best known tool for understanding the reality we are living in and the science fiction is a pretty good drug inspiring our brains to use this tool. With SF we dare to ask interesting questions and the science is the only reliable way how to get right answers.

JAN:

Lately, you are getting reinforcements from the camp of skeptics. Of course, they are not those old Greek skeptics who didn't believe we can ever discover the real truth; on the contrary: new skeptics believe in science and are skeptical only about anything beyond that. All things considered, isn't sci-fi "beyond" science as well?

PAVEL:

OK, my previous words about perfect sync are not quite correct. Sometimes it is hard to keep both views in proportion. For some SF fans we are not pure SF magazine - because we are sometimes publishing conference papers, a hard-to-read-scientific-stuff and notifying seminars. For 'real scientists' we are not a hundred percent relevant and creditable medium (fortunately for our science :-)). On the other hand, we offer a broader insight to fans, trying to help them leave their SF ghetto, showing them that a 'boring science' can be fun and scientists are sometimes better and crazier freethinkers than SF writers. Since we are not tied by a scientific 'rigidity' we are able to create a platform for more speculative scientific-like articles or start a discussion about controversial topics.

There is clear border between science and the SF, of course. The science fiction is the art created by writers for our speculative joy and it is dangerous *'to_believe_in* their fictions and to suppose they are true. On the contrary, the science maps our world by its precise methods, constantly showing us new domains and shores. Our knowledge - the map

created by the science - helps us to discover the truth.

The proper understanding the distinction between SF and the science allows us both to see SF series called *X-files*, but not to share their conspiratorial paranoia (which is what various UFO cults do today). We can use our precise maps of known territories when hiking and then we can sit around a camp fire, tell the stories and dream about the land 'beyond', can't we?

JAN:

Why do you think engineers and scientists like to read sci-fi? Is it because it brings them relaxation or maybe even inspiration, or is it just a detour from their everyday work? I also know you are interested in nanotechnology. How much of it - according to your opinion - still belongs to sci-fi?

PAVEL:

Why do engineers like SF? Perhaps it is because of wiring of their brain circuitry. Engineers and scientists are not normal people. They are *not _so_average_people* I mean. They should be exact and accurate in what they are doing. But the accuracy alone is not sufficient, for example bureaucrats are accurate, too. Engineers have to be innovative *to _create_ new designs*, scientists have to be curious to find out hidden laws of the nature. Both the curiosity and the creativity is essential.

In my opinion, the exact and accurate thinking is *sequential* - we think in a logic chain of causes and results. Each theory is built this way - our knowledge has to be coherent. But the creative thinking is like the massive *parallel* search - getting a new idea is nothing more than connecting of two or more fitting facts together.

SF is a literature of wonder (this is an often cited slogan). It helps to stimulate creativity by finding parallel ways of thinking. It helps to imagine previously unimaginable, breaking prejudices. It learns us to manage successfully our what-if scenarios, etc. But I am not advocating SF- centric point of view. There are of course other forms of a mind-jogging. We chose SF.

Nanotechnology rather reminds me a territory not well mapped yet. I cannot competently answer your question - my only qualification in the nanotech field is that I have read some articles about it. And my only credit is that I had written an essay which encouraged Petr Krejzek (of *Zivel* magazine) to translate the bible of nanotechnology - *Eric Drexler's Engines of Creation* in Czech language.

Drexler's book is a daring probe to the totally new area of science - promising but dangerous *molecular engineering*. Scientists are probably far from some crucial breakthrough in this field today. Drexler argued that the complex molecular systems are possible, they are not forbidden by any laws of the nature - the live cell is the example of such a system. He did not predict the date the first nanoassembler would leave a lab's incubator. Instead, he has shown some principles of designing molecular robots - an evolution from protein-based cells is quite interesting one. He tried to motivate a serious research by collecting of examples of possible future nanotech applications - like healing robots swimming in our blood streams, self-growing rocket engines, nanotech wars ... this part obviously sounds like SF.

JAN:

We all know how much is your Amberzine giving to its readers - you have plenty of letters to prove it. On the other hand, it takes a lot of your personal time, in spite of the fact that you managed to spend some time in England and even get married. Now to the crucial question: how much gives Amberzine to you?

PAVEL:

AmberZine is the great, great, GREAT consumer of my time. Even if my contributions are recently less frequent than in early days of AmberZine, I spend a lot of my time by reading and answering e-mails, discussing with editors, co-ordinating each issue and managing activities of AmberCREW and doing other hidden work. You know it well - tell me something about *Hurontaria* :-).

The key aspect of surviving when you decide to run a non-profit webzine is to create an excellent board of editors. They are contributing, finding articles, looking for interesting topics and people, constantly motivating and challenging each other. Each editor has his own field of interest - his own section - and has a final word in the case of choosing material and shaping up the character of his section. You - a co-ordinator rather than chief - just have to oversee the process, think about the long-term direction, avoid potential conflicts and keep people, articles, hardware, software, graphics, and everything, in the best possible condition. There are some kind of a satisfaction for editors creating AmberZine. Receiving praising letters, for instance. Thought-provoking on-line debates on our editors' mail list. Never-ending discussions and brainstorming when we meet on the real-life *AmberSession*. Editors of paper magazines showing their interests for our articles and reprinting them. And, we are now recognized by others - mainly from the SF community - as much as we are being invited to give speeches on SF conventions or on some seminars.

And my personal satisfaction? I like to think about interesting issues of the near future. Sometimes it is easy for me - I read news and magazines and browse articles and papers on the web, catch a core message or try to reveal hidden trends. Then, I try to translate relevant pieces or interpret those trends and write an article about it for AmberZine. It fills the strange media gap which I think is expanding in Czech Republic right now - it seems that only few people are interested about our "*online*" future, which may have a devastating effect later, slowing down the progress. e.g. good scientists, professors and specialists leaving their careers because of low salaries, general lacking of funds for universities, science, health care, research etc.

We are all entering the "online" age - it is inevitable, whether our politicians are ignoring it or not. The production of material things is less and less important while the production of relevant bits and ideas is necessary for us to survive. I hope that we in AmberZine create these interesting bits.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: ILLUSION OR VISION?
(First published in Amberzine, Prague)

Time is a peculiar physical variable: it does have a negative scale, but it cannot run backwards. Oh yes, we can see it in computer simulations or when using some memory banks or tape recorders, but the *real* time, shall we say the "biological" one, cannot be reversed except maybe in some science fiction.

I guess we all got used to it except for the fact that time will one day *run over* for every one of us. But, as the saying goes: *Everybody wants to go to heaven but nobody wants to die*. Also, the time cannot be accelerated or slowed down (at reasonable speeds, Mr. Einstein!) and we cannot jump over or skip it either.

There is an old joke among us technical people - it is called *Time Advance Relay*. It is the opposite of the *Time Delay Relay*, which is the device operating some time AFTER you pushed the push-button. The applications are many: from automatic closing of doors behind you to developing of photographs. If we reverse the *paradigm*, that is the pattern of our thinking, we get *Time Advance Relay*, the device which works some time BEFORE we push the button.

You are probably thinking that such thing is impossible, since it is difficult to establish WHEN we are going to push the button in question, except when we deal with short times and use some proximity, sound or temperature sensors. Better yet, with sensors which can read our mind. But hold your horses! I have found a very elegant solution: all we need is to *reverse the time* and we can then use our good old *Time Delay Relay*, which is so easy to build. I am presenting here this idea without any extra charge (financial or electrical) and I am positive it was not attempted yet, commercially that is. True, I already said time cannot run backwards - at least until now - but when I find out how to do it, you will be the first to know.

In the meantime, we can work out some interesting applications of the device: anticipation of unexpected guests or - almost impossible task - to calculate how many hours will take my wife to get ready for the party. You can object that such device is not needed if we know exactly *what* and *when* things happen - but that would rather spoil my joke. Besides, who can really tell the future?

Since the dawn of civilization, people were trying to forecast, guess or even predict future events, be it the anticipated moves of mammoth herds or the collapse of your friendly bank. It is easier to do it for events or phenomena which are repetitive or periodical by nature. We can then use a *guess*, *guesstimate* or even better, *calculated guess*. Don't ask me how they differ, that's another mystery. In modern times, we use *fortune tellers* or *neural networks*, the marvels of computer mathematics. Both bring another uncertainty: how much we can believe them or even better, *trust* them?

And how about the events, which are not repeating themselves very often or those which never happened before? In such case, your guess is *as good as mine*, or rather *as bad as mine*, especially when we are not concerned with methods but the *results* only. The paradox is that we sometimes take random events and try to explain them as natural laws. When somebody is a *dowsing* (the person, who uses twig fork or other homemade equipment to find dead bodies or live cables) and he finds crude oil in my backyard, I may spend another million of dollars to repeat the feat and he may not succeed again at all. But it still doesn't prove he can or cannot do it. In our short lifespan, that is.

Which brings us right to *illusions* - the imaginations or predictions, which are unreal. Again, I do not mean any magic tricks or colorful hallucinations created by drugs - they belong to different department. No, I mean the *sincerely* meant - but utterly wrong - expectations which have no confirmation in reality, be it in near or distant future. Contrary to illusions, we have also *visions*, the imaginations which later turn into reality and prove themselves to be rather accurate and true.

Let me quote one example - the year was 1862 when *Victor Hugo* wrote in his *Les Misérables*: "Citizens. . . can you imagine the future? Nations will behave like brothers, there will be no horrors (meant wars, uprisings, crises - my comment, j.h.), all people will be happy. . ."

Yes, it was all meant well, but it was and still is just an illusion. On the other hand, only one year later, another Frenchman, *Jules Verne*, wrote quite different book, which was discovered by his great grandson more than hundred years later (1989) and first published in 1994. In his book, Verne describes his visions about the world a hundred years later, appropriately named "*Paris in the Twentieth century*" (*Paris au XXe siècle*).

It was actually his second book, the first one was "Five weeks in balloon" (*Cinq Semaines en ballon*) and he still had to wait for his fame to come. Even so, the book is already filled with typical Verne's *clairvoyance*. Just few examples what he has foreseen - and don't forget the year was 1863:

- the use of electrical current for **street lighting** (first arc-type lamp appeared in 1876, Edison's light bulb in 1880 and street lights in Paris in 1890)
- **motorcars powered by hydrogen** (quite few appeared almost hundred years after, in 1990-ties)
- electric **trams** (first one in 1880, USA, then 1890 in Europe)
- **automatically controlled overhead trains** on rails, driven by compressed air and held in bearings by magnetic force (we already have them, but driven by electro-magnetic linear motors, of Japanese or German design)
- **electrical elevators and doors operated by pushbuttons** (first Otis elevator appeared in 1857, but it was not electrically driven - electric motors were introduced in elevators in 1880 by Werner von Siemens - and pushbuttons were used for controls much, much later)
- **underground trains** (in Paris as late as 1900)
- **electric chair for executions** (invented 25 years later)
- offices with **copiers, faxes, and computers** (Verne called them "calculators")

When I recently read that book, I discovered some other predictions, even about **e-mail**:

"...electrical telegraphy, which sends letters directly to addressee" and such a way, that "...the text secrecy is guaranteed". In another place he mentioned "...photographic telegraphy,,,, which allows to send photos and pictures on great distances". His computers already have *keyboards* (which is quite something, considering that there were no typewriters in Verne's time), people play on *electric pianos* and there are many things quite familiar to us today, but completely strange at the time he wrote the book.

Do I need to continue? I think not. Instead, let's try if we can come up with some explanations how could he guess all that. For instance:

- *The book could be a hoax*, written much later than it is claimed. There are however documents which confirm that Verne gave this book to his publisher Hetzel who sent it back with comment: "It is just an utopia. Nobody could never believe it." Recently, the manuscript was officially authenticated by French authorities - that is it was found to be genuine.
- *Somebody helped Verne with his visions* - that was claimed, by the way, about all of his books. Still, we have to ask who "helped" the helper, that is how was *that* person able to forecast all those things so accurately. And we do not have the answer for that either.
- For last hundred years, *people were trying everything to please Verne* and gratefully invented all those things. Yet they haven't read his book, it was not published until recently! That of course is not true about his other books - Verne *actually inspired* a lot of scientists and engineers.
- *Verne came from planet Venus*. The same thing was claimed about another great visionary, *Nicola Tesla*, who not only "saw" the things, but built them as well. If so, I suggest to e-mail a request to Venusian government to send us more chaps like those two :).
- *Verne was talented observer*, equipped with good logic and superb guessing talent, seer, or shall we say a prophet, who was also able to estimate which way the technology was heading. Somehow, he could skip the erroneous experiments and many false detours our designs were not able to avoid. He didn't have the special technical education, but then again, it might have been a bonus, not a drawback. All we know is that he built his own database which contained around 20 thousand filing cards. And his technical "predictions" in his other books are quite remarkable, too. For instance the Mission Apollo 9, the real trip to the Moon, happened *one hundred years* after he wrote about it. The rocket was *also* launched from Florida, its weight was about *the same* and landed *three kilometers* from the place Verne predicted. There were other data related to the trip, twenty total, which were rather accurately predicted, too. He also wrote about an orbital

satellite of Earth, as early as in 1889!

As we can see, Verne could foresee the trend of things, including those which were considered impossible, at least in his times. On the other hand, we can say without exaggeration that given enough time, nothing is absolutely impossible. But for all those things he predicted to happen within next hundred years is of course next to miracle. I would say that about 60 percent of technologies we are using today were non-existent hundred years ago. And some quite impossible even to imagine. In the world of fantasy of course, we can create almost anything. Everything is possible there and it is only our limited understanding of things, further held down by our today's experiences, which are telling us that this or that is just "impossible". I believe it was Murphy, who said that the inventor is a man who "does not know something is impossible so he goes ahead and invents it". The other definition I heard is that "an inventor is an engineer who does not take his education too seriously". You figure it out.

One way or another, the visions of Verne became reality, while the illusions of others are still circling around, without any hope for conception. Unfortunately, it is mainly *the illusionists* who always start something they dream about, something which cannot work and it is rather difficult to repair the damage they cause - take for instance the "revolusionists". Between illusions and visions, there is also the category of predictions which seem to be logical, but are tainted with gross errors of judgement. I remember reading about the "forecast" of one American who - at the time of Verne - predicted that the city traffic will grow so enormously that the streets will be finally covered by three feet deep layer of horse manure. Well, there si other manure we are also deep in and the New Year's predictions in various newspapers will fit that bill nicely . . .

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE OLD HEROD (2nd part)

They interrogated Paulus rather thoroughly. It took a long time and not only because of his stutter. It was not too difficult to confuse him, but on the other hand, he kept telling things differently every time and his statements had to be scrapped and re-written. All that until there was the last version, which was supposedly the final one, the one to build the case on.

In the meantime the other painter, *Ignatius Drock*, was spotted carrying some large parcel, apparently with paintings, to his car. The police was called and stopped him using the roadblocks. Drock was pulled from his car and the paintings were really found there. He was arrested on spot and was read his rights. The paintings were unwrapped at police station and found to be the genuine paintings of - Drock himself. By that time it was

already news - both local radiostation and newspaper had a real heyday. What's more: he later sued the city for damages, in spite of the fact that he actually sold those paintings for more than was ever expected. Of course, the "stolen" pictures became then the collector items. Some people even suspected it was Drock himself who called the police first place.

His case against them was of course dismissed, but our police was slowly becoming the laughing stock. They didn't catch the murderer and everybody knew that *Paulus* was too simple-minded to plan anything, not even a simple fraud. How could he ever become a town clerk was difficult to comprehend. Probably in spite of his stutter his writing was quite normal and legible. The public opinion then swayed in another direction. The attention was caught by accountant *Bromfield* who, as you may remember, was the first suspect and who bragged in our local pub that he knew *why* was Herod killed. It was probably only to get an attention, we all are prone to it after few beers, but the rumour caught up momentum and the story was growing like a snowball. Next day, people were saying he knew *who* was the killer. It made no difference that Bromfied denied all that - he was called downtown. When he arrived at police station and while he was waiting for his lawyer, he was asked to make his statement official.

True, Bromfield had alibi for the day of Herod's killing. He was not even in town then, but there were witnesses who heard him say all other nonsense in the pub. In sworn affidavit, he proclaimed he was drunk and he didn't really know anything about anybody. Nobody of course believed him: he who can cheat in your income tax can lie some other time as well. He probably had to pay his lawyer good money to get him out of that mess. On the other hand, there was never any intention to arrest him for complicity, at least that was what Phil told me.

He added that he was not happy with the way things developed. He was after all in charge of the investigation and people started to joke about him, too. Well, he never looked to me like super bright fellow - have you ever seen the super bright cop? - but I knew he had some grey matter between his ears and plenty of common sense as well. The case was simply beyond his capabilities, I thought. After all, Sherlock Holmes had it easy, there were always some clues here and there. But in this case? The gun was found, yes, but all washed by rain and those darn paintings were nowhere to be seen...

But let's not forget *Paulus*. He was not arrested, he didn't admit anything and there was not enough to prove he did it. Motive he got and means he didn't need - the gun which was found was finally traced to the one registered with Herod. There is nothing easier than to use the victim's own weapon, if one can steal it beforehand. As for his alibi, he claimed he was at home, sick with flu, but there was nobody to confirm it. No, he didn't

see his doctor, he took a hot tea with some brandy and slept most of the time.

I have learned all that from Phil; he probably wanted me to believe his interrogation was progressing after all. He was also complaining that his boss is pushing him to bring the investigation to end, but the prosecutor, rather old and experienced "courtier", didn't think there was enough of evidence, especially when it was only circumstantial. Phil was almost at dead end when I suggested to go through the files again: maybe there was somebody else who could hold grudges against old Herod? But he was not too happy about it and I could see why. All his four suspects took great part of investigation time, but with no particular results - and yet the suspects at least had some motive, they were the most probable killers! Still, he promised he will take another look, but he didn't thank me. There you have it: you are trying to help somebody and he is not thrilled! I am telling you: there is no gratitude in this world!

After a week or so, he told me there was no other clue anywhere. Sure, there were few thousand people in our town who might have a good reason, any reason to harm old Herod, but it didn't look like they had a *real* reason, the one to kill for. I was surprised that nothing else could be found, but he asked me what did I expect? At the same time, he looked rather desperate - his time was running out and he still had to bring Paulus to trial. Of course, Paulus didn't help him with it too much and come to think of it, I didn't blame him.

Then I got a great idea, at least that was what I thought. How about those two former wives of Herod? Did they have any reason to kill him? Phil took it with extra enthusiasm and actually went to look for them. I was rather surprised that nobody thought about it before me. Of course, he knew one ex-wife lived in the nearest city, but the other one had to be traced all over the country. They found her in Vancouver and she never left it during past two years, which was easy to prove, she was living in the shelter for elderly people. The other woman had an alibi too, that is if you consider it takes four hours one way to drive from her city to our town. Around the specified time, she was never missed there for that long and besides, she wasn't seen in our town, either. No break in Phil's investigation then. I was rather disappointed, mainly because the idea didn't work, but also because I sent him on the wild goose chase. When I told him I am sorry, he was not particularly mad. He could understand I tried to help him, he said.

I suggested another of my "great" ideas: since there was no traces of violence, how about the fact that Herod was probably friendly with his killer? Shouldn't we should look for such person instead for his enemies? Phil laughed: "But can you imagine anybody Herod was friendly with?" I admitted that would require somebody from hell and there was no devil living in our town. It's well taken care of: after all there are not less than six churches here. On the other hand, we couldn't exclude some devil's apprentice: the

murder certainly looked like his work. Revenge, that is the best word, I believe. It may as well be that Herod signed his soul to devil. Phil was amused: "But I never heard that devil comes and shoots the person's head off!" Our conversation then turned from things natural, like a murder, to supernatural, like strange disappearances.

Then, I remembered something else so I asked him: "Where was the gun discovered and who found it?"

"Kids found it somewhere in the fields and brought it to our constable," replied Phil.

"But it does not really help you too much," I said. "No fingerprints, no indication who could have possibly used it."

"True, but at least it proves it was not a suicide," he laughed.

"But couldn't you somehow associate it with Paulus? After all, he was badly beaten by Herod. Thinks like those can haunt man's memory for quite a long time."

"I tried," he admitted, " but frankly, his interrogation got us nowhere. Hardly any proof we do have a case. Besides, he might be telling the truth, he could have been home all that time, you know."

Phil was right. One week after our conversation, old Miss Mac Caustic remembered she went to see Paulus the day of murder. She saw him all right: the clerk was home in his bed, but he had no flu. He was drunk like a dog and that explained why he couldn't remember anything. Suddenly other people recalled that early afternoon of the very same day, they saw him drinking in the pub. One of them even remembered dragging him home in such state that he couldn't possibly distinguish his dog from a can opener. The police tried to test old lady's memory, but it was perfect - the reason she came up with her testimony so late was rather simple: she didn't know Paulus was a suspect, she just returned from Europe where she was staying several months with her daughter. And how did she remember the exact date? Well, it was the day before her birthday.

Phil was becoming rather melancholic. He lost his best choice for a killer and there was nobody to replace him, the suspect I mean. Then suddenly the art dealer again surfaced in the public conscience or rather in the little notice in some newspaper: he just sold old pictures by Herod for couple of big ones. At the same time, the insurance company that insured the stolen pictures, refused to pay for insured paintings, mainly because there was no real proof that all of those pictures were really painted. That was probably true, but how about the insurance contract, which was signed by both, the art dealer and Herod himself? The contract, which was also signed by the representative of the same insurance company, the person who was supposed to see the pictures? The answer was simple: the representative had seen only some of them in finished state, the others were still in works. The contract was rather prematurely approved and art dealer already paid the deposit. And after the pictures were delivered to dealer, the contract was supposed to be transferred entirely to his name. Only one detail was missing: there was no delivery . . .

Another rumour appeared; but it was not substantiated, but which one is? Insurance company claimed that Homer made a secret agreement with art dealer to get pictures stolen so the selling price could be then beefed-up, after they were "found". This was of course opposing the fact that no trace of stolen pictures was ever found, but then again, the pictures were probably not supposed to appear that soon anyway. And if that was not enough, the investigator *Boucheron* visited Phil and raised one question, which was all that time in the back on our minds: could it be that Homer didn't want to go ahead with that fraud and somebody - presumably the art dealer himself - shot him?

As he later told me, Phil objected that art dealer had a pretty tight alibi, but Boucheron dropped a hint that one can buy a hired killer. He was probably hired only to scare the painter, he said, but the situation went berserk, he panicked and killed him. "And how do you want me to prove that?" asked Phil. The question intrigued me as well, since if there was a professional hit man, he could hardly leave any proof at all. We discussed that with Phil for some time, but got nowhere. The only way to get answer was to interrogate art dealer and get him confused, but he came with his lawyer and the chances of success were rather slim.

Still, it was the only way. Art dealer, *Sanston* was his name, was rather upset with all that, but they could see he was trying to cooperate. They spent three hours with him, but got nowhere. Then Phil dropped the bomb: would Sansson mind if he asked him to take a *lie detector* test? Actually, he said "polygraph test", but of course that is only a technical lingo. We all know they are not after any "graphs" but are trying to establish, if the person is lying. And surprise, surprise - in spite of his lawyers warning, Sanston agreed. He must have been darn sure about himself, if you ask me. And he passed the test with flying colors. Little as it meant, it proved that there was no hope to bring him to trial just because some unproven suspicion.

Then another thing happened which was also in his favour: they finally found stolen pictures. Yes, they did. Boucheron got anonymous call - how else? - that the pictures were in a remote, rather deserted barn. Meanwile, hunt for the murderer went again to hopeless standstill. For a moment, the police chief was hesitating if he still shouldn't drag art dealer to court. But the insurance company apologized to art dealer and also withdrew their accusations. It was almost sure the judge would dismiss the case. Art dealer of course was not complaining, since it freed him of any suspicion. Also, the value of pictures raised substantially, partly because the painter was dead, but mainly because he was murdered and those were his *last* pictures.

Since there was no will left, court appointed the art dealer to be executor of Herod's estate. He was only too happy to accept it. The rather slim proceeds from the house sale

went to our community, but of course, there were still the *lost and found* pictures. Insurance company was also happy since there was no need to pay the premium and I bet you a dollar that Boucheron got his well deserved wages too. Only one question remained: who was the killer and how to prove it . . .

Yes, the killer. By simple elimination process, the only suspect left was that old thief *Bruno*. He did have a Herod's knife and could not explain how he got it. That is if you are not so naive to believe that he really found it on the street. And he didn't have any alibi either. As for the motive, robbery was assumed to be good enough reason. Still, what robbery? The only thing which was stolen were those paintings and they were found again.

"Elementary", explained the chief of police, "Bruno got scared and returned them. But the crime of stealing and motive for murder cannot be erased by the simple act of returning those pictures." The first statement was of course a nonsense - there was nothing Bruno should be really afraid of. Everybody expected art dealer to be proved guilty - and the find of pictures only helped to get him free. I know they say that Bruno was feeble minded, which is probably true, but then again, how could he realize the pictures were the only valuable thing in the house, then successfully plan the murder and sweep clean all traces behind him?

Besides, Herod would never let him into his house, not while he was still alive, that is. He knew that Bruno was a thief and he was always afraid that things could be stolen from him. He always accused people of stealing from him. Of course, Bruno could get in the house, hide and threaten the painter with his knife. But if Herod pulled his gun, how could the thief possibly get hold of it and shoot him? And what's more, right in his head, while Herod was sitting at his table? But the chief of police reached the decision that Bruno is the killer and in spite of Phil's objections, decided to close the investigation.

They got some hum drum confession from their suspect, at least as far as the knife was concerned. Bruno admitted he did steal it, but only from Herod's pocket, while the painter was standing in the crowd and watching our famous Easter parade. Add to it several jail terms for robbery and one for possession of the dangerous weapon. No, no gun, just some crowbar for tire change, used mostly for stealing hub cups but never raised against any person.

They searched several places he was know to inhabit, that is some ruins as well as few summer cottages he previously broke into. They had no luck there. Instead, it only confirmed he was not a person who could pre-meditate little bit more than his next supper. Phil was certain they did not have enough to prove anything substantial, but then again, if Bruno admitted stealing the knife, he might have very well stolen the gun, too.

In advance, of course. As for the stolen pictures, he was not stupid enough he could not realize they were valuable. beside, he was seen once sleeping in the barn the paintings were hidden. Police might eventually find whom he was stealing them for. Maybe it could be the freshly cleared art dealer, who knows?

(conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

BITS: WINTERIZING

Here in Canada, we are now in the middle of winter which is hardly any news to those of you who are living in northern hemisphere. Those of you who are "down under" of course have a nice summer right now. I was told it makes sense, because the earth is tilted. Of course it is tilted, otherwise you wouldn't be "down under", would you? What beats me is the apparent justice in it, since half a year from now you too will have winter and we'll be in the middle of summer. Only apparent justice, of course - your winter is warmer than ours, actually so warm it should have no right to be called winter at all. So why not make it more just and let you have your "winter" all the time, while we have our summer all year around? Because I am sure you can stand your "winter" better than we can stand ours. I know I would!

Now I suppose they have four seasons even on South Pole, right? So how come there is a snow there all year around? Isn't it bad enough that those who live there, those scientists and penguins, who have only one direction they can go? Imagine one of penguins telling his wife: "Honey, let's go somewhere, let's go North!" And her answer: "Again? I am fed-up going all the time North! Let's go Bahamas!"

Changing of seasons, I was told, has nothing to do with the earth tilt, but rather with the Earth rotating around the Sun. O.K., I can buy that, the more we rotate, the cooler we get, but how about those who will live on the Moon? Do they also have four seasons there? Or maybe six or even ten? And how come there is no snow there, aha? Yes, I was told there is no water there, but I do not care about water - I am talking about snow. Another thing: while the Moon is happily swinging around our Earth, how come we can see all the time only one side of it? Obviously the same applies for those who would be viewing us from the Moon surface. No wonder that the *man with harp* is so sad - he can watch only half of the Earth for his money. And I bet you a dollar fifty that his colleague on the other side of Moon cannot see Earth at all, actually he might not even know the Earth exists, poor fellow . . .

To quote my favourite nun: "We are creatures of our habits". Needless to say, we are also products of our environment. In winter we feel cold, we shiver, tremble, shudder and quiver. Mentally, we shrink and withdraw, obviously due to shortage of heat which normally keeps our brains warm and fully functioning. We yearn for sun rays, ultraviolet rays, x-rays and sting rays. For those of you who never yearned: it is something like longing, but more pathetic. Yes, we long for long, warm days and sandy beaches. We miss the southern seashores, deep water fishing and shark alarms. We think about summer like the paradise lost. Well, *we in Canada*, anyway. And it goes year after year, be it under liberal, conservative or any other temporary government. None of them - and you can quote me - hasn't done anything with this periodical weather calamity. None of our MPs even dared to promise that if elected, he would get rid of winter. Not even a promise - and we all know they cannot keep them either. No wonder we people of Canada are trying to help ourselves. We are getting ready for winter. We do some preparations. We buy firewood. We buy computer games. We "*winterize*" ourselves.

No, I do not mean *hibernation* - that's only good for politicians. Most of us are not able *to sleep it through, sleep it over or sleep on it*. We just take precautions to survive those several months of winter - and believe me, if you think there is only three of them in Canada, think again. It is not just a low temperature, humidity, lot of white stuff and plenty of salt on our roads. No, we have to fight the other curses as well: for instance our winterly moods. Yes, it is "the winter of our discontent", first observed by Richard the Third - or was it Shakespeare? - who could have had only Canadian winter in his mind. Come to think of it, it couldn't be Richard - nobody knew about Canada then. Maybe they are still not sure about it, in Buckingham Palace, that is. They come to Canada rather infrequently, mostly to check if we are still here.

You may ask why suddenly all that sadness. Well, not all of us can go south like our retirees, appropriately called *snowbirds*. Some of us have to work, to earn money we have no time to spend. The others may have plenty of time but no money to spend. Still, the rumour has it that if Quebec ever separates, the Quebecers will move the whole province down to Florida. For those who are staying here in winter, there is of course rich choice of winter sports. No only that: most of the existing activities can even benefit from moving inside. Watching of TV and playing cards - mostly strip poker - can even increase when mercury starts hiding in the bottom of the thermometer.

We also enjoy many winter sports like *snow-balling, snow-shoeing and snowshoe-shining. Tobogganing, dog-sleighing, hot-dogging and mac-donalding. Hockeying, bodychecking and penalting. Skating, down-hilling, up-hilling and cross-countrying. Snow-boarding, snow-hoarding and ice-fishing*. Believe me, I have tried them all, but they did me no good: all snowshoes were too big for me, my skis crossed and double-

crossed me and my dogs run away, chasing the cat. What's more: I was told all about ice-fishing when it was too late: I already caught a very nice piece of ice, a real ten-pounder. They claimed it was undersized and made me throw it back in the water without even weighing it.

OK, they say that the best cure for winter "blahs" is reading, walking and exercising. Who are they kidding? I tried all three things at the same time and let me tell you: it is just impossible. It is like chopping wood, painting a picture and have a long distance call to Dawson City. Oh, you already tried that? I bet you couldn't find your chopped-off finger on the ground either. . .

Finally, for spending your long winter nights, here comes the real *disguise in blessing*: yessr, the Internet. Winter or summer, electrons are here to stay. And we can sit home and stare happily at our monitor and wait for half an hour to see one picture loading. No, not the one with the girl in undersized bikini. Instead, you keep getting logo telling you that program *Minerva* will solve all your accounting problems. Never mind that you actually wanted to read *Loose News* about your blonde *Dimmi*, the page of *Loose News* is sponsored by company *Minerva Intelligence Limited* and that's that. Even so, when there is extremely cold outside, be happy that instead of snowboarding you can do *keyboarding* - just don't lose any keys, please. It's educational, it's entertaining, it's also super-boring and all that only for only few pennies a minute!

Well, I have better solution for myself: I do not read Net , *I write it!* It is rather selfish, I know, but it is like a medication - for me, of course. And when I want to have a real fun, I try search engines, like *Yahoos and Hootboots, Booboos, Eggscite-me, Leak-us, Alpavista Riccola* and others. I was told they are really good to get all information you need. I cannot agree more - actually I cannot agree *at all!*

For instance, I was trying to find out how it is with those four seasons in southern hemisphere. So I launched a search for "seasons" and "year". I got four hundred links to different pages, related to anything from *hockey seasons* to *high school yearbooks* and "*Seasons in the sun*" - the song written by Canadian singer Terry Jacks. Contrary to him, I couldn't say "we had joy, we had fun, we had seasons on the sun", as he claimed. My mistake, I said to myself, let's try "winter" and "season". The result was impressing: I have learned about *Winter Palace* in St. Petersburg and *winter sports in Gatineau, Quebec*. Happy luck next time, I told myself and tried "seasons" and "sequence". I got *food seasoning in Thailand* and also *sequential logic for industrial drives*.

No, it wasn't a winning combination. Fortunately, I remembered some e-mail discussion I had with Mr. Plsek, my pen pal from Australia. One mail to him and as the old spiritual

goes, "all my troubles, son, soon'll be over, son". It was that easy. Obviously, there is some problem with search engines or - God forbid! - with myself.

In the meantime, I have a good advice for all of you who want to hear it - and you who don't, are out of luck, you get my advice anyway: Skip search engines and get more friends!

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: POETRY

TOO MUCH OF LOVE

I carried in my heart
too much of love
but nobody to give.
Nobody asked for it,
nor begged me either,
and I was too much shy
to offer it myself.

I knew it couldn't wait
'cause life was short
and time was running by.
I was no coward -
all I needed was
little encouragement,
yes, that was all.

Maybe I was afraid
to love a girl
who would not
feel what I felt,
hear what I heard,
deep in her heart.

The others might be satisfied
with gentle loving harmony,
but no, not me!
I wanted to exchange
my yearning and desire
for her desire and yearning

as strong and deep as mine.

I haven't found it yet,
but who am I to blame?
I should have known
there never was such love
and never ever will be.
Ours isn't perfect world,
no matter what we think.

The magic of true love
is not in similar'ty,
but *aux contraire*
it's based on difference.
Those who are choosy
and who hesitate,
they never know true love. . .

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 3A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

There is something in the air. Long winter is slowly receding and my neighbour nailed his buckets to some trees in the park, in order to collect maple sap and to make it into sirup. It is rather reassuring: every time he did that, spring was just around the corner. Except for this year - the droplets of maple juice froze on the taps, creating nice white icicles. Remember Wiarton Willy from last issue? His predictions about mild winter didn't hold the water: we already had four snowstorms since and there is more to come. Still, we do not complain. We don't have avalanches in our area (probably because there is no mountain around here), there is hardly any flooding - knock on wood - and not a single smoking volcano. No wonder our weather forecasters are seldom excited and tell some jokes instead . . .

DO NOT OPEN THE ATTACHMENT HAPPY99.EXE when you get it in mail! It is a computer virus (worm program). Opening it will infect your machine and cause you some headaches. It may escape detection by some anti-virus software. This worm program will be sending a duplicate of each message you send without you knowing it - the duplicate message will contain "happy99.exe". If you receive an attachment named "happy99.exe" - simply delete the whole message.

If you are not sure whether you are infected, send yourself a blank letter - if you get it back with attachment "happy99.exe", you are infected - please visit this site for removal information: <http://www.meaford.com> If you want to know more, visit the site of expert virus-buster Bruce P. Burrell <http://www.umich.edu/~virus-busters/ska.html> (I interviewed him for *Hurontaria* last year). Frankly, attachments of EXE type are selfrunning programs and they are usually nuisance anyway: they take your time, memory, the long ones cripple your e-mail delivery and they ARE possible carriers of viruses. And what's worse: everybody likes to send them around!!!

I took a bold step and started to write essays for **Prague Art Gallery AftForum** to

accompany their exhibition of pictures on WEB. You can find them in this issue, under *Inclinations*. If you love art - and I think you do, if you like reading Hurontaria - please take a look at those pictures, too. The address is under each essay.

Another free software: **Email remover** © is at <http://home.pacific.net.sg/~thantom/eremove.htm> I have found it on WEB and it fulfills two functions I needed very badly: it checks my mailbox at server for too long attachments (you can erase them without loading them into your PC) and also to bounce back *spammers* who were lately bugging me like a cloud of mosquitos. Also good advice: if you get letter from spammer, do not answer it - it will only give him confirmation that your address is correct.

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH Dr. JASON OHLER
Life:	WATER LOO
Short Story:	THE OLD HEROD (conclusion)
Bits:	HALO AROUND HAL
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE

Note: Click on left column. This is **Part A** only. **Part B** (or C) is in **Czech** language and the content is different. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"600 years ago, it was **politically correct** to claim the Earth is flat."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH Dr. JASON OHLER

Dr. Jason Ohler, Ph.D.

jfjbo@acad1.alaska.edu

is the Director, Educational Technology Program, School of Education, Liberal Arts, and Science, *University of Alaska Southeast* (see <http://www.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/>) since 1986. This program offers a teaching endorsement, pre-service and in-service training, and educational technology infusion in *teacher education programs*. The program is committed to the creative, effective, and socially responsible use of technology in education.

He is not only an educational technology planner, facilitator and project manager, but also a composer and writer. Dr. Ohler is involved in a wide range of activity in the arts, including creating music (from avante garde to neo-classical) for radio, TV, theater, and public and electronic performance, working with school programs in the field of music composition, conducting public workshops on composing music using computer technology, and *promoting art as the 4 R of "literacy"*, see <http://ivaldi.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/4Rs.html>

Dr. Ohler excels as an author, presenter, speaker and teacher in the field of *educational technology* since 1985. He teaches classes and conducts workshops designed to help participants achieve a balanced understanding of technology's opportunities and limitations, and the responsibilities incumbent on us to shape technology and use it wisely. He was also a featured speaker at *EDUTECH* in Prague in the summer of 1996, a conference sponsored by *Charles University*. According to his own words, he "absolutely loved Prague". You can find more about his achievements at: <http://www.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/jun.html#Jason>

BY EMAIL

From: Jason Ohler

To: Jan Hurych

Subject: Re: Interview for Hurontaria

Date: February 2, 1999

JAN:

In your article, "The 4 Rs: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic and aRt" (1996), you brought up some very interesting points, namely about using art as another important dimension of the educational process and communication. It is encouraging how many of your predictions have already become reality. On the other hand, there is probably still a long way to go. In your words, what is your basic idea?

Dr. OHLER:

In a paragraph, my point is this. For over a decade I have served as *Director of the Educational Technology Program at the University of Alaska*, a program I created to help teachers, students, and the public understand how to use technology effectively, creatively, and wisely. From this vantage point I have watched the kinds of communication that we expect from the average student become significantly less textual and more graphic in nature. As the term paper continues to yield more and more ground to the web page and multimedia presentation, in which students are expected to create and combine art, video, music, sound and text in unified presentations, a much larger issue is being missed by the public, namely, where in a standard curriculum are students getting the skills to think, design, and communicate like artists? In a multimedia world, art is a literacy as basic as reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic and equally important as a general employment and life skill. Therefore, we need to teach students how to use art across the curriculum in much the same way that we teach them to use reading, writing, and math across the curriculum as a mainstream form of expression--thoughtfully and deliberately. It is time to make art the 4th R.

JAN:

And what was the general reaction from teachers as well as from students?

Dr. OHLER:

Whenever I promote the 4th R, whether in presentations, classrooms, or articles, the response is positive. But there is confusion about the concept, even for those who are used to promoting art in education. They are used to promoting art for a number of good reasons, all of which I support, from developing an appreciation for multi-culturalism to developing hand-eye coordination. But my point is more practical: having art skills will get you a job and allow you to communicate in the multimedia world that we all inhabit. That is, in the so-called information age, the average person will be required to speak in pictures and sounds as well as words.

This point is a bit threatening to some in the art community because they fear that making art a 4th R may trivialize it. After all, art technology is doing for art what the

word processor did for writing, namely giving anyone a chance to get involved. This in turn floods our information channels with artwork the way word processors have flooded them with words. So, some people fear that the line between fine art and commercial art will become too blurred. To a certain extent this may happen but I believe that regardless of the medium both will always exist side by side, the way poetry and computer manuals exist side by side in the text world.

JAN:

We are now receiving information through a complex system of written, graphical and acoustic forms, now even via virtual reality. On the other hand, the written word, as you anticipated, is now being rediscovered. One of those examples is our Hurontaria, which shows how quickly the readers switched from paper form to an electronic one. Now, when it comes to different forms of artistic expressions, do you feel that they should not only complement each other, but also boost their mutual effect?

Dr. OHLER:

Absolutely. Paul Levinson writes eloquently about how different media and art forms evolve because they fill specific needs in our communication schema. Each media has strengths and weaknesses. An ideal multimedia project is one in which its authors accent each medium's strengths, and avoid each medium's weakness, collectively achieving maximum communication resonance.

JAN:

After all, the right half of the brain, the "artistic one", is also the main source of inspiration, imagination and new ideas. Do you consider the new technologies and their use as a revolutionary step or just another stage of the process? Can you speculate further along that line?

Dr. OHLER:

There is absolutely no question it is revolutionary. An ability to use text and only text was, for many years, the great cultural filter through which we all had to pass as students. If we couldn't, then we were not "literate." Now, as we are forced to work in teams to communicate complex ideas and create complex products which integrate a number of different media and art forms, not everyone needs to be a great textualist. Some team members may be good writers, others good visual artists, others good sound designers, and so on.

Let me be clear--being able to read and write will be more important than ever in the digital age. But there will be more than one medium with which to communicate. Additionally, everyone will need a working knowledge of a number of art forms in order to achieve basic literacy. A modest starting place would be to amend our education system to require everyone to be able to draw at a basic level of competency in much the same way that they are required to read, write, and calculate at basic levels. Ideally, students should pursue drawing with the same vigor that they pursue writing throughout their K-12 careers. We are at the point where art is upon us and we can either be proactive about it and incorporate it into mainstream culture successfully, or be reactive about it and do a poor job of helping it find its place in our social and educational systems.

A final point here. Pictures, sounds, video have a more global appeal than text because they tend to be more cross-culturally accessible -- a very desirable quality in a global economy driven by the ubiquitous Internet. Because of this, art will become an international language of sorts.

JAN:

You also correctly anticipated that our teachers will experience a loss of control, of course only during the transition period. How do you think they can get it back now?

Dr. OHLER:

In the information age, you get control by giving up control. That is, there is so much specialization and so much to know about, that each of us can only hope to be part of larger team which collectively can produce a body of knowledge or a unified product. To this team we bring our particular specialist knowledge. We can have a generalist perspective but it is very difficult if not impossible to have generalist knowledge any more.

What this amounts to in the classroom is being "the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage." I tell my students, most of whom are teachers or are studying to become teachers, that one of the secrets of my surviving in the educational technology world as long as I have is that I am not afraid of 10 year old students who know more than I do. They too are specialists in the ways of their computers and web sites. Teachers need to deputize these students while remaining sheriff. That is, teachers need to let these students tutor other students while they maintain control of the instructional goals and overall flow of activity in the classroom--a kind of control through cooperation. From the instructional perspective, art teachers should begin working with content area teachers the same way reading teachers have done, infusing art into all branches of learning the

way we have done with reading. Of course this takes resources and a commitment from the educational community that do not exist right now.

JAN:

While more and more work is done by students via computer, do you foresee in the future some kind of fully electronic or "virtual" school via monitors only?

Dr. OHLER:

Only virtual learning? No. There will always be room for all kinds of learning experiences, from VR to RL: Real Life. The important point here is to get clear about your goals. When I hear that someone is going to create a "cyber school" or "cyber course" I warn them not to swap one mental box for another--a cyber box for a brick and mortar box. That is, if you plan to "go cyber" you are placing the technology before the instructional goal and you will miss a number of good opportunities to use media effectively--including RL--simply because the myopia of your new mental box won't allow you to see them.

When I design courses I don't ask myself, "How can I put this online?" I ask myself, "What is the best way to present this material and facilitate student learning?" In some cases I realize that a course is going to be most effectively delivered primarily on-site. My most recent course, [Thinking About Technology](http://ivaldi.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/tat/cover/covfram.html) (which can be accessed at <http://ivaldi.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/tat/cover/covfram.html>) uses a combination of web resources, books purchased online, mailed videos, community activism, and peer interaction. This is my kind of course.

Having said this, virtual education will evolve and expand and continue to offer incredible opportunities, particularly for a number of disenfranchised groups who can't get to school or don't do well within a conventional education system. In the past we went to school. In the future school will come to us. But we will always require a number of media and experiences as part of a complete learning environment, combining, to paraphrase Negroponte, bits and atoms.

JAN:

And if so, how can we then effectively provide students with teacher's guidance, assistance and valuable feedback?

Dr. OHLER:

There are many ways: conferences, listservs, email, phone, mailed video, on-site visits, to name a few. When to use which is the topic for another interview.

But I want to say this about the role of teacher in the information age: In the age of the Net, multimedia, glitz, and information overload, teachers will be valued as much for their wisdom as for their knowledge. They will be absolutely essential in keeping us from losing our way. They will be guides, coaches, facilitators, mentors, as well as information specialists. They will be more important than ever.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: WATER LOO **(The Importance of Emperor's Piles)**

*"Even when I am gone, I shall remain in people's minds the star of their rights, my name will be the war cry of their efforts, the motto of their hopes."
Napoleon, Memorial de St-Hélène.*

"**Loo** (French *lieux*, short for *les lieux d'aisances*, places of conveniences; *loo* (Brit. Slang) a toilet."
Quote from Webster's New World Dictionary.

It is not my intention to contribute to rather dubious glory of one man with overinflated *complex of superiority*, nor I am trying to make fun of the famous battle where thousands of good men died. I choose the name to celebrate that great *Imperial Flush* that finally got rid of one European menace. With a little foresight, all those soldiers didn't need to die there. Napoleon *should and could* have been stopped earlier, even long before his escape from Elba. He was vulnerable and after all, he *did* make great mistakes. Still, some historians are even today trying to justify his military blunders, highlight his military "genius" and call his lust for power and unprecedented waste of French elite "the culmination of Great French Revolution". And they even believe that at Waterloo, he just run out of luck. . .

It was no doubt one of the most terrible battle of last century and probably the most

important, too. True, there were some *emperors* hundred years later who were still pushing their pawns into the bottomless grave called the First World War, but then they finally disappeared there as well. Needless to say, Waterloo had a record to be the first flush of emperors.

Slaughter-masters of the new era were called differently: no more "emperor", just "*fuehrer*" or even "*batuschka*" (e.g. daddy Stalin). Still, they had many things common with the butchers of the past, something which was of rather pathological nature. One time, scientists suspected some common sickness - after all, many of them were epileptics: Caesar, Hitler, Alexander the Great and Napoleon the Short. If it was so, we should then call epilepsy the *deadliest* disease indeed!

But in the case of Corsican up-start, the important discovery was later made, which might yet trigger very interesting research. It was disclosed that Napoleon suffered also from something else. According to that information, which was withheld for almost hundred years, his Emperorship got well developed case of *piles*, or if you prefer, hemorrhoids. Sure, they were no ordinary piles, they were imperial piles. Which reminds me one old joke indeed, but in this case, it was no brain tumor, it was *real* hemorrhoids. During Napoleon's life, only three persons knew about it: his brother Prince Jerome, his doctor Baron Larrey and his personal valet Marchand. That of course if we do not count Napoleon himself, who was apparently the first to know.

Just imagine the laugh of British soldiers, who already call him *Boney* - who knows, they might even call him *a rear admiral*! Think about thousands and thousands of French soldiers ready to die for French posterity while in fact, they were only dying for his *posterior*! And come to think of it, why not? It was *Montague*, who said: "*Upon the most exalted throne of the world, we are still sitting only on our own rump.*" So now we know what was that driving force which didn't allow him to sit down and rest, the force which sent more men to their death than famous *Madame Guillotine* herself. . .

French nation, devastated by their *revolution gone sour* and surrounded by enemies everywhere, put its hopes in the hands of man who was considered then - and even now, by some - a military genius. But was he really? Innovator and great strategist maybe, but no genius. Out of his twelve campaigns, he lost six of them - not too impressive statistics. The most disastrous (and *stupid* by any measure) was the campaign against Russia. Starting with the army twice stronger than the one of his enemy, he lost it all and had to run for his life. Hardly the feat of military genius. Even I could have done it and much faster, if you ask me.

O.K, but how about his political career - was he a political genius? Conspirator is the better word. His first successes were under protection of Maximilian Robespierre's brother. When guillotine sliced Max's head in order to fit him in his rather short coffin and thus ended his terror, Napoleon was arrested because of his connections. He was soon released and his bloody suppression of Paris uprising - when he shot his cannons at crowds - gained him a rank of general-major. He then collected his first victories in Italy, but his very next adventure in Egypt ended in disaster: first he lost his ships in the battle at Aboukir Bay and all in all half of his soldiers. He deserted his army there and sneaked back in Paris, to hush it up. He got away with it and started to plot against government with the help of his brother, then chairman of the *Council of 500*. When he was proclaimed the chief commandant of Paris, he accused the *Directorate* of pro-British conspiracy and treason. The Directorate was then dissolved under the threat of force and replaced by three consuls, that is Napoleon and two others. The same year, he became the *First Consul* and later even the *Consul For Life*. Two years later, he proclaimed himself an *Emperor*.

Then the second act of his comedy quickly followed: the French revolution died by decree: *liberté* was replaced by censorship, arrests and executions, *égalité* was destroyed by creating *nouveau riche*, the newly created aristocracy of his cronies. Yes, there was still some *fraternité*, but only for his brothers, who were subsequently made kings of various satellite states. No wonder that great Beethoven, trusting and honest soul, who originally dedicated his Third symphony (Eroica) to Napoleon, later cancelled his dedication with utmost disgust. Yet Bonaparte was still claiming he was walkin in the steps of the Grand Revolution.

As Napoleon's power was increasing, so was his ego. And of course, he started to do political mistakes, yes, big mistakes. One of them was kidnapping and execution of Bourbon Prince *Duke d'Enghien*. Next error was starting of infamous *Continental System* and barring other countries to trade with England. After his *armada* of ships was beaten at Trafalgar - his side lost twenty ships, while English didn't lose any - it became obvious that *he can and he should* be beaten. The *First Alliance* against him was created in very same year. What followed was another war, which he easily won, because they made more mistakes than he did. He signed peace treaty with tsar Alexander whom he admired and trusted, rather foolishly as a matter of fact. Needless to say, he then became the master - or shall we say *virtual* master - of Europe.

That was not enough for him however: he decided to occupy Spain and make his brother Joseph the king of Spain. That was of coarse another mistake: proud Spaniards could not stand the occupation of their country and Madrid raised in arms. As could be expected, British troops were only happy to step in and Boney got himself two enemies for the price of one. Lead by Arthur Wellesley, later *Duke of Wellington*, Brits were highly

successful in beating French. Napoleon made a short trip to Spain, but didn't stay too long and gave the reigns back to his less competent brother.

In the meantime, Bonaparte got busy somewhere else: Austrian Emperor declared war against France, quite prematurely if I may say so, because pretty soon Napoleon occupied Vienna and forced his peace conditions on Austrians again. Also, Still foolishly believing that Habsburg aristocracy - then the oldest ruling clan in Europe - can sincerely accept him as equal with his common origin and rather dubious methods, he married Maria Louise of Austria, the niece of Maria Antoinette. French people didn't like neither of them and their feelings were of course reciprocated.

Things didn't go too well in Spain. Joseph Bonaparte was trying to stop both British and Spanish guerilla fighters, and he permanently kept 300 thousand French soldiers in Spain. Still, it didn't work: Wellington scored victory at Salamanca and entered Madrid. He even defeated French again at Toulon, France, the place of Napoleon's first victory.

Meanwhile, Napoleon had total of million soldiers, but half of them was tied elsewhere. He gathered the other half, called it *Grande Armée* and attacked Russia. Only half of his soldiers were French, but they were still equal in numbers to Russians and under normal conditions were strong enough to beat them. That is if Napoleon would fully use his military skills as well as what we call "common sense". Having learned nothing from guerilla warfare in Spain however, he stubbornly believed in big battles which - according to him - should be enough to guarantee his victory. Well, he didn't get his battles, at least not when and where he expected them. Russians knew better: they avoided any major conflict and waited for their popular "general Winter" to take over. In that direction, Napoleon was unwittingly on their side - he always stopped and waited, then rushed his soldiers to exhaustion, and stopped and waited again. To his surprise, nobody ever came to surrender.

This way he wasted whole summer and when he finally got his battle at Smolensk, his losses there were even greater than those of Russians. Then it all went downhill: he lost most of his horses, which in turn converted his cavalry into rather inefficient infantry. Because of bad Russian roads, he was losing the wagons with supplies and soldiers started to die of hunger. First died the young, untrained soldiers, who couldn't stand as much as veterans. Soon his losses counted hundred thousand soldiers, by death and desertion. And it was getting worse. Nevertheless, he almost won at Borodino in spite of his rather far fetched battle orders, but again: his losses were enormous. And before he knew it, he was left with mere hundred thousand soldiers, the number quite inferior to

Russian strength.

Finally, he reached his target - or at least what assumed to be the target - Moscow, but it was deserted and ungrateful Russians even came back at night and set it in fire. He waited there undecided, wasting the time he should have saved for his trip back home. Still, nobody came to surrender. It took him whole five weeks to realize they would not negotiate. When it finally dawned at him - it was in the middle of October - he started the *grand retreat* of his now *not so grand* army. Soon he lost the rest of horses and for a while, his cannons were pushed by exhausted artillery men and eventually abandoned.. Without cavalry and artillery, French retreat turned into complete disaster: they were attacked by Russian *partisans* and *cossacks* everywhere. Boney then abandoned his wounded men at hands of Russians, who killed them without mercy. In Egypt, he once let his prisoners to be killed by bayonets in order to save cartridges, as the rumor goes. In Russia, Bonaparte even sacrificed his own soldiers: he blew behind him the bridge across river *Berezina*, thus leaving 30 thousand of them in hands of vengeful Russians.

Again, like in Egypt, he simply run away to smooth the things in Paris. Well, he did it again and he succeeded - in spite of the fact that out of half a million soldiers, only *few thousand* of them returned. In his *Bulletin No. 29*, he admitted the destruction of his army, nevertheless he also reported that his health was "*better then ever*". Again, he got away with it and there were still more people to be killed . . .

(conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE OLD HEROD **(Conclusion)**

Finally, the court was in session and witnesses were called. Nothing particular except for the last one. He was a local farmer, who testified that he saw Bruno in his fields, close to the barn in question. That amounted to little, since the chap couldn't remember the exact day he saw him.

Stolen knife was probably the only evidence except for the fact that Herod had no knife wound. They couldn't link Bruno to Herod's gun either, so all of it amounted to very little. As it was expected, the crowbar they found in Bruno's room was not even brought to court attention, so ridiculous it was.

With no particular motive and no substantial material evidence, state attorney tried to bring up some probability that Bruno might have been Herod's illegitimate son. He could not however build-up any motive from that either. True, Bruno had no alibi, but without

other things it amounted to very little. No wonder the case was then dismissed.

People in our town were not surprised. There was no point to carry the case any further: nobody liked Herod and general opinion was that he probably deserved it. Who would miss him, anyway? There were other things to worry about, more important things.

Well, not for me. Not that I missed Herod, but I just believed that justice should be done. I was also curious to see Phil's reactions so I went to visit him. He was sitting on his porch, drinking beer. He seemed to be deeply submerged in his thoughts, but he didn't look upset nor satisfied. He offered me beer and I sat down next to him, but I didn't know how to start.

Finally I uncorked my first question: "Aren't you happy it's all over?"

"Oh sure," he said, "I am very happy". He didn't mean it and wasn't trying to hide it.

"But you do have your doubts," I continued my questioning.

"About what?" he asked and looked at his bottle like it was the most important thing around.

"Well, if you didn't like it, why didn't you stop the whole comedy before it went to court? You knew he would not be sentenced anyway!"

"I could have stopped it, but it would probably cost me my job. And they would carry on anyway. Besides, it's all over now, thanks God."

I felt he was hiding something and so I carried on: "Don't tell me you are satisfied that the murderer is running around free and loose?"

"How do you know he is running loose?" he asked. "Oh, come on, how about that anonymous caller who knew where the pictures were hidden? He must have known at least something!"

He started to answer, but suddenly the car stopped in front of his house and the detective from the insurance company jumped out and headed toward us. "May I talk to you?" he addressed Phil.

"Sure," said my friend and I was ready to leave when Boucheron stopped me: "You better come in with me, I need you as a witness!" So we stepped in and Phil offered us whisky, Jack Daniels that is. When we sat down, detective took some envelope from his pocket and handed it to Phil. He opened it, pulled out the paper that was inside and read it. Then he carefully folded it again and inserted it back into the envelope. His face looked serious when he asked: "Have you seen the content?"

"But of course, " Boucheron admitted, " I have found it inside the package with those

paintings and it wasn't sealed - I thought it might be the list of pictures or something like that."

"Have you told anybody about it?" asked my friend.

"Not a soul," answered the detective with rather strange smile.

My curiosity betrayed me. "What is it?" I asked Phil.

"It is the last will of Herod," explained Phil and wanted to add something, but it was Boucheron, who interrupted him with some gesture and turned to me: "I think that is enough, you may go. All I needed was that you witness my forwarding of that envelope."

"No," said Phil. "He may stay, I *want* him to stay."

"As you wish," Boucheron shook his head, "but I have something to say and it is for your ears only."

"I have no secrets before my friend," said Phil and it bothered me: he never called me his friend before. "Please tell me what you have to say."

"O.K." Boucheron continued, "as you saw from the will, he made you his sole inheritor."

"Yes - and that bothers you?" laughed Phil. "Are you suspecting me of murdering him? Why would I need to kill him then? It would be just question of time and I could certainly wait *that* long."

"I am not suspecting you of anything, Sir," retorted detective. "The will is handwritten and is bearing only Herod's signature, but it is O.K. But have you noticed the first sentence, which was crossed out?"

"Yes," said Phil, "but I couldn't really read it, it was crossed out with many lines."

"Well, I used magnifying glass and it says: 'As I am going to kill myself...' and then continues 'being of sound mind, etc. etc. Apparently it started as an suicide note and then he decided to make it his official will."

"So?" asked Phil.

"Did he kill himself or not?"

"How am I supposed to know?" smiled Phil.

"I think you know," insisted Boucheron. "Otherwise you would have asked 'How could he kill himself and then hide the gun?' I think you know, you bloody well know. Yes, because you were the one who called me about those pictures - I recognized your voice!"

"Is that all?" laughed Phil. "You must have been mistaken. After all I have got an alibi."

"You call that alibi? That broken watch? I suspected from very beginning that it was just a plant. There is nothing easier than to set a watch two hours back, drop it on the floor and brake it with your heel."

"You can't prove that either," disagreed Phil.

"But they saw you near the house. Don't you remember the lady who picked you at police line-up?"

"One old confused lady. She was mistaken, that's all," he answered, but he sounded less sure now.

"Putting it all together with that will," continued Boucheron, "it would make a very interesting case, don't you think so? Listen, you better tell me now : was it suicide or not?"

"It was," Phil finally confessed, "I just didn't want it to look that way."

"I thought so," agreed the detective, "your mistake was that you didn't look in the package. Once I got the drift that it was suicide, it all started to make sense. Yes, it was *you* who didn't want it to look like suicide. But why?"

"It's a long story!"

The detective pointed at me: "I believe your friend has plenty of time and so do I. To be honest, I do have to know the whole story, I have a decision to make."

"It happened many years ago. Herod caught my little brother Tommy while he was eating an apple he stole in his orchard. He brought him to our house and threatened my mother he would inform police. My mother was a widow who took care of us, very honest and very proud person. When Herod left, she reproached Tommy for his misdeed and then she realized that Herod's charge could destroy boy's future. The very same evening, she went to see Herod again. There she begged him not to press charges. Old bastard was pleased he saw her crying - she once refused his marriage proposal - and said it was never his intention to accuse Tommy of stealing; he just wanted to humiliate her. My mother returned home with good news, but Tommy was nowhere to find. She picked me at my friend's and we both searched everywhere. Then they found him - on railway trucks; he jumped under the nine o'clock train."

"My mother blamed herself for his death," Phil continued, "but we both knew it was Herod's fault. To protect Tommy's memory, we never told anybody the truth so his death was considered an accident. My mother, who never stopped blaming herself, died two years later. At her deathbed, I swore I will kill old Herod. However, she begged me not to and i didn't. I had plenty of opportunity, believe me, but I didn't. No Sir.

The evening Herod killed himself, I was on my rounds in the vicinity of his house. I heard the shot, rushed inside and found him sitting at his table, shot in head. In front of him, there was his gun and suicide note. I have read it and was shocked: he really killed himself because of his bad conscience. He mentioned my mother, Tommy and his guilt. In his twisted mind, he thought his death would make it all right. Somehow I felt he didn't deserve to die by his own hand. I felt cheated - human justice required him to be executed, to be killed. And then I got that silly idea."

"I took the note and his gun and put them in my pocket. Then I realized that it would look strange if he was "murdered" and nothing was stolen. So I took the package with paintings and decided to hide it somewhere. They would find it later, but that was all right with me - I didn't want his paintings anyway. It also occurred to me that they would be looking for murderer and I might be a suspect. So I arranged the alibi with the broken watch - to suggest his death occurred two hours before, when was still at police station. I took off in my police cruiser and drove out of town, where I disposed of his gun and hid the package in that barn."

"But why did you call me about those pictures?" asked Boucheron.

"To help the art dealer," admitted Phil. "When he was suspected and it looked very bad for him, it was the only proof he was innocent. Believe me, I did everything to protect the suspects - I didn't want them to be harmed in any way. And they weren't."

"That's the question of opinion, " I interrupted. " Besides, what if they did find Bruno guilty?"

"They wouldn't," he assured me. "And even if they did, I would take that suicide note - I still have it - and anonymously send it to the police station."

"Why didn't you do it anyway?" asked Boucheron.

"I just waited if it was ever needed. It would put me in jeopardy, too."

The detective was quiet for a while and then he said: "Well, the last will and even that crossed out sentence is really genuine, I got it independently checked. They could never prove you killed him. But they can still charge you for obstructing justice, destroying the evidence and what not."

"And making many people suffer," I added.

To my surprise, Boucheron disagreed. "I don't think so. My company is actually happy we got those pictures back, he saved them a lot of money. Are you going to claim the inheritance?" he turned back to Phil.

He smiled: "I already had to answer that question to myself the evening I saw him dead: the suicide note also stated he chose me a sole inheritor. It was meant as an compensation for his sins, he wrote and he also asked for my forgiveness. It went without saying that by accepting his money I would be forgiving him. I then remembered my mother and Tommy, and I said to myself: "To hell with his money and to hell with Herod!"

"Very noble gesture," said Boucheron and there was no irony in his voice. "Very few people would refuse so much money. Our insurance company may gain even more if there is no will. Art dealer got his pictures, now of higher value and he already made good money from other pictures of "murdered" painter - actually much more than if it was just suicide. Other guys were never charged and Bruno is again free and happy. And your town has now more tourists than ever before. No, I don't think you did any great

harm to anybody except yourself. Now tell me: have you achieved anything particular with all that cover-up?"

"Not really," admitted Phil. "Soon I realized how silly I was. Besides, I went through a lot of fear, not for myself, but for suspects. What's more: it actually helped Herod too: he was even buried in consecrated soil which normally not allowed for suicides. But I didn't have a choice. I couldn't accept his money and even more, I would have to explain *what* harm he did and *why* my brother killed himself. But what I am to do now?"

Knowing that the question was addressed to him, the detective said: "It's entirely up to you. As far as I am concerned, I only gave you one unopened envelope. I never told anybody there was any envelope. If you choose to destroy the will, I suppose we never had this discussion either - that is if your friend here is willing to forget it as well." I looked at Phil: I could see the very same question in his eyes. So nodded my head and Boucheron carried on: "If you do, you may lose a bundle of money, but that it is not my concern. If you decide to make it public, it is your privilege too, but frankly, I do not see any reason. After all, there are worse things in this world than one unsolved suicide . . ."

[Back to index](#)

BITS: HALO AROUND HAL

Our friend *Jeff Harrow*, whom I interviewed in Issue 9/98 of *Hurontaria* and who writes *WEB* magazine **RCFoC** (the address is on our Title Page), is describing in its last issue a new supercomputer **HAL**, the fastest computer ever. By the way, you may remember that there was already one HAL, in the movie "2001 - A Space Odyssey" and you may even remember the rumour that its name was derived from IBM (if you shift every letter in IBM one position down).

New *HAL -4rWI Hypercomputer* apparently can perform around 13 trillion of operations (that's tera-operations) per second which is ten times the speed of so far fastest computer, the IBM's *Blue Pacific*. Now I am not sure if this is the same Blue which already won the game with one famous chess-master, but we are certainly talking about heavy artillery here.

There is more: *HAL* has 280 chips FPGA's (Field Programmable Gate Arrays). Now that's something I know a little bit about. In 1983, I did some design using similar devices developed by Signetics, then one year old invention. We didn't have 10 billion circuits, as *HAL* has, not even thousands, but the idea was the same: we used so called *virgin chip*, which could be then programmed many different ways. And what was more important, you could program practically any non-sequential logic. Then sequential chips arrived and later again, with analog circuits. The whole new world of design opened to

us. Once you programmed it, you could erase it by ultraviolet light and reprogram it. So there is now another novelty with *HAL*: its chips are not only re-programmable on power but also *by themselves*, whatever that means!

Which is actually one step closer to the way our brain operates: contrary to computers, our neurons perform its logic *and* data storage in the very same cell. And of course, it can learn and optimize itself. Well, the original von Neumann's machine is still around, but FPGA computer is quite a different ball-game, as I can guess. It is not only faster, but also more efficient than our old systems: it can *optimize* itself!

As I remember, we also used FPGA's for *parallel computing*. How? Let me first recapitulate the way our PC computer works. To execute simple command operation **a AND b**, quite a number operations have to be performed: store A, store B, run compiled program for logic functions, pick A, pick B, run command (x AND y), then store result - and all that in precious synchronized clocked operation. During this process, it can be stopped by priority interrupts or by some other tasks. Do you want another operation, say **c AND d**? Then you have to wait until the first operation ends, because this is a *serial* operation only.

On the contrary, if you *wire* two AND gates - one to A, B inputs, the other to B, C inputs - you get both results almost immediately, that is in a fraction of microsecond, of course each on its own output. What we are talking here is very simplified principle of *parallel* computing. Substitute the word "*wire*" with "*program*" and you are talking about something very handy and very fast as well.

It is most likely that our brains work like that. How else could those two billion of neurons in our brain be able to handle more information than average disk drive with thousand times larger capacity? We should really use new unit of comparison: forget the clock generator speed in our PC which has to perform hundreds of operations to get simple output. Let's go to the core of problem: how much of *processed information per second*? What is the *speed of the throughput*? How much powerful our computer really is? How optimized it is for the particular problem we are solving? How much garbage our programs probably carry to beef-up the needed few kilobytes into wasteful megabytes?

Yes, we are talking here about the real *quantum leap*. Until now, we were just building faster-clocked computers, to overcome their functional slowness. Let's do something better, let's make them *functionally* faster. After all, why should we buy faster cars when they are slowed down by sluggish traffic cops?

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*I have a confession to make: quite recently, I was asked by **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague to write some accompanying text for their exhibitions of art. Every month, one of best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art and I was told they would appreciate my input. Of course I liked the idea - I always like to do something different.*

*So I wrote two **short essays**, that is for February and March exhibitions and sent them to the Art Gallery. They liked it, so I figured you might like them too (the first one was too late for February issue of Hurontaria - so I included it in this one). Of course, to get the whole idea you should **see the Gallery and individual pictures** as well and there is the appropriate Web address at the end of each essay. The engravings are of three sizes: the icon, medium and large size (when you click on medium size). In following essays I am describing the impressions I got when I was looking at those beautiful pictures. And let me give you one hint: the words in each essay, marked in italics, are the names of those pictures, too . . .*

THE PILGRIMAGE (The world of Jindøich Pileèek)

 Imagine the place big enough you can squeeze all your dreams in and still have plenty of space left, place large like a galaxy and yet small like the embrace of a loving woman. And while you are there, try to see it through the eyes of an artist who is your travelling companion. Come aboard of his boat, which is driven by the most powerful force of them all: the longing. . .

Just look around: you can see birds heading to the sunset, some faraway island, the castle below and the girl *flying* high above and looking for the distant land. See the empty boat with the *mermaid* carved in its bow, the symbol of safe voyage. Symbolism? Yes, but isn't it the stuff the dreams are made of?

Look into the *window*, where everything is upside down yet brighter than all the real world which surrounds it. And you suddenly have to wonder: maybe that our dreams are the snapshots of the genuine, actual existence, while all that what we call "life" is just one bad dream? Isn't all what is around us rather upside down, reversed, distorted? After all, ours is the small world, like the one we can see in the the center of *night sunflower*. No wonder we long for something different, something better. We yearn to *set a sail* and take-off with the first tide. Where to? How about that faraway island, full of *atolls*, the confederacy of lagoons, those little seas surrounded by one big coral sea? After all, they

say that every man is an island, don't they?

Or maybe you want to go to the never-never land, the midnight kingdom, with the sun like a glowing *balloon*, the world of several levels when one can reincarnate into another being, the better one? Is there such place, the land of ultimate happiness? Probably not. We know it and the artist knows it too. Still, the joy of dreaming, the joy of travelling is sometimes greater than the joy of getting there. Well, as far as somebody keeps the watchful *eye* on us, as far as we know we are never alone. But then again, where is our God - it he also dreamt of?

Yes, our dreams. Why is there always something which prevents us from living them through? Like the armored knight on the picture who is barring the girl from giving the flowers - her beauty - to her loved one. But wait, look at the girl's face! See her determination - no, she is not going to throw it all away. She is not afraid of the knight - after all, his armor may be as hollow as the one of the *knight of autumn* on another picture - who is just a fistful of dry leaves, dancing in the wind. And again, notice the ship waiting in the harbor, the promise of magnificent escape, of the infinite journey.

Maybe what's stopping us is just our bad fate, the whims of our *Miss Fortune*. She is no generous Lady Luck, no Sir, she is more like a spinster and when she rolls her dice, the odds are always against you. There is no smile in her face either - she looks more like Miss Misfortune. You want to know your future? Ask the *fortuneteller*, but believe me, she is lying, too.

No, the truth is somewhere else - maybe in the *mirror*, where the world always looks nice, sunny and beautiful. But beware: see the shade crossing your path. It does not look real - it's more like a shadow of something which does not exist, which simply isn't. Maybe our life is just a mirage, after all.

Torn between those two worlds, which are drifting apart like the walls of some canyon with bottomless *depth* beneath, we are hopelessly trying to find some *balance*. Then comes the redemption: man, the *weight lifter*, just have to carry his whole world alone, like immortal Atlas, who was punished by Greek gods for his revolt against them. Still, if I remember correctly, Atlas carries on his shoulder both the Earth and the Heavens as well, the land where we live and the land of our dreams . . .

February 1999, see the pictures at:

http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/1999_02/Ramec.html

**THE DAY PEOPLE SAW THE COMET.
(The revelations of artist Jan Hísek).**

One day, the light appeared on the sky, brighter than any star, shining through black darkness of the night, *the illumination of upper regions* of realm. And while some people talked about coming wars, disasters and hunger, only few realized it was the fulfillment of the old prophecies, the promise of peace and tranquility, *the daybreak of wonders*. It was announcing *the coming of the Lamb*, the son of God, the Saviour of the world.

There weren't *three sisters*, three fates at His cradle, but three kings from East who, lead by the light in the sky, travelled all the way to Bethlehem, to see Him and kneel before Him since it was revealed to them He was the "King of kings". He called himself modestly just "Son of Man" since He knew He came to this world with one purpose only: to die for his fellow men, to give them the supreme *sacrifice*, his own life.

And he was not only Son of Man, he also lived like one. *The christening of Christ* by John Baptist was the indication that Jesus took on Himself all the sins of mankind. He then spent forty days in *solitude*, in deep meditation and *prayer*. After that, He went on preaching and people came and listened to Him. He told them all about his kingdom - which was not from this world, as he said. He called Himself "the good Shepherd" and soon there was many of his followers. They realized that all he said made perfect sense: man should not cause any harm to his fellow men, since they were all children of God, they were all brothers and sisters. And in order to be forgiven, one has to forgive first.

He loved them all, *innocents* and sinners as well. He knew their sins were only weaknesses, that deep down they can be as good and innocent as children. He showed them there is a way to salvation through regret and repentance of their sins. He taught them about brotherly love and that people do not need to be like the ships, passing each other in the night, but they should be *meeting at sea* instead.

While many people were enlightened, the others hated him and even conspired against him. On his Last Supper, he gave people the *celebration* of the Holy Mass, the reminder that he might leave this Earth, but that he would never leave them. Still, He was betrayed, humiliated, judged and sentenced to terrible death. He died in pain, like people do, probably the most painful death of them all. Then, resurrected and on his *way to the sky*, he left with them his last message: "I am the Hope, I am the Way."

For many people, his sacrifice was lost - they never saw the light. Others tried to live the way he preached, but were not strong enough and failed. However, there were also many who succeeded and many more are trying today because they believe that He is the Way, the only way. . .

March 1999, see the pictures at: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/Ramec.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA -

4A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsìèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

Our dog Tara is chasing school-busses, those colored yellow all over - never mind it is the color of quarantine on high seas - and full of children. Children who apparently are not too happy, even if the transportation is free of charge. Whenever I take Tara for a walk (or more accurately: whenever she takes *me* for a walk), she barks at those busses like crazy. The driver of one bus, probably frustrated, stopped the vehicle, open the window and asked me, rather ironically: "Your dog apparently does not like busses, does she?"

"Oh no," I replied, she just hate school, that's all!" And believe it or not, it made him laugh and all those unhappy kids in the bus were laughing with him.

Do not miss the interview with **professor Reinis** in this issue. For those who speak Czech, we also recommend his page <http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sreinis/short.html> And something else: during the second quarter of this year, Czech publishing house *Faun* (in Prague 1, Spanelska 6, Czech Republic) will release his book of essays *Dve vety znudene jeptisky*. He claims it is his first non-scientific book and knowing his writing skills and sense of humor, I am quite sure we will enjoy it tremendously.

As I mentioned in last issue of Hurontaria, I was asked by Czech Art Gallery **ArtForum** in Prague to write some accompanying texts for their exhibitions of art. For April exhibition, I called it *REFLECTIONS* (Marian Karel, The Geometry of Mirages) and you find it in this issue's Inclinations. Professor Karel exhibits his art all around the world and do not forget to take a look at his art - the address of ArtForum Web page is here, too.

Another free software: For those, who get our Hurontaria by e-mail - and also for those, who prefer to download the issue quickly from net and read it later at leisure (and off net) - we can recommend off-line browser *Allegro3*. It is fast, it displays pictures and plays the sound, you can print, copy, search and even flip through various saved Web

pages. And another good thing: Allegro3 is free. It is not working with net, but it was not meant to. Even after unzipping, it is small enough to squeeze on one (and I mean *one!*) floppy disk. It does not have "national" fonts (you can read only English or Czech ASCII version of Hurontaria). It is from *Jans Freeware Collection* and you can find it here: <http://jans.hypermart.net/jfinternet.htm>

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH Dr. STAN REINIS
Life:	WATER LOO (conclusion)
Short Story:	FRIENDS AND FOES
Bits:	MELISSA ONCE MORE
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Marian Karel)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"600 years ago, it was **politically correct** to declare the Earth is flat."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH Dr. STAN REINIS

Professor Stanislav Reinis, M.D., Ph.D.

sreinis@watarts.uwaterloo.ca

is the professor Emeritus and behavioural neuroscientist from the **University of Waterloo**, Department of Psychology, Ontario, Canada (see his page at <http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sreinis/info.html>). He is the author of the original method of analysis of neuronal assemblies in the CNS (central nervous system). In cooperation with several laboratories around the world, he is working on a general theory of neuronal systems. He wrote two books about human brain, *The Chemistry of Behavior* and *The Development of the Brain*, and one of them received the award **The Book of the Year 1982**. He is also the author of several articles for magazines *Biological Cybernetics*, *Journal of Neuroscience Methods*, *Brain Research*, e.t.c. His recent article for *Neural Network World*, "Some Principles for Decoding Local Neuronal Systems in the Mammalian Central Nervous System" can be found at: <http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sreinis/princ.html> He is also the Visiting Professor at the Third Medical Faculty of **Prague University**.

Dr. Reinis is a sharp commentator on Czech political scene and contributes to Czech newspaper *Novy Domov*, published in Toronto. A collection of short stories "*Stan's Short Stories in Czech*", which may be read at: <http://watarts.uwaterloo.ca/~sreinis/short.html> contains comments and columns (published in Czech) in various Czech journals and newspapers, both in the Czech Republic and in Canada, namely in *Reflex*, *Respekt*, *Lidove Noviny*, *Plzensky denik* and they are sometimes read in *Czech Radio*. In the second quarter of this year, the Publishing House *Faun* (Prague 1, Spanelska St. 6, Czech Republic) will release his book of short essays in Czech, *Dve vety znudene jeptisky*. Our interview was actually written via e-mail, while he was in Prague.

BY EMAIL

From: Stan Reinis

To: Jan Hurych

Subject: Re: Interview for Hurontaria

Date: March 23, 1999

JAN:

*You are talking in your article "**Some principles for decoding local neuronal systems in the mammalian central nervous system**" about the modelling of neuronal systems. To some of us, who are slightly familiar with **neural networks**, it sounds remotely familiar. Could you explain to our readers the difference and how much one category benefits from the advances of the other one ?*

Dr. REINIS:

The field of modelling of artificial neuronal systems is important and useful. It brought many interesting programs mimicking the functioning of the central nervous systems. My approach was different. I recorded activities of a number of nerve cells, in other words, time series of spikes produced by those cells simultaneously, and then, I tried to reconstruct how they interact. In other words, I made an attempt to model neural machinery in a small area of the central nervous system. The most important finding was that in each brain area studied, the cells solved their tasks differently. This approach differs from the works of researchers constructing artificial neural networks because I analyzed the real thing. I believe that this work may help to improve the programming of artificial neural networks.

JAN:

I was quite impressed with the movie "Awakenings" that I decided to read the original book by Dr. Oliver Sacks. One sentence there caught my attention: "We need, in addition to conventional medicine, a medicine of profounder sort, based on profoundest understanding of the organism and of life." As an example of the influence of music, he describes the case of one patient, akinetic on one side and frenetic on the other. Being the professional pianist, at the moment he starts playing, both sides come together in perfect union and his pathological EEG pattern disappears. What is your opinion about this phenomena from neurological point of view and can it be the base of some complementary cure?

Dr. REINIS:

There is no doubt that any human being can control many functions of his/her body, even after a short training. This is actually a growing trend in medicine. You could help to heal or improve your pathological state, or even to find your own cure of a disease. Try this: It is easy to control one's blood flow through a certain area of the body. Just imagine that you put your hand into fire, and in a while, you may feel how warm it gets. No big effort is needed. This is true for many other functions of the body, heart rate, even wound healing, hypertension, and some claim that even cancer can be cured. There are examples in the literature showing how a patient with metastases survived for many years because he simply believed that he had no cancer. People in a positive state of mind respond better to cancer chemotherapy than pessimistic patients. These are no miracles, it is simply brain control over the body. Various natural and faith healers use this approach - treatment by belief - and they have a certain percentage of success. This is because the patients believe them.

JAN:

Some time ago, I saw in Canadian TV one film about a doctor in Montreal, who in the sixties pioneered the method of subliminal suggestions by playing his patients some infinite tape. The messages on that tape were supposed to overwrite the illusions of his patients. The project misfired: there was a substantial reluctance from his patients and subsequent addition of drugs and electric shock treatments didn't help it either, not talking about the alleged research for CIA. All this apart, what is your opinion about subliminal suggestions in general and as a treatment in particular?

Dr. REINISH:

I do not know too much about this. Subliminal suggestions were a big issue about a decade ago, but I do not believe that the success was great. Subliminal suggestions probably do not work. I do not know.

JAN:

Now my favourite subject: the brain. The majority of people have "prevailing" use of the left half of brain, which is the one related to speech, writing, logic and reasoning. On the other hand, the right half, the source of insight, imagination and artistic qualities, is now being discovered to be probably as much important, but not so easily used or to be communicated with. For instance, American corporations are trying to tap inspirational fountains of their employees through all kinds of seminars and methods, by means of so called "whole-brain" thinking, with not too great success however. Still, I think that our science came long way since the case of Phineas Gage, which started the research into localization of certain functions in brain. But how far did we really get? How far are we with developing our ability to influence brain functions by other (say electrical) means, for instance for medical cure? And one really heretic question: will we ever be able to read the other person's thoughts?

Dr. REINIS:

I do not believe that it is possible to read other people's minds directly, at least not now. In fairy tales or in Star Trek, perhaps. The brain function has its objective side which can be studied by electroencephalography, biochemical and pharmacological methods, questioning, etc. It can be measured and quantified. Then, there is the subjective side, not accessible to anybody. It is our private self. I do not foresee any way how to enter this aspect of the brain function directly. We are able to influence it by drugs, lack of thyroid and other hormones, alcohol, hypoxia, brain injury. The mind is definitely part of the brain function. Only when we admit that everything is possible, then somewhere at the

end of our brain research, there might be a narrow gap through which we might, eventually, get into other people's mind. But, why?

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: WATER LOO
(The Importance of Emperor's Piles, conclusion)

"Porvu que cela dure!" (If only it would last!) **Letitia, mother of Napoleon**, when told he was proclaimed the Emperor.

"Merde!" **General of Old Guards, Cambronne**, when asked to surrender at Waterloo.

—

After Napoleon's debacle in Russia, nations of Europe realized he could be defeated after all. It was only a question of time when and where it would be. In 1813, Prussia declared the war, Russia joined her and other allies soon followed. After winning at Lutzen, Bautzen nad Dresden - Napoleon was defeated at Leipzig. In March 1814 allied armies entered Paris and in April, even his Marshals refused to fight for him any more. He "generously" offered he will step down in favour of his son, but was forced to abdicate unconditionally. He was then exiled to the Mediterranean Island of *Elba* and even allowed to keep some 400 soldiers and then rather hollow title of Emperor. France of course had to pay few hundred million francs to allies which money didn't go from Napoleon's private loot, since it was already stolen, again. In September, the Congress of Vienna started to reshape the borders of European states, drastically changed during Napoleonic Wars.

On February 26, 1815, while the congress of Vienna was still in session - the allies couldn't agree how to slice it - Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France. With only few soldiers he took with him he couldn't get too far, but he believed in his capability to swerve people's opinion in his direction. Of course with his proverbial charm and promises, he first won the army. Soon he promulgated new, more "democratic" constitution and the French flocked around him again. He "generously" offered allied powers some kind of mutual peace, but knowing him well enough, they proclaimed him an outlaw and were getting ready to stop him. He was not supposed to

get away with it any more.

Well, it wasn't that easy, but soon enough he started to make mistakes, rather serious ones. Mainly because he got out of touch, made some extremely wrong guessing and even underestimated his enemy - something he had never done before. And the worse, he started to violate his own, "Napoleonic" rules of battle. True, several mistakes could be blamed on his generals, but the major ones were indisputably his own. In the following section, I am trying to number all of them in brackets, without any further explanation (which I believe is not necessary). Notwithstanding the mistakes of allied commanders, which were numerous as well, his were obviously grave enough to bring his defeat. Grave enough to convince us that the famous military "genius" didn't run out of luck, but simply ceased to be "genius" - if he ever was one, which can be doubted as well.

On March 20, Napoleon again ascended French throne. Soon all four allied nations agreed to deliver 150 thousand soldiers each for the invasion of France, but it was obvious they would not be ready in time. Napoleon quickly mobilized and within two months he had an army of 360,000 trained soldiers. He deployed half of these troops within France and took only the rest of them with him (mistake no.1). He was heading North and on June 12, he took Charleroi while the allies still believed he was in Paris. On June 14 he reached the Franco-Belgian border with 124,000 of his troops and gain, another 56,000 men were left behind in secondary or supporting positions (no.2). True, he was threatened by Austrians and Russians at eastern border, but they were not ready yet and he obviously underestimated strength of the armies in Belgium. There he again split his army: he ordered *Marshal Ney* to attack *Wellington's* army (93 thousand strong, but multinational and some of them were only militiamen) located at *Quatre-Bras* and moved with *Marshal Grouchy* and the other half of his army against *Blücher's* Prussians (who were 120 thousand strong). And soon enough, his armies held the strategic advantage between the armies of Wellington and Blücher.

The French met Prussians at *Ligny*. After an hour of fighting, Napoleon realized he is not strong enough and sent an urgent message to *Marshal Ney* ordering him to send his First Corps, 30.000 men, to the battlefield at *Ligny* (no.3). Instead of delivering the order to *Marshal Ney's* headquarters, the courier took it directly to *General Drouet*, the First Corps commander. *Drouet* left immediately for *Ligny*. When *Ney* learned of *Drouet's* departure however, he dispatched a reversing message ordering him back to *Quatre-Bras*. So back he went again, with the result that while both battles were fought he could not participate in either. So when Napoleon defeated *Blücher's* army, he could not mount the pursuit and 70,000 Prussians were able to retreat in good order (no.4). On the other side, without *Drouet*, *Ney* could not cause too much damage to English army either and after *Wellington's* counter-attack, he even retreated south of *Quatre-Bras*.

After learning about Blücher's defeat - apparently when he was still dancing in Brussels - Duke of Wellington gave his army immediate order to retreat back while leaving some units behind, in order to confuse his enemy. He also sent the message to Blücher (then only 10 miles away) to join him at *Mont Saint-Jean*, near Waterloo. Not knowing about that, Napoleon ordered Grouchy and his 30,000 troops to pursue Blücher to Namur (no.5) and at the same time sent message to Ney to attack Wellington (no.6). Ney obviously hesitated (no 7.) and when Napoleon arrived, it was too late: Wellington retreated without Ney even noticing it. When Napoleon realized he was fooled, he moved on (no.8) and soon, near Mont Saint-Jean he could see the English, setting for a battle. Grouchy, who couldn't find Prussians since they meanwhile turned northwest, eventually learned what happened and sent a dispatch about it to Napoleon. His courier came back with Napoleon's order to carry on pursuit (no.9). At that time Grouchy was of course far behind Prussians, which could have been expected by Napoleon anyway (no.10).

Next day - it was Sunday, June 18 - Anglo-Dutch forces (67, 000 total with 156 cannons) finally faced Napoleon (with 74,000 soldiers and 246 cannons) and the battle was imminent. Napoleon apparently didn't know Blücher gave Wellington assurances that his 70,000 strong army would arrive during the same day. Bonaparte's brother Prince Jerome however told him he got an information that Wellington and Blücher were supposed to meet at Soignes, but Napoleon rejected it as a nonsense (no.11).

Wellington placed his defence line on both sides of the main road to *Brussels*, with two strategically located and fortified farmhouses (*Hougoumont* and *La Haie-Sainte*). This position was later considered by some historians a very bad choice since there was a dense forest behind the line - all in all not too good place for organized retreat. I believe the choice was actually very convenient, all things considered, including the fact Wellington studied the location personally some time before, apparently while studying Napoleon's tactics. The French had to mount their attack uphill, through the muddy (it was raining during the night) valley which Napoleon could not even oversee from his observation post at *La Belle Alliance* (no.12). Duke then located only small part of his army on top of ridge, the rest being hidden behind it, well protected from cannon fire. Even more so, since he also ordered soldiers to lay down during French cannonade, he minimized his losses. Of course, should Napoleon succeeded to capture the road to Brussels, the situation would become really dangerous. But as they say, "after the battle everybody knows best". Contrary to his "military maxima", Napoleon the attacker didn't choose the place for the battle himself (no.13).

Even before battle, Marshal Soult asked Napoleon to bring Grouchy back. Napoleon laughed at him, saying something in sense that Soult is afraid of Wellington since he was

beaten by him in Spain. It was rather ignorant statement from the man who never fought Wellington before.

For no apparent reason, Napoleon waited with his attack until lunchtime (no.14). Some speculate he waited for ground to dry in order to be able to get his cannons in their posts, but it is more likely that he waited for message from Grouchy confirming that he engaged Prussians elsewhere and the danger of them joining Wellington was not imminent. At 1PM, he saw the approaching Prussian army on his right at *Plancenoit*, but he claimed those were French troops and again, hoping that Grouchy was somewhere near, he sent him a dispatch to attack Prussians. With his numbers less than half of Prussian strength, Grouchy couldn't have done much more than to hold them long enough so they could not join the main battle, and even that is dubious since he was the best commander for that job. Of course Grouchy was not nowhere near (still about 15 miles away) and Napoleon knew or should suspect that much (no.15).

The battle started with French cannonade answered by British artillery. The French then mounted diversionary attack on Hougoumont, lead by Prince Jerome. He apparently wanted to make himself useful and turned it into the battle of its own, thus engaging large number of French soldiers who were needed elsewhere. What followed was a series of French frontal attacks on Wellington's main line of defense, first by infantry - *without cavalry support*(no.16), then several more by cavalry - *without infantry support*(no.17). Why it was done such stupid way is hard to guess - it was Ney who mounted those attacks. Maybe he couldn't muster enough support, maybe he was not familiar with commanders - he joined the troops only two days before the battle - and every time he mounted attack he was stopped and even driven back. It is interesting that while his cavalry overrun British cannons twelve times, they never stopped to spike them, so Wellington was able to use them against the them again and again (no.18).

At 4PM Prussians attacked the French from flank and tipped the scales. It must have been obvious to Napoleon that the battle was lost. But now he did what he knew best: he lied . He proclaimed that the troops on their right are not Prussians but actually those of Grouchy. Desperately, he still wanted to open the road to Brussels hoping to break British defence (no.19). Having his cavalry destroyed thanks to Ney's attacks, he drove into battle his Old Guard, the best and only remaining force he had. Originally, he wanted to lead them, but he let himself be "convinced" by his generals otherwise (no.20). Prince Jerome believed Napoleon wanted to seek his death there, but he obviously didn't know his brother that well. The time Bonaparte personally lead his attacks were long time gone.

His presence could have probably make a difference: allied troops were thinned and tired - that's why the battle was later considered "a near run". But it is also possible that it was

too late anyway. Not seeing the real strength of Wellington (no.21), whose troops were hidden behind the ridge, and claiming that Grouchy already came to their help (no. 22), he drove Old Guards uselessly to their slaughter. When the rows of hidden British soldiers raised like ghosts in front of Old Guards, the volleys from their muskets cut those old veterans down and some were so shocked they did not even put up any fight. Seeing that they cannot even climb over the piles of dead comrades from previous attacks, the rest of them run. At 8PM Prussians defeated Napoleon's right wing and created panic among French troops everywhere. The battle was soon over and Napoleon himself barely escaped, something he always did very well.

During French flight, the cries of "treason" were heard everywhere, but for long time nobody knew who was the real traitor. Napoleon at last stooped so low he betrayed his own soldiers, those who got him to power and whom he claimed he loved most. It is rather unthinkable, that Napoleon would mistake Prussians attacking his own troops for French soldiers. And even if his eyes could fool him - there was a smoke all over the valley - he knew pretty well he still didn't have any news from Grouchy and he knew he *could not possibly come* to his help in time. There was no justification for that lie. It was the last desperate effort of desperate Emperor, who till the end believed in his proverbial luck more than anything else.

This time, the French were driven south and pursued till the very night, all the way through the village *La Belle-Alliance* Marshal Blücher suggested it to Duke as the "symbolic" name for the battle, but Wellington refused, apparently thinking it would somehow diminish his own involvement). Next morning, the rising sun saw the valley littered by bodies. The losses were 40 thousand French and 23 thousand of allied soldiers. Ironically, Napoleon himself once said that commander is worth 40 thousand soldiers . . .

In his later reminiscences, Napoleon criticized Grouchy for his failure to intercept the Prussians, Ney for his failure to attack Wellington at Quatre-Bras and to prevent his withdrawal there. He also held against him that he ordered Drouet's corps to turn back and depriving Napoleon of the chance to destroy Blücher's army. He blamed everybody, even his bad luck, but hardly ever himself. This was just an indecent attempt to shift his blame elsewhere. He never gave credit to British bravery, Blücher's military skills or Wellington's strategy. On the contrary, as a sore loser, he had in his memoirs only criticism for Duke and the way he had lead the battle. As I tried to show here, Napoleon's mistakes already started when he took substantially small army north and left his reserves far behind, thus underestimating his enemy resistance. It was he who sent Grouchy on his wild goose chase. Also, he never paid any attention to defeats, namely those in Spain - he might have learned something there. The allies, on the contrary,

learned a lot and then proved it to him..

So what were the reasons for his blunders? The pain of his imperial piles? Maybe, but how could they influence his thinking? The lack of information? Well, his spies may have failed him, but it was he who lost the touch with reality, probably because of the easy way he gained back his army and power. He became overconfident and started to underestimate his enemy. His choice of commanders - those who handled the battles while he was attending to his painful piles - was pretty bad on its own: freshly promoted and inexperienced Grouchy and experienced but confused Ney. He had no shortage of better generals. What caused then his sudden vacillations, his over-confidence mixed with hesitations and lack of decision? Well, we may never know and it does not particularly matter any more anyway.

Or can we assume that he knew from the very beginning he couldn't make it? Did he realize that he was a different man then? Was he tired of fighting? No, none of the above. Maybe he knew the overall odds were against him, but he was never giving up and he would never admit to himself he wasn't good any more. Was he a victim of some plot? Well, in one novel about Waterloo, its author suggests that allies lured Napoleon into his escape from Elba, in order to unify the slowly disintegrating accord of the Congress in Vienna. But it would have been rather risky enterprise, rather a hazard, if you ask me. Then we have here also the puzzling behaviour of Marshal Ney, who earlier promised French king he would bring Napoleon back in chains or die - and then treacherously joined his Emperor, for which double-cross he was later sentenced and shot. His orders during the battle were unexplainable on their own. Not to mention the plotting of Napoleon's ministers Talleyrand and Fouché, who originally didn't want him to be sent to Elba, but much further away (Talleyrand suggested St. Helena, Fouché even as far as America).

On the 3rd of July 1815, Napoleon tried to sneak away via port Rochefort-sur-mer, trying to escape - you guessed it - to America. It didn't work and he gave himself up to the English, knowing that the French would shoot him at spot. He was then sent on his one-way trip to St. Helena, to start his new career as a writer of his Memoires, or shall we say his military fiction, that is describing what he could have done if he wouldn't have done what he did. It was so good that it convinced many readers he was a "genius", something he had an honour to be the first to discover and never ever doubted. On May 21, 1821 Napoleon died, apparently from stomach cancer. At least that was believed until it was later discovered that his hair had high content of arsenic. Poisoned, maybe, but by whom? "Obviously by the English", claimed the French. "Obviously by the French", claimed the English - and it seems likely since he was more immediate danger to French king than to anybody else. More recently, somebody discovered high content of arsenic in some wallpaper, apparently from the house he lived there. So the culprit is now the

wallpaper paint or glue, or could it be that he did it himself? After all, he made one such attempt after his abdication before he was sent to Elba. Again, I think he didn't do it, it was against his character. But what does it matter, anyway? All in all, he died at least fifteen years too late. Too late for those who died during that time.

But let's not forget he was really admired, mostly by French people and even now there is a lot of Napoleon's admirers in France. I guess it is not because of his aggressive lust for domination of European nations - Frenchmen are *not* oppressors by nature. Instead - and maybe as an excuse only - they believe he greatly contributed to the glory of France. Well, if glory grows on cemeteries, he fertilized it all right. But the real glory of France can be seen only in ideas of French revolution, the ideas he suppressed as much as any other ruler of his time. After Waterloo, France turned to kingdom and later, for a while, even to Second Empire again. It tells something about the nature of French people that they happily returned back to their republic and to the ideas of Great Revolution - the best thing they ever gave to the rest of the world.

The fall of Napoleon was of course the logical end of all usurpers of power, the same way some revolutions turn later into oppressions and eventually die violent or even natural death. But if you let mother nature to take its course, it may cost a great loss of human lives. During his flight from Elba, Napoleon was stopped at Grenoble by French Royal troops which were sent to arrest him. Their officer gave them the order to fire, but Bonaparte kept walking toward them. He stopped in front of them, opened his famous great coat, pointed to his chest and encouraged them to shoot. None of them did - we all like pathetic gestures I presume. One can only speculate how many lives could have been spared if only one single grenadier would have obeyed his order. Of course Napoleon knew the spell he held on them. And there were few other similar opportunities - even at Waterloo: when artillery officer spotted Napoleon at some distance and asked Wellington if he should give it a try, the answer was: "It is not a business of commanders to fire upon each other!"

You may object I have presented here very few positive features of Napoleon, if any. I believe there was no need: many "good" things were written about him already and even today, there are many of his admirers everywhere around the world. I was not trying to judge him as a person, but only *the myth about him*. Because such admiration can be dangerous on its own and is often the best prescription for a disasters. Just because one fool thinks he is a great person, it does not necessarily make him so. Unfortunately, all he needs is to be able to mystify the crowds and spread few lies. In this century, actually *even more in this century* than in any other time, there was and still is quite a number of those "petit caporals". They can control crowds and they can incite man against man, to hate and to kill each other. Some are only pathetic and feebleminded fools, but some of

them are of Bonaparte's calibre. In 1840, the again-grateful French nation moved his body to La Musée de L'Armée, Paris. At hundred years anniversary of the event, Adolf Hitler let the remains of rather unimportant Napoleon's son (ironically called "Eaglet") moved to Les Invalides, too. After all, Adolf always looked at Bonaparte as a great inspiration - he already had a plan to surpass his deadly statistics. . .

Today, there is a 40 meter high mound at Waterloo and 28 ton cast lion is guarding the place where young Prince of Orange, Wellington's second in command, was injured (by the way, there is no record that Prince was probably shot by major Sharpe, as recent British movie suggests :). There is also monument to fallen Prussian soldiers, with dedication by their king. Bronze imperial eagle indicates another place, the last stand of Old Guards, whose commander spent rest of his life denying his famous not too decent but thoroughly sincere response (it is quoted above and I have to admit it gave me an idea for the title of his essay: Water Loo). So we have to assume that he said his own version instead: "The Old Guards know how to die, but not how to surrender". Come to think of it, one likes to die gloriously, *ne c'est pas?*

One story from Waterloo however touched me deeply, the story of Mrs. Deacon, the wife of one British lieutenant. While she stayed with her children at Quatre Bras, she heard her husband was wounded in the main battle. She spent all night at the battlefield, looking for him, but in vain. Next day, she learned he was taken to town of Waterloo. She walked there through another night - the whole night - with her three children. She struggled through the rain and mud towards Waterloo town and when she finally got there, she found him there alive. Luckily, he was only shot in his arm. Next day, she gave a birth to healthy girl and happy parents named the baby *Waterloo*. . .

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: FRIENDS AND FOES **(mystery)**

I will call them Gino and Arturo. No, naturally those are not their names, actually they didn't have a drop of Italian blood in their veins. They were only close neighbours, or as we use to say "good neighbours" - Gino was a widower and Arturo was divorced. Both seemed to be well adjusted in their postmarital status and none of them wanted to complicate his life with another marriage. While Gino had occasional, less serious affairs, Arturo was more devoted to his hobby.

Actually, that hobby was common to both of them and no wonder that soon they became friends. They regularly visited each other and watched together baseball games on TV while drinking beer. They were both fans of Toronto Blue Jays, but their tastes of beers

were different: Arturo liked *Molson*, Gino preferred *Budweiser*. In winter, they used to go skying to rather remote mountains, since there are only some little hills around Toronto. And it was there where Arturo got his idea: he found a very nice skying resort near Haliburton, the place that was also good for summer vacation. He took a picture and showed it to Gino. It was a beautiful corner of the country with some forest, a lake in the foreground and hills all around - simply the place you must immediately fall in love with.

They went there the very next summer, built the tent and hiked around and even further east. Gino was amazed as well. And one warm evening, Arturo said to Gino: "I think it would be nice to build here a little cottage, don't you think so? The place one can move in for retirement, far from any civilization, to do nothing and to live happily ever after." I have to mention here that Canada is of course very nice country, but you have to have some time to enjoy it. The question is when? We are daily tied in traffic, off to work and back home we drive those long distances, over and over again. And in the evening, we are happy just to stretch our legs in front of television set, open a can of beer and wake up at midnight, by the sound of national anthem blasted from TV.

When people grow old, their thoughts are logically revolving more and more about their retirement. They dream about it like it is some paradise on earth and many of them are so obsessed with the idea they can't think about anything else. Like the one I knew from my work, Ben Ericsson was his name. Half of his lifetime, he was saving money to buy himself a sailing boat - he was a born mariner, like his Viking ancestors - and when he did, he was proudly slicing waves on Ontario lake, all the way to Thousand Islands. On holidays, when he and several other guys got together, they donned captain hats, and in semi-sober mood and six-packs at their feet they steered their boats around Kingston harbour. I mean the one in Ontario, not the one in Jamaica of course.

Ben also repeatedly explained to me why he liked his sailing. "Felix," he said, "there is only one place on this cursed earth you can still live free: the ocean. Our cities already look like prisons, with their gangways of highways and even in the country, you have a hard time to find one road where you don't see the signs "Private Property" on one side and " No Trespassing" on the other. Everything is planned, prefabricated, by order or forbidden. Only here, on my boat, I am my own master, with nobody breathing on my neck."

"Free - you mean free like pirates?" I asked, knowing his answer already. "Sure, like *buccaneers and corsairs*," he anxiously agreed. " They were all members of the real brotherhoods of free men, equal to equal. Do you know what I mean?" Well, I had my doubts, but I kept them for myself.

When his last day at work came, he received the golden wristwatch, we sang that he was

a jolly good fellow and off he went to his long expected retirement. They said he settled somewhere in Florida where he took care of somebody's summer apartment. He sailed all the way down on his yacht, crossing Ontario Lake, via Montreal and around the Eastern coast of United States. On top of his small pension he made some extra money by renting his boat for deep-sea fishing, mostly to snobbish tourists. They usually rented the boat and its captain - that means him - and went fishing for a sword-fish, they call it *merlin* there. Ben put them in special chairs, set the bait and let them play a tug of war with the fish, the same way it is described in Hemingway's book "The Old Man and the Sea". Finally poor merlin - but very often only the line - gave up and the fish was with loud celebration pulled out, photographed with the winner. After paying hefty deposit, it was expected to be stuffed-up by some local expert.

The victorious tourists returned home and impatiently waited the arrival of their artwork. Finally, the large box arrived, containing the whole merlin, which was of course made only of plaster, while painted with vivid colours which looked - well, very natural. And the owners hanged it above their fireplace and were then afraid that some guest of theirs - either from ignorance or deliberately, because he was also tricked the same way - would start scratching the surface of the their trophy.

After many years, when I happened to be on my business trip in *Fort Lauderdale*, I decided to visit Ben, who was supposed to live there. His sun-tanned face made a beautiful contrast with his hair bleached by tropical sun. At first, he didn't recognize me and tried to sell me the special discount on his "perfect fishing trip". As usual, he had a lot of things to tell me: he was living comfortably and what money he lacked because of his slim pension were plentifully provided by unfortunate merlins.

"So you are finally free, old man?" I asked him and could not suppress smile.

"But of course," he said. "This way, Sir and don't forget, we are leaving at six tomorrow morning." The second sentence of course was not for me but rather addressed to the customer, whose luggage he was just carrying to his boat.

At the evening, he took me to local oyster-bar, a little cozy restaurant where we ordered lobsters and *Chablis* wine from California. We were reminiscing about the days he used to "slave" with me for our company and said: "Freedom? There is no such thing. I tell you, Felix, the only free creatures on this earth are those fishes and I am stupid enough to help to catch them!"

Gino was really taken by the idea of their cottage. He arranged the loan from their bank and he even put his own money for downpayment. After half a year, the cottage - or should I say the house, it was that big - was completed and they both started to visit it

regularly, on weekends and during vacation.

Each enjoyed their long-desired freedom his way: while Arturo was fishing on the lake, Gino was painting, the pictures, you know. They were somehow all similar to each other: the lake and pier with a couple of *loons*, viewed from left or right side, sometimes even from the other shore. When criticized, he changed his style and started to paint ducks and Canadian geese, especially while they were taking off in the air. He saw it once in some exhibition and he liked doing it even if the results were far from satisfactory. Every evening, they ate fried fish - Arturo was much better fisherman than Gino was painter - and later they sat in front of TV set, armed with beer cans and watched some baseball game or movies. Mostly the movies from Hollywood, those which always end with some happy-end.

Well, should this story had a happy ending too, it would end right here. Unfortunately, something happened and so there was a continuation. The "naughty" fate changed everything - if I can use the word of little Cathryn, the daughter of my neighbours. I keep telling her that the fate is neither good or bad - it is just us people, who give it those qualities - but i am afraid she does not believe me.

Really, how can we honestly say the death is bad, if it mercifully takes away all human suffering? And why are we celebrating the birth of a baby if we pretty well know that it is the beginning of life with plenty of suffering ahead? If something bad happens to somebody else, we say he was just out of luck, but if it happens to us, then it must be *the fate!* Of course, it looks better if I say: "Something was forcing me to bet on horses" instead of more sincere "I lost everything, because I was stupid". And what's more, we all prefer to yield to "fate" rather than to change ourselves.

Certain Eddie Catrall recently proclaimed in TV that the life is *a series of choices rather than chances*. He used to work for Columbia drug-lords, but he made a *choice* and took his *chances* by cooperating with the FBI. He got new name and lives nobody knows where. His drug-lord however thinks differently: he made his *choice* what he is going to do to Eddie and now is apparently only waiting for his *chance* . . .

Let's go back to my story. Suddenly, one good chance - or if you prefer, a good luck - hit Gino as well. He was offered the job with one company in New Brunswick, somewhere on the Eastern coast of Canada. It was something he dreamt about for very long time, "one in the lifetime" opportunity. It required the exact expertise he possessed and the salary was good, too. Of course he would have to relocate, but they gave him plenty of time to arrange his affairs. O.K., he could sell his house, but what about that cottage he shared with his friend? He decided to go and explain it to Arturo; he was a good friend, he thought, he would understand.

Well, he didn't understand Arturo said he couldn't possibly buy the other half of their cottage from Gino, he had no money. So Gino suggested they both could sell it together and he offered that he could wait while continuing to pay his share of installments for a while - at least until the cottage is sold. But Arturo didn't want to hear about it. He didn't want to sell, he said, and he wanted to keep his half. So Gino started again: Arturo could keep his half and buy Gino's half from him for good price - he would be satisfied if he pays very small installments, without interest of course, surely they could make a deal. Or they could sell it with profit and Arturo could build himself another one, just the size to fit his needs . . . Arturo refused and refused again. And who does he think he is, he asked, to make a deal and then back off and run away? That evening, they parted in bad terms, the first time ever.

Arturo of course didn't tell Gino the whole truth: he was unhappy about losing his friend and took his departure as a betrayal. Some people consider friendship more like a property which belongs to them. And when they lose it, they think they were robbed of their possession. So did Arturo. He was used to Gino and didn't want to lose him. He hoped that by sticking to his guns - which was of course rather naive - he would bring Gino to senses and change his decision.

Have you ever noticed how human feelings sometimes freeze - like a stone thrown in the air at the top of its path - and then start to move in opposite direction? Or that one little impulse can make the pendulum swing in other direction? So can love turn sometimes into hate and your friend into your worst enemy. The impulse like envy, offended pride, jealousy or something else, like if you are more successful than he is.

When Arturo cooled down, he went to see Gino and explained to him his refusal. "That new job," he started, "is not worth to loss our friendship." He had tears in his eyes and he looked like rejected lover - he talked about the trust and treachery. At the end their talk turned back to their cottage, of course. To show a good gesture, he offered Gino for his half rather reasonable - at least what he thought to be reasonable - sum of money. To his surprise, Gino was offended by such ridiculous amount. He reminded him that he had put some extra money down and how can Arturo try to cheat his own friend? Now it was Arturo's turn to get angry. He said he wouldn't talk about it any more and that he did not need to take such despicable behaviour and anyway, he said, he did not want any deal at all and Gino could go and *fly a kite*.

That wasn't of course the end of it. Next month, Gino got letter from their bank, informing him that he forgot to pay his monthly installment which was then overdue, and if he wouldn't pay, etc.etc. Well, I forgot to tell you that the friends made earlier this

deal: since they were both owners and debtors as well, they agreed that Gino would pay the installments every odd, and Arturo every even, month of a year. And it was Arturo's payment which was overdue. Gino came to me - I knew him from our club - terribly upset and he complained and asked me what to do.

"Don't pay," I advised him, "and better talk to Arturo first; maybe he has just forgotten."
"He didn't," Gino answered, "I have already talked to him. He said he did it deliberately."

"So it is quite clear," I explained to him, "he wants you to give him your half of cottage for free. He is betting on your fear of losing it and thinks you rather make a deal with him. He is simply blackmailing you. Don't pay and hold on."

"But so will he and I will lose my cottage to bank - or rather my share," he corrected himself.

"You will probably lose it anyway," I said as a matter of fact. "Such cases are known to happen before."

"No," he decided, "I will find myself a lawyer and I am gonna show that S.O.B.!"

And soon he sent him through his lawyer some letter, in which he asked him - well, you can imagine what. Letters were flying back and forth, but when it looked like even the third installment wouldn't be paid, the bank warned Gino that they will confiscate the cottage. His nerves gave up and he paid the installments, not only his but those of Arturo as well. But to get his money back, he decided to sue him.

Arturo answered in his own way. He installed in his backyard several large speakers, and blasted some heavy metal music in direction of Gino's house. In desperation, Gino called police, but when they came, all was quiet and Arturo wasn't even home. He probably used some remote control or what. It happened twice, and third time police ignored his call completely. Another day the fire started in Gino's backyard. Firemen came, extinguished it and reprimanded Gino for putting some rags soaked in flammable liquid in his garbage can. Of course, he knew who did it.

Come to think of it, we people differ from animals only by our culture and wars. The temptations to create or to destroy are almost equally strong. Mother who brings new life to this world can easily kill anybody in order to protect her own child. And Holy church, who does not allow incurable people to take their own lives, conveniently forgets the commandment "Thou shall not kill!" when it sends young boys to war, where they are expected to do just that, actually *only* that.

And so the war between those two continued. Gino met me again later, when somebody called his future employer in Fredericton, informing him that Gino lied about his job experiences. Informant also said about him, that he did not possess any qualifications he

claimed, that he never worked in places he quoted, never finished his studies and could never keep his job, etc.etc. The company sent Gino letter that they are checking all his references and in the meantime, the offer is put on hold and they will let get back to him later.

Gino was mad like hell and screamed on top of his lungs: "I am going to kill that bastard!"

"No, you will not," I told him, "you wouldn't have that courage. Besides, stop screaming, I do not want to be an accessory to your crime. Mine is the revenge, said Lord, you should read your Bible, Gino."

I took him later to some bar and we got plastered. When we took taxicab and returned home, I was thinking what could I possible do. Needless to say, I couldn't come up with anything smart. I never do when I am too drunk.

Fortunately for Gino, somebody in that company got reasonable and when they realized that the caller just lied, - apparently from some malice - they finally hired him. However, the time they gave him to arrange his affairs was gone and he had to leave the same week. Immensely happy that he got the job, Gino passed his half of cottage to Arturo, free of charge. I guess he knew he could not win anyway, it was either bank or Arturo. Gino left apparently very happy, but I wasn't: every weekend, I had to watch Arturo leaving for his now half-stolen cottage, conceited and extremely satisfied with his victory.

One day, a death notice appeared at the street corner where we have our post-boxes and billboard. It simply stated that Gino died in Fredericton, as a result of his car accident. I went to see Arturo - he was quite arrogant but curious enough to listen what I had to say. So I told him about the call from Gino's doctor who gave me his message for somebody called Arturo. At his death-bed, Gino said something like: "Tell Arturo that I -" but before he could finish the sentence, he died.

Gino's doctor of course didn't know who could that Arturo be, but he found my telephone number in Gino's vallet and thought it would be nice if somebody called Arturo knew that Gino was thinking about him during his last moments. And since I do not know any other Arturo, I said, I figured it must be him and here I am. Arturo was standing there, stunned and for a moment, he looked like - well, like somebody deeply touched.

"And are you sure that was all he said?" he asked me and I shook my head. Even if I knew, I thought, I would never tell him, but to Arturo I said: " It must have been something important I suppose, the doctor said he tried and tried, but could not even finish the sentence."

The phone was ringing and Arturo left for another room , so I waited for few minutes. I also wanted to tell him I hoped it was not some curse, but since he wasn't coming, I went downstairs, through corridor and finally left his house . . .

It was some time later that strange things started to happen with Arturo and people were gossiping about him. When I saw him on the street, I was surprised: his hair turned grey, he lost some of weight and looked rather withdrawn. Later, he was not even leaving for his cottage any more, like he was afraid of something. He didn't go to work any more and stayed home, locked in his house. He swore at kids who came to collect money for some more or less charitable purposes and even threatened to beat them.

Some other day, he was seen to walk unsteadily across the street. He talked to himself, something about alcohol - gin or what not - but I knew he meant Gino. They said he was stopping people and asked them for forgiveness. Some other night he run out of his house and knocked on the door of the church, claiming he wanted to make a confession. He committed a mortal sin, he said. He was drunk again and didn't want to leave, so they took him to the police station. He slept himself sober and they took him home again.



But he didn't stay in his house for long. the very next week, the sign "FOR SALE" was put in his lawn and Arturo soon moved away. Where to? They say to his sister in Cincinnati, Ohio - but we don't miss him anyway.

The sign was there for quite some time, apparently nobody wanted to buy the house. I could not stand the suspense and called the sales-lady whose name was on that sign. She showed me the house and when I told her I heard that the house is haunted, she said with a very nice smile: "I know, people around here say many things, but I can assure you there is no truth in it."

I told her I believed her; after all, why not. I also asked her some question to which she didn't know the answer and had to phone her office. I slowly descended the staircase and checked the space under the last step. It was still there, from my last visit, so I put it quickly in my pocket. The lady came back and I told her I have to think it all over.

On my way home, I made a small detour. I took a stroll through the park and watched the river. I could see the neverending flow of water under the bridge, the water running away to some distant places only to come back like a rain again. I went half way across the bridge and pulled out of my pocket the little box with tape recorder and radio control inside. Arturo could thank only to himself: all I used was his old idea. The battery was almost dead and when I turned on the switch, the speaker said in a rasping voice: "Tell Arturo that I -". I threw the box in the river, there was no need for it anymore.

When I reached our street corner, I looked at he billboard and ripped off the already

yellowish death announcement. Gino was coming to see me next week and he could see it. I am not superstitious, you know, but some say it might bring a misfortune to somebody. . .

[Back to index](#)

BITS: MELISSA ONCE MORE
(A letter published in *Neviditelny Pes*, translated from Czech)

The author of one of your letter is presuming, that the creator of Melissa does not like Microsoft® (further only MS) too much. Be it as it may, the main reason Melissa hit documents type *.doc made by word-processor Word® and it's derivatives is that it was probably very easy, thanks to big help from MS itself.

We were attacked by similar viruses more than five years ago - thanks to the lack of foresight on the side of MS, since it allowed their program Word® to insert automatically its *macros* inside the document. Macros are those small, apparently useful programs that were - again only apparently - supposed to save us, users, some work. At that time, many of users were pointing to MS that they are not particularly interested in receiving viruses "made by Word®". So what did people from MS do? Instead of thinking harder, they came up with some kind of firewall, some warning program, which was determining if the document had some *macros* - any macros - in it and friendly recommended that it is entirely our problem if there is a virus there or not. In other way, they generously gave you a choice. You could either:

- 1) **leave the document without opening and discard it** (i.e. to erase it) - that was not too helpful, if you had to throw away all your incoming letters, especially from internal company mail, or
- 2) **with additional waste of time, to check the document for viruses** and if you find it did have one, to return to the point 1) which could have been done before and without that waste of time, or
- 3) **to take a risk and open the document without any virus check** (people who did it and suffered consequences told me it is not worth that risk, and they were right!)

For some time, I painfully followed step 2. and yet one day I got a call from our vice-president, informing me that my computer had virus. With increasing panic, I run upstairs and - lucky me - it was only the above warning, which smartly transfered MS guilt onto their customers, free of charge of course. While I was sure I had no virus, I knew that nothing else would convince my boss than thorough check-up by software technician. He came and found that I was O.K. The above firewall just did what it was intended to do - nothing more than the bogey-man does: a BIG scare.

The message advising us to check the document for viruses - which we of course could get only thanks to negligence of MS programmers - only proved that MS would keep their tongue-in-cheek attitude. True, I didn't have a virus and true, my boss apologized to me, but it was MS who should apologize. Evidently, I switched to option much better than all three above, the option they somehow "forgot" to mention":

4)**don't use Word® or it's derivatives** and you will be trouble free (Note: there are other ways to read documents *.doc)

So I was "*Melissa-protected*" even before the hacker wrote it. And as the latest news show, pretty soon I may do the same thing with Excel®.

As we can see, even after those five years, the danger is still real, with one difference only: those who were digging the hole for the others - however unintentionally - eventually fell in it as well. Their cries of pain are now reaching our deaf ears. Be this the warning to programmers who think they don't need to care for the happiness of their customers. As for MS, I have no worries they will ever learn.

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

As I mentioned in last issue of Hurontaria, I was asked by Czech Art Gallery ArtForum in Prague to write some accompanying text for their exhibitions of art. Every month, one of best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there on WEB together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for April exhibition.

Of course, to get the whole idea you should visit the Gallery and see inividual pictures, in medium or large scale and there is the Web address at the end of my essay.

REFLECTIONS

(Marian Karel, The Geometry of Mirages)

 karel Glass, the *glossy glass*. I am almost positive that those two words have, beside the inherent linguistic link, also some other mutual connections: *geometrical, optical and artistic*. The last one is easy to prove: professor Marian Karel - artist, architect and teacher, all in one person - has already done that.

First: **geometry**. He gives his works simple names: *Triangle, Square, Cube, Pyramid, Cylinder, Prism*. But do not expect the old Euclidean space - for instance, his square has three dimensions. Elsewhere, his transparent glass creates objects similar to *holograms* and gives the impression that you see them from many directions at the same time. And

true, triangle has three angles, but they also change, depending on your angle of view. And his prism defies gravity, being held in the air by some unknown force . . .

Then - *optics*. The artist knows it very well and he can harness it in his creations. But don't believe everything your eyes are telling you: *there is more than meets the eye*. In one place, our eyes can penetrate the matter while from another one we can only see what's behind us. And suddenly, we feel like trapped in not just three-, but multi-dimensional world. The space is expanding and our familiar reality is no more. It all suddenly gets new meaning thanks to light projections, reflections and transparencies. Glass is, after all, very much like water: sometimes transparent to great depth, sometimes only reflective like the lake at sunset. But contrary to frozen water, there is a life in glass. Just look closer: aren't those reflections suddenly moving?

Third connection - *art*. Not only shapes, light and space, but colors too. And unlimited combination of all that. Our illusionist is performing his miracles and like in the magic show, we wonder if it is "*all done by mirrors only*". But glass art of professor Karel does not stop there - he adds another important dimension: the beauty itself. His objects are not isolated in space: they are sitting in gardens, hang in Gothic halls, shine in streets, reflect the walls of an old castle corridor and enhance the majesty of medieval piazza in Venice. They fit there too, and why not - after all, art is timeless. Look closer and you may even see the ghosts of yesteryear. They are probably as curious as you are. And while watching all that, we have to ask: where is the object and where is the image? Where does our reality end and the mirage starts? Or could it be there they are only two images of the same thing?

Karel's objects of art are of course more than just decorative art, they not only complement their surroundings - they give them new meanings, new functions, new beauty. No wonder Mr. Karel successfully exhibits all around the world, looking for new settings while experimenting with new ideas and techniques: molten glass, metallurgical glass, etched glass, glass flat or curved, reflection glass, and some steel, wood, you name it. And I bet he uses yet something else: a special magic

April 1999, see the pictures at: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/cz/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA -

5A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

The author of *Chernobyl virus* (also called CIH) was reportedly found: he is a former college student from Taiwan. The college didn't administer a harsher punishment, because he had warned fellow students *not* to spread the virus. That does not explain how could the same virus recently wreak havoc in computers worldwide, especially in Asia and Europe (300,000 computers damaged). It was originated last summer and activates only on the 26th of each month (anniversary of Chernobyl disaster), otherwise it is dormant. The bug uses Java language to take advantage of a long-standing problem with Microsoft's operating systems for Windows 95 and Windows 98. It wipes out data on disc drives and makes it impossible for programs to start up (by infecting the software on which all the PC's programs depend, like BIOS etc.). For checking for viruses, try Norton *AntiVirus*, McAfee *VirusScan* or now you can even do it *on-line*, but it takes about 30 minutes and, since it's a one-shot deal, you still need an anti-virus program for daily protection. Other option (for CIH only): never use your computer on 24th each month . . .

Another essay for Czech Art Gallery *ArtForum* is in this issue's *Inclinations*. For May exhibition, it is about the art of Dana Zámeèníková, painter, architect and pedagogue and it is called THE WORLDS AROUND US. Dana Zámeèníková exhibits all around the world and you can see her beautiful pictures by clicking on the address listed there. In the meantime, she is leading workshops in New York City.

head **Another freeware:** *Movies 4* is a GIF Animator. You can use ready made BMP-images or create Frames within the program. *Wizards* are also introduced in *Movies* and they enable you to achieve animation effects which are not easy to create manually. It also has a *Gif Explorer* - you can open an animated GIF file and explore the individual images - that is to modify them - and their properties. The one to the left was created by me - the first ever - and named appropriately "*Do-I-have-a-splitting-headache.gif*". For individual deformations, I used another picture editor - just

in case you are thinking I could inflate myself that much. The program Movies 4 is by Jan Veerhoven and can be found [here](#)

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH JITKA SPLITKOVA
Life:	PARADIGMS
Short Story:	THE VISIT
Bits:	SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Dana Zamecnikova)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"Arrogance is the younger sister of Ignorance."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH JITKA SPLITKOVA

JITKA SPLÍTKOVÁ
jita.zelos@seznam.cz

is a sculptor, painter, writer and photographer from Prague. And what's more, she is also

the webmistress of Czech magazine **Zelos** (from Greek: endeavour, effort, <http://mujweb.cz/web/zelos/>) and a person of many other interests.

She graduated from the university, subject *Economy of Mechanical Engineering and Metallurgy* and later also studied *Psychology* there. But the science itself was not fully satisfying for her and she dedicated her time at the same time to painting and later to sculpturing as well. She achieved in both quite a success and exhibited her works in many galleries. She then started to create the paintings with the help of computers and from there it was just a small step to creating her own web-page, the independent, non-commercial Internet magazine. It soon became famous, maybe because it deals with art, popular science and the philosophy of life as well. You can find there also some photographs of her sculptures and paintings.

And if that was not enough, she collected contributions for Zelos from other interesting people and the circle of authors and readers was steadily growing, not because there were only few such magazines on Net, but also because it was interesting and well done. You can find there all which may interest really modern person: stories from life, philosophy, photographs and opinions of other people. She is also engaging in fight against superstitions, prejudices and false prophets, including various pseudo-sciences.

She likes people, nature and animals, not necessary in that order. Her slogan is: "*It can't be all dark if the monitors are shining.*" And so it is our wish that her Zelos will shine a very long, long time.

From: Jitka Splitkova
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria
Date: April 25, 1998

JAN:

*You are a painter, sculptor and photographer, create graphics, have regular exhibitions in several galleries and you are also a writer and editor of web-magazine **Zelos**, which has a great success not just among artists but with the readers of all kinds - please correct me if I missed something. How can you manage all that? You are also attracting talents of all kinds, who write, snap photos and any other way contribute in Zelos - how can you explain that? When you started with Zelos, did you have some great plans and how much they got fulfilled?*

JITKA:

How do I manage all that? Many people ask me the same question. And I simply don't know the answer. Maybe when one is under pressure and does not have enough time, one can really produce a lot. There is also some truth in the fact that if you do what you want to do and the way you feel it, then everything goes faster than when you just *must* do it. I hate the word "must". I use to say that one only *must* die :-)

But one has to do so many things . . . for instance to pay taxes, walk the dogs regularly, do some prosaic things like shopping, washing . . .

Moje work is like a strong drug; if I couldn't work as an artist, do my web pages . . . I couldn't exist, not even as a person. Yet I do not want to enclose myself in one world, rather strange for somebody else, so I started to publish magazine Zelos on the Net and to discover other worlds the people are living in. On Zelos pages, I want to give a space to other interesting people, those who are of the same "blood type" as I am, so to say. And I don't even know how it is possible that people accept my offer of cooperation and become my friends. You and At'a also belong among them, so you can tell it better than me. Why did you accept my offer to cooperate?

And my plans with Zelos? Actually only one: to get together many different "human worlds".

When I started to publish Zelos - more than a year ago - I never expected how much it would grow and that I would work together with so many great people. I never suspected that Internet would also change my life so much. I say "Net" but I actually mean people whom I met via Net. We send each other e-mails, but I also try to meet them personally. I introduced in my atelier the *Friday sessions*; everybody is invited, not just Net-people, and we discuss science, art and life. And so my plans are becoming reality, my close friends are by best fans and for me, that is the driving energy and maybe the reason why I manage to do so much.

JAN:

As an artist you surely underwent - and maybe still do - certain developments. Can you tell us more about it? Which medium do you prefer? What are your artistic examples (models)? What is your artistic goal for nearest and distant future?

JITKA:

Everybody goes through some development, otherwise it would be rather sad. A person has to change all the time and so must his/her work. People I respect are telling me that the artist who cannot evolve, who is satisfied with his work, has nothing to tell and may as well die.

You ask me which medium I prefer - well, not any particular one, they are all equal. I

like to work out one theme in stone, then to paint it, take a picture and at the end to express it with the help of my computer. And the written word is the same in the book as well as on the Net - of course, a printed book is a printed book, but then again, the text is accessible to more readers when it is on the Net . . .

I consider as a greatest example the art of prehistoric people and the art of so called "primitive" nations - their artifacts seem to be full of strength and sincerity, they put their heart in it.

And my artistic goal? To address people with my work, to put them little bit out of their balance, disturb them and maybe even shock them so they would start to think about it. To show the world which is in front of the mirror and the one behind it. That of course is my wish - if I am really achieving it, even slowly, must be judged by people themselves.

JAN:

You once admitted you like people, nature, art and life. Which of them do you like most and to which extent? Do you ever dislike anything? What is your life philosophy, that is what do you believe in and what do you hope for? What do you expect from spreading culture over Internet?

JITKA:

The nature, people, life and art are for me only the one entity. One cannot love only part of it. Obviously, there are many things which belong in that entity - the whole cosmos for instance and science, and cities, etc.

There is something in my blood from my grandfather from Sicily and my grandmother from Hungary, so I am rather wild and unbridled person.

I don't do compromises very often nor use alternatives so I can like some things, but also know what to hate. I hate orthodoxy, intolerance, human greed - if somebody can kill baby seals, whales, destroy rain-forests . . . and I despise those who think about war, military operations . . .well, I don't like that kind of people.

To live and let live, to live and have my own thoughts, my beliefs and tolerate the others with their thoughts and their beliefs. To have a right and even duty to communicate my own ideas and to be obliged to listen to other people's ideas - and maybe disagree, but always with those ideas only, not with the person! It is rather difficult to separate a person from his thoughts and to see that actually, he is the nice person, even if he believes in something else. We need more progress in that. More often however, I meet just intolerance.

Myself, I am an atheist and I reached that belief through my studies and personal

experiences, nothing else influenced me. True, I discuss many things with my friends, who are true believers and especially with one my friend we argue a lot (right now she writes for Zelos an article about "why I am not materialist"). But the discussion ends and I know that I still have a friend who I respect very much and she knows that she can call on me any time.

So that is my philosophy and I also believe that what you give to the world, it will come back to you again. I believe in human mind, the discovery of the world around us and the strength of science. And what do I hope for? I hope that never comes the moment when some person without brain turns a knob and sends some rocket with nuclear warhead in our direction, that neither koala bear nor any other animal will be extinct, that rain-forests will not be destroyed, that Prague City will still have the same magic as before, that all my friends remain with me, that no government will ever abolish Internet, that our science will discover something marvelous, that ...

I see a great power in Internet - people can meet there even if they live far apart and receive new informations. To be informed, truthfully informed - it has a strength in it. My favourite poet Jan Neruda said: "He who knows nothing must believe everything". Is there more to be said?

JAN:

In your Zelos "manifest" you confess that you left science to be able to create the art. Could you tell us why and how much you are satisfied with that decision? Were you ever sorry you did it? Have you turned your back to science afterwards?

JITKA

I have very few days without some new experience or something remarkable happening to me, so I do not have too much time to think about my decisions "*post hoc*". I rather think in advance.

I attended the *Popular Artistic School* since I was five years old, therefore I lived in art since my early years. My parents - and it may seem to be an anachronism - didn't wish me to make a living as an artist. So I studied the high school, was majoring in mathematics/physics and tried to get to artistic college, subject the Art of Sculpture, but in vain. So I studied at university, the Economics of Machinery/Metallurgy and as a postgradual study, I took psychology and started to study for my Ph.D. at the *Academy of Science*. The science was an interesting subject, but I also wanted to create and to write. In 1990, I left science to do free-lancing, to devote my time to all of those things I always wanted to do - sculpturing, painting, photography and writing. But I never turned my back to science - I even continued to publish scientific articles - even now - but mostly

about popular science.

Recently, I was meeting again with my colleagues from scientific field and discovered how much it progressed during that time. Therefore one of those days . . . maybe when I finish my Ph.D. thesis . . . One should have a goal, something to look forward to, impose enough self-discipline on oneself and - if it is possible, laugh every day.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: PARADIGMS

I have a method which helps me to overcome the stress, whether I have big problems, worries or just find myself totally depressed. I will share it with you *free of charge*, in spite of the fact that one California shrink - I mean the psychiatrist - is making pretty good money on that idea.

I works like this: I just *imagine* that I am going to die, say tomorrow same time as now. Why? That's not so important - I actually don't want to die, but that imagery is important for my method. Next thing I am going to imagine is that it is already tomorrow, five minutes before my imaginary death. And I will recall all my yesterday's, that is today's problems - I hope you still follow me so far. And guess what: all my troubles will seem to me so ridiculous, so secondary, so petty, that I will start laughing. And if I won't die from that laugh, I will gladly and peacefully return to present time and will be happy I have only my unimportant problems after all.

Well, this is *my idea* and I can assure you I got it few years before the mentioned shrink ever thought about it. But to give him some credit: I really think that method is as old as the mankind itself. After all, how else we would have so many religions?

As you can see, I started with unsurmountable problems, and ended up happy and on higher note. I simply transformed everything onto another platform, to another dimension. They call it *a shift of paradigm*, that is the change of the *method or model* we use to thing by. We can proclaim that everything actually depends on our attitude, our approach, our angle of view. Our whole life is the chain of *attitudes*, which sometimes even seem to look - at least to some of us - like being more important that the problem itself. I said "they seem to", because that si also part of our attitude, like in the story

about the bottle filled up to it's half mark.

You don't know that story? Well, there are those two guys: an optimist and a pessimist. The pessimist says: "The bottle is already half empty". The optimist however is pleased, that "the bottle is still half full". Of course, their attitude does not change the fact at all. I usually add one more guy: the pedant. He keeps pouring whisky in the bottle, in and out - because he is not pleased, that the level *is not exactly* on 50 percent mark. And like the proverbial rabbit in the proverbial race cannot reach the turtle, our pedant will never finish his job to be able to drink from that bottle. But the whisky alone - and our attitudes too - can effect the results of our behaviour, it can even make our life longer or shorter. There is a saying that our life is a "*series of choices rather than chances*". In other words: we all get our chance, but only those, who will recognize it and use it, will eventually succeed.

Well, it is not always the pure logic, which can help us to make the decision. In one laboratory, they made an experiment with two empty bottles - I wonder, why it have to be always bottles - and laid them on the table. One bee was inserted into the one bottle and a fly in the other one. Of course they didn't plug in the corks since they wanted to know, which one would escape sooner. The bee was trying very hard to get through the bottom of the bottle, so hard that she eventually died of exhaustion. The fly of course kept flying to and fro, with no apparent plan. Still, soon she have found the opening and escaped. From the point of logic, the fly had no method of escape, while the bee was listening to its instinct: to follow the light, the sun, the source of life. And she died, because her instinct was right but the situation was wrong and she was not able to change her paradigm.

Zeno of Alexandria once said that the life is like a book: it is not important *how many pages* it has, but how *good* it is. And our philosophers are still arguing, how many of those pages we are actually writing ourselves, be it the whole society or individuals. But that does not matter so much - important thing is to realize that depends only on us, if our performance will turn our life-play into a comedy or tragedy. The term "comedy" is meant here of course only as an opposite to a tragedy - and not as a farce (that would be rather overdoing it).

Yes, we can change our paradigms and suddenly we have here a new flavours. And when we use to think it is just our bad fate, let's change the angle of view - or the point of view - and suddenly things do not look that bad. Yes, there is a plenty of hope while we are still alive: problems can be solved, people can be healed, mistakes can be corrected, situation can improve, harm can be remedied. On people are being *difficult*: they change very little a and what's more - they hate changing themselves . . .

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE VISIT

When I woke up, she was sitting on my bed and smiled. She was dressed in white coat, but I knew she didn't belong there. "Who are you?" I asked her. "I haven't seen you here before."

"We can use first names," she grinned, "after all, we know each other for such a long time."

"But I don't remember," I objected. "Where could I possibly. . ."

She passed her hand across my forehead. "You still have some temperature. And as far as your memory is concerned, it was never really good, was it?" she said as a matter of fact and I realized she really knew me. "We were vacationing by the sea, you and me -"

She didn't finish, but there was no need to. It was like if somebody rewinded a film in my head and I was back again. Sand, hot beaches and salty sea. So salty that I suffered from some allergy for few days. Yes, the sea, families with familiar sun-burns, the lines at kiosk where they sold drinks and of course she, with her sub-miniature swimming suit, making all men turn their heads in her direction.

"*Bonnie!*" I said when I recognized her. "But you used to be a brunette - now you are blond."

"But *The gentlemen prefer blonds* - you remember the movie? We saw it together then."

"But of course, I even remember that I said it did not matter since I was no gentleman." I winked at her and she made a face.

Suddenly, a cloud appeared behind my window and the room turned dark, making our meeting rather intimate. Then she said: "Do you remember we had to stay in our tent for three days, just because of rain?"

"Sure, but it was not boring, was it?" I revived some of our memories. "And then you lost your earring and we went to look for it. By some miracle, I found it nearby, close to public showers. I also remember I told you that it was raining pennies from heaven so we would have plenty of them when we get married. Plenty - till the death parts us."

Her sullen look revealed she didn't like my comment: "It was not supposed to be, I told you already. I couldn't belong to anybody."

"Yes, and I begged you, lamented, threatened and begged again . . . But you were relentless. Suddenly you changed, like you had no heart at all."

"Do you think so?" she asked ironically. "You were still a boy, full of dreams and had so many interests . . . I couldn't spoil your life, try to understand!"

"You were my ideal, my dream! You took my love and didn't give me anything in return."

She protested: "And how about our memories, you have lost them too?" Her black, arousing eyes were watching me as they used to and it was no surprise that I once fell madly in love with her.

"That is true, the memories I have - you couldn't take them away from me. I have them locked here, in my heart - the only thing you left me." Actually, it was not entirely true: I forgot most of it and time was a great healer. Other gorils, too. Still, I carried on:

"Especially the most painful memory of them all, the last one . . ."

"You mean the one when you climbed the cliff and screamed down that if I wouldn't marry you, you will jump down? I still can see you: you were standing there, the wind was stealing the words from your mouth and your really looked like you had decided to throw yourself down. Now tell me, did you really mean it?"

Her question surprised me: "To be honest, I am not sure. I only remember I was desperate and unhappy. I really don't know what would have happened. But I lost balance and started to fall. Come to think of it: no, I'm sure I wouldn't jump, I would probably find some excuse again. In the very moment I was falling down I already realized that it was not what I wanted, not at all. And then came the impact and I lost my conscience . . ."

"Luckily you missed the coral reef and when you hit the water, you collapsed. Some people were swimming there to help you," she recalled.

"Some people? They told me in the hospital it was you who saved me. But as soon as I opened my eyes, you left. They called at you, but you didn't even turn your head. Why?"

"Don't you see why? It was necessary that you wouldn't see me any more. It was the time for you to start a new, different life. I gave you new chance, my dear." She took my hand and stroked it gently - and I wished it would last forever. Again, she touched my forehead: "You see, the fever is gone."

I smiled: "It's because you are here with me. Will you visit me more often now?"

"I don't know - maybe," she said absentmindedly. Suddenly the room felt cold. The sky behind the window turned red, the evening came earlier and I could expect another painful night. I felt extremely tired.

She must have noticed that since she stood up: "I have to go. So - have a nice life."

"Wait, Bonnie, don't go yet! I haven't seen you for such a long time and you are already leaving," I complained, but in vain. She left quietly, same way she did the last time and I haven't seen her since, until now.

Next day, I thought all the time about her, at least the whole morning. Some memories cannot be thrown away, you know. Then the nurse brought me my meal and said, rather officially: "Here is your lunch - you have to eat, at least something, you know." I was

watching her, apparently with too obvious curiosity since she asked: "What is it? Do you want something else?"

"Oh no, I just thought I must have known you from somewhere. You reminded me very much one woman I knew."

"Which woman?" she asked and bent closer. And I remembered who she was. Yes, it was her, *Helene*. I would recognize her any time, just by her red hair alone, so disobedient that she had to tie it into a knot or use some hair-clasp. Or tie it with some ribbon, mostly. And she looked so beautiful with that ribbon - she used to untie it only at evenings, when we were alone.

"What are you doing here, Helene?" I asked her and was afraid it might not be her after all, maybe some other girl, especially since she didn't even have that ribbon.

"I had to find you, Peter, you know."

"But why?" I didn't understand. She never talked in riddles before.

"That is a really stupid question. Don't you like me any more?"

"Like you? I never stopped loving you, Helene!"

"All I know you lied then and you are lying again," she smiled, "but it does not matter any more. You could never love only one woman at any given time, could you? Oh, it wasn't your fault, I know, you just had a very big heart."

"But we loved each other passionately, you have to admit that. Day or night, any place with grass or at least on the floor. I loved you with all my heart, with all my soul."

"And then we got married and your love somehow evaporated, " hse reminded me. "Still, I never blamed you when you had another girl."

"You were my greatest love of them all," I said and I really meant it, at least in that very moment.

She nodded. "You may be right. Too bad it didn't last longer. But then it happened . . ."

Yes, then it happened. She asked me if we could go camping again, for the last time. The way we used to before we - how do they call it - yes, before we got estranged. Actually, it was me who got estranged, not her. But I didn't like her idea about a trip too much, I was afraid that she would again try to get our marriage together or at least argue who would get children and so on.

But I felt sorry for her and up we went - up north that is, to do Red River again with our canoe. We used to be pretty good team once. It was really great country: few kilometers of white water, series of rapids and finally quiet, peaceful river with the current so slow you had to use the paddle again. And I almost forgot - there was one waterfall, before you reached that lazy river.

Well, on that last trip we had problems in those rapids - our canoe overturned. We both

had our life-jackets, but there were boulders everywhere and the stream strong enough to throw us at them here and there, and to knock us about all the way to that waterfall. The rather dangerous and high waterfall, which had to be bypassed by portaging.

As I tried to see where I am, I hit some stone; apparently rather seriously, since my old back pain came back to life again. It took me a while to get closer to the shore, where I grabbed some branch, sticking above the water. And I immediately started to look around for Helene.

Then I saw her, up the river, holding onto another rock. She fought bravely, but the water took her and carried her down, towards me. I tried to catch her and stretched my arm as far as I could - or better yet, as far as my pain allowed me. The current there was very fast, but I managed to grab her jacket.

I screamed with pain when I pulled her closer to me. The wild water was trying to tear us apart and it looked like we would be swallowed by the current. We fought for a while, but it was obvious we would not hold much longer. Suddenly Helene gave it a push and broke away from me. The merciless water took her again and carried her down, toward that devil's waterfall. I held out my hand, but it remained empty . . .

"Why did you do it, Helene?" I asked her.

"You still don't know it?" she smiled, but it was an unhappy smile. I saw something glittering in her eye; she quickly turned away and went for the door.

"Heavens, Helene, come back! Come back to me, Helene!" I called her and suddenly I realized I used the same words as I did then.

"Good bye, Peter!" she said and I remembered: those were her last words. She closed the door and she was gone.

It was breaking my heart, actually it hurt even more than when I lost her the first time. What happened to her then, I still don't know - her body was never found.

It was a sleepless night: I fell asleep in the morning and apparently slept for quite a long time. My pains were coming usually at dusk and lasted for the whole night. And fevers, of course. After lunch, I slept again and woke up at sunset. I was alone, waiting peacefully for my pains and thinking about all that. About the life, the way it should go and the way it went. About my loves, those which I lost and those I simply wasted. Loves, which came to me like precious gifts and which I threw away like a kid, who is bored with his new toy. Loves, which I didn't even deserve. Yes, twice in my life I got my life back, but how did I use that gift?

Then the silver moon appeared behind the window and in its rays I caught the sight of her, sitting on my bed and her eyes full of understanding. She wanted to tell me

something, but I stopped her. "Hold it, don't tell me anything. I want to search my memory to recall who you are. I am sure I know you from somewhere. Just give me more time, I will surely remember."

"I can't give you back something you don't have any more," she said and wiped the perspiration on my forehead. "But you are right, we already met. Twice, to be accurate. Once by the sea and once on Red River. Can't you still recognize me?"

Suddenly, it dawned on me: "So it was you? But how could you . . ."

"That is not important," she interrupted, "the main thing is that I am here."

"You came for me, right?" I asked her and deep in my mind I hoped it was not true. She didn't answer, just nodded her head..

"There you have it," I thought out loud, "all my life, I was waiting for this moment! Strange - I thought about you quite often. But I never imagined you as a young, beautiful woman, full of temptation and desire."

"And why not?" she smiled, obviously flattered. I shook my head. "No, people always connected you with bad things: the end of all hopes and futile dreams . . ."

I could see she was having fun: "And why only the end, why not the beginning? Why only the bad things and not the good ones too? Our loving each other so much, wasn't it nice? Don't you want it to continue forever?"

"Well, I am not sure any more, " I stuttered, rather confused.

She looked offended: "You used to be desperate - every time you lost me - and now, you suddenly don't want me any more?"

"But I didn't know, at that time - " I wanted to explain something, but I was not sure what.

"You didn't know, you didn't know - you never knew! Stop those excuses, you just don't love me any more! Or you never did. Maybe when you were sixteen, when you used to write me those nice verses. Do you remember?"

She recited with exaggerated pathos: "*Goblet of light in darkness - devil moon / put out a lure of hiding shadows . . .*

Or how about this one: *Now I will love you many, many years / glorious night, the mistress of my dreams . . .* After all, you even thought several times about suicide - once even seriously, if I can recall."

She laughed, but I knew she was not making fun of me. Maybe she wanted to revive some memories, the memories of my confused youth, long time forgotten now . Her laugh sounded like a bell - wait a moment, I know that sound - it was the little bell, hanging on the door of our old cottage in the mountains.

As a student, I used to return there every summer. My brother always came to pick me up at the railway station and my mom and dad were already waiting for me at our dinner

table. And I had to tell them everything and it was so much of it that we sometimes talked till sunrise. Then I slept till lunchtime - after all, the whole summer was mine, there was no hurry. I had plenty of time for fun: swimming in the river or hiking to the old, busted dam, climbing Spicak mountain and by evenings taking girls to movies. . .

I felt better now. The pain subsided. My fever was gone and maybe tomorrow, I'd be allowed to leave the hospital.

"It's your time," she said. Then she took my hand and urged me: "Come!"

Suddenly, it all started to make sense. "You are right, let's go!" I decided, but before I got up, I asked her: "Just one more question: you could have taken me with you twice before and still you didn't do it. Why?"

She didn't answer. Instead, she smiled and bent over me. She touched me gently, the way only woman in love can touch. And then she closed my lips with her icy kiss . . .

[Back to index](#)

BITS: SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING NEW

Don't worry, I am not going to talk here about some weddings, but rather about recent advancements in digital electronics and communication. As we all know, progress is usually made in two ways: steps and ramps. *Step* is the sudden, qualitative change, mainly through some new idea (or old idea applied in new environment) and *ramp* is the quantitative, usually slow progression in very small, sometimes miniscule steps, day by day drudgery - simply using somebody else's idea, slightly improved. Development, they call it.

Needless to say, we do need both because:

- NEW idea does not immediately come with it's best realization, technological that is - sometimes it even needs the advancements in related technologies. In other words, there is always some way to IMPROVE it.
- IMPROVEMENT itself will eventually halt and the time will come when you just cannot make it any better, and you need something NEW: technology, algorithm, method, sometimes even new people :).

Now back to those advancements: I prepared for you the series of the latest news and will leave it up to you to decide which of them are *borrowed* and which are really *new* (those with question marks are of course only predictions):

- PC cameras are predicted to cost eventually only around \$40 (?)
- Intel and AMD are now producing 500MHz microprocessors
- IBM is working on highest disk density: 3 terabytes (3 millions of megabytes) per square inch of the disk surface
- Your cellular phone will eventually collect your e-mail, paychecks, navigate you through streets and also have a speech recognition (I guess we would not need to listen to it anymore) (?)
- While some computers have already 64 bit CPU, Sony is considering 128 bits
- Electronic toilet: heated seat, washing jets, digital timer, pre-recorded flushing sounds to mask those embarrassing sounds, all that sold for measly \$4000 (maybe some April joke?)
- Pentium III 32 bit CPU already demonstrated it can run at 1000 MHz, IBM CPU with 64 bits reached 1100 Mhz mark
- With war in Kosovo, the hostilities spread also into cyber-world, mainly WEB and communications. Could it be that our over-computerized world has one weakest point since we have at best only semi-intelligent computers (?)



Now for freebees:

- some companies now offer *free Internet access* (not a big deal: you save only twenty bucks a month!) but the customers will have to carry some advertising
- in Alaska, you get free Internet access from one telephone company, if you subscribe to their long distance call program
- You probably already heard about *10,000 free PCs*, given away to those customers who will fit certain advertising profile
- *Free e-mail*, again not a big deal, I have one for two years now!
- Free advertising, free merchandise, free love, you name it. But how about getting some free time, I haven't got too much of it lately . . .

Again, I was shocked with recent statistics: *half of homes* in United States have at least one PC! That means from now on, WE netizen are the majority of population and don't you ever forget it!

Another interesting bit: in 1998, an average browser (yes - the person, I do not mean Internet Explorer or Netscape!) was browsing Net *at work* three times a week while *home users* only twice a week. And if in 1996 he/she spent only 14 minutes per session, today it is 55 minutes! Now I did some extrapolation (only linear - the conservative one) and calculated that in the year 2020 he/she will spend 8 hours per session and will access the net *every day*.

Now that's the interesting food for thought, but it would hardly fill your dinner plate: I do

not think the employers will be paying you for that (if you are not government employee, that is). Now you may object that the access speed will be also much quicker, but so will be our hunger for more information, don't you think so? We are already spending more time with our e-mail than we used to spend with a snail-mail, and that's mainly *because* it is so fast . . .

Note: *I have picked some data for this column from **RFoC Magazine**, authored by Jeff Harrow. I interviewed Jeff last year for *Hurontaria* and I can recommend his magazine for all of you who want to be up-to-date. The address of his periodical is on our Title Page.*

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*As I mentioned in last issue of *Hurontaria*, I was asked by **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague to write some accompanying text for their exhibitions of art. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for May exhibition.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **visit the Gallery and see invidividual pictures**, in medium or large scale and there is the Web address at the end of my essay.*

THE WORLDS AROUND US

(The exhibition of Dana Zamecnikova)

 zamek

Ever since people left Eden, settled on Earth and started to multiply, the mankind was facing the puzzling duality: the unity of the universe but also the differences between its components, mainly between people. We are equal, but we are not the same. We live different lives, have different interests, suffer different pains. Still our lives have many things in common: for instance the beginning and the end, the birth and death. And in between, we may feel pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, we can fall in love and be loved in return. But the pain and pleasure are only two sides of the same coin, the unity in duality.

Observing the art of Dana Zamecnikova - the architect, painter and pedagogue - one cannot help seeing those contrasts: her pictures are expressing them through their composition, form and content - and several of them even by their dual names. Sometimes the contrast is more than obvious, like in *Divided world* of a man and woman. They both live together, but they are worlds apart. Once there was a unity

between them, the *liaison* between *a man and wife*. Yes, they are still married, but estranged; they live in different worlds - partly by nature, but mostly by choice. Once she was a lovely *bride* and he was a loving groom, but their worlds somehow drifted apart.

The woman's world - how little we men know about it, how much we underestimate it! And yet, it is as much interesting, as much beautiful as the world of man, even more so. Different? Yes, by all means. Woman can place more importance on things she is sharing with her man: her *family*, her children, her home and things around, but also her happiness or sorrow, *laughs* or tears and yes, her love too. Her world is not *upside down*, it is just more feminine. And she wants to share it with her partner - every woman has a *secret wish* to turn him into a man of her dreams. But she seldom succeeds, sometimes it is more like a *conversation with a fish*. Their worlds are only partly overlapping and so the life of a woman is not easy. No wonder she dreams about better world: more beautiful, more romantic, more cordial. After all, those are the things *women* understand better than men do.

"All the world is a stage", said Bill Shakespeare and we are only actors on that glorified *Theatrum Mundi*. The artist knows it and so we can see ourselves in her pictures not the way we want to be, but the way we are - dressed in costumes, but naked underneath, with painted faces, but under those masks each of us has his own face.

Paintings on glass, created by Mrs. Zamecnikova and exhibited in many places all around the world, are dynamic and inventive. Amazing, yes, but also agitating our thoughts. Who are we and why are we so different? Do we sincerely want to reach out to the other people worlds, those of our loved ones, our friends or even those of complete strangers? Do we have enough of sympathy, enough of compassion? Can we look close enough or deep enough to recognize the beauty, which is sometimes only in the eyes of beholder?

May 1999, see the pictures at: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 6A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

A new *Trojan horse virus* is being sent by hackers via e-mail over the Internet. It pretends to be only a screensaver, but allows them to access your PC and use it as their client, according to *Network Associates*. It was given name **BackDoor-G** and affects Windows-based PCs. It is difficult to detect because it is able to change its filename. Apparently the program - actually, it is not a virus, but it is harmful nonetheless - pretends to be screensaver with J.S. Bach's motives, but it will surely change, now when it is publicized. Help: **do not open or run it!**

New attachment to HURONTARIA, called **PRILOZNIK**, is an open format webpage devoted to letters and written contributions from readers (including photos, too). As an experiment, it is running only in Czech, but we could accept writings in English, too. Click on [PRILOZNIK-1](#) or [PRILOZNIK-2](#) and take a look. If you like it, pls write to me or send your writings to HURONTARIA address below.

Another essay for Czech Art Gallery *ArtForum* is in this issue's *Inclinations*. For June exhibition, it is about the glass art of professor Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova and it is called THE CAPTIVATING BEAUTY OF FRAGILITY. Both artists exhibit all around the world, thus spreading and advancing Czech tradition of Bohemian glass and you can see their beautiful pieces of art by clicking on the address listed with the essay.

Another freeware: Czech **HTML Editor** by Lubos Horacek is an excellent tool for anybody, who creates pages on Web, handles pictures, frames and you name it. It covers recent standard (HTML 4.0), supports Java, has sophisticated selection of color - any color - and you can open many windows in it. It is so far in Czech only, but the pictorial menu uses standard icons and we hope it will be soon be presented in English version, too. You can download (version 2.82) on <http://drak.radio.cz/~doctor/editor.html>

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH RICK ROSS
Life:	GLOBETROTTERS
Short Story:	THE CALLING
Bits:	VOINICH MANUSCRIPT
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Prof. Libensky and J. Bartova)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"Some choice you gave us, Mr. Darwin: to evolve into humans or to be extinct!"

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH RICK ROSS

RICK ROSS

info@rickross.com

is an internationally recognized consultant on religious cults. He is considered *a leading expert* on destructive cults, including the Branch-Davidians, whom he began studying in 1988. Prior to the standoff, Ross was successful in bringing four Davidians out of their groups (two from the Waco compound) as a result of his intervention work and during the tragic standoff in Waco, he was consulted by both the ATF and the FBI.

Ross also found serious problems caused by cults and radical groups within the prisons and jails of Arizona. In response he founded a statewide Jewish prisoner program and his work as a program coordinator and resource person regarding cults was well recognized and culminated with his election as *chairman of both the Religious Advisory Committee*, for the Arizona Department of Corrections and the International Coalition of Jewish Prisoner Programs, sponsored by B'nai B'rith. In 1986 Ross left the staff of Jewish Family Service to become a full time *private consultant, lecturer and intervention specialist* concerning destructive cults and radical groups. He also has been qualified and testifies as an expert witness in court cases that typically involve child custody and personal injury, related to such groups.

As an intervention specialist, Ross typically works with people who have come under the influence of destructive cults, usually at the request of family members who are seeking to break a group's hold on a loved one. Through interventions that typically last three to five days, Ross tries to help individuals look at their cult experiences objectively. This process is often followed by psychological counseling, and in this connection, Ross frequently consults and works with mental health professionals. He states that over the years about 75% of his clients have broken free from their cult domination.

Ross has been quoted in such publications as *Newsweek, The New York Times, The Chicago Tribune, The Washington Post, The Associated Press, Globes, and Davaar*. He has appeared on *The Today Show, Good Morning America, 48 Hours, Day One, ABC News, Nightline, Dateline*, as well as on numerous radio shows and television spots in Japan and Canada. Rick Ross has been interviewed by some of the most well-known figures in the media, such as *Phil Donahue, Geraldo Rivera, Ted Koppel, Joan Lunden, Oprah Winfrey and others*.

Mr. Ross has lectured at such prestigious institutions as the *University of Chicago, Carnegie Mellon, Baylor, and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia*. His lecture venues have included universities, colleges, private schools, community events, seminars and educational conferences. Further information is provided on his page <http://www.rickross.com/> as well as the direct link to contact an agent for arrangements regarding booking him for a future lecture. There are also several links in the interview which follows.

From: Rick Ross
To: Jan Hurych
Re: Interview for Hurontaria
Date: May 15, 1999

JAN:

The main purpose of cult "programming" is of course to gain control over their members, that is over their free will as well as financial reserves, I presume. So more and more people get lured into different cults and societies than ever before. Could you tell us what methods of deprogramming you recommend most?

Mr. ROSS:

At one time, due to the reluctance of cult groups to allow members to dialogue with their families and professionals about their involvement (or even to allow families access to a loved one) -- "[involuntary deprogramming](#)" became the choice of some families as a last resort. That is, they held their adult children involuntarily for brief periods of a few days to hear their concerns, specific information about the group and analysis about its persuasion techniques. However, today due to civil litigation funded by cults this option for families has been eliminated. Instead, the only form of cult intervention now practiced is voluntary--with the exception of minor children under the direct supervision of a custodial parent.

"Voluntary deprogramming" is sometimes referred to as "exit-counseling", "thought reform consultation", "intervention therapy" or simply cult [intervention](#). This is similar to a drug or alcohol intervention and consists essentially of a family and/or concerned individuals, sitting down with an involved adult and discussing their concerns. In a cult intervention information is presented about the group that the member is most often not aware of. This is typically facilitated by a professional cult intervention specialist--sometimes called an "exit counselor", "thought reform consultant" or most commonly a "cult deprogrammer" who works within and [ethical framework](#).

This consists of a series of meetings that may last several days through which information is provided that may include reviewing documentaries, news programs, court records and certain reports about the group in question. This might also involve a former member of the group offering personal insights. An intervention can be seen as somewhat of an educational seminar. It is focused on the group, personal involvement, the specific methodology certain groups may use to influence people and how that [process of persuasion](#) takes place.

JAN:

While reading for instance the book about "Heavens Gate", I was surprised how many intelligent and highly educated people could get under the spell of cult programmers.

How does that indoctrination works and is it possible that the people with higher education can be even more prone to their influence?

Mr. ROSS:

Typically cult groups target universities and colleges. Most likely those schools that maintain campus housing. This represents an opportunity to approach young people (usually 18-26) who are often away from familiar surroundings and support systems for the first time.

There are many [myths about cults](#). Perhaps the most prevalent is that they only successfully can recruit emotionally disturbed or unintelligent people. This is a false assumption and often appears to be a form of denial. That is, "they could never get me." In fact, many groups are largely composed of sophisticated, educated people--who are often the most useful and productive.

Wayne Martin, the second in command at the Waco Davidian compound under David Koresh was a Harvard Law School Graduate. Steve Schneider, the next in line under Wayne Martin--was a seminarian. Within one group led by the "Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh"--85% of the members were college graduates, 25% possessed postgraduate degrees and 15% had doctorates.

Cults look for often naïve, young and perhaps isolated people that may be experiencing a difficult period or situation in life. They offer clarity, answers and seeming solutions to virtually any question or dilemma. Their leaders are most often strong charismatic compelling figures.

Today many celebrities are involved in controversial groups that have been called "cults"--such as [Scientology](#) and the [Kabbalah Center](#). [Historically](#) Hollywood and the entertainment industry have been rife with such connections to controversial groups. Many people view celebrities as "role models" and may be influenced by their endorsements of such groups.

JAN:

Contrary to programming, the deprogramming methods are directed towards freeing of such persons from their bondage. Some people are afraid that after deprogramming, there is some void left in a person's mind or even that the deprogramming can go too far. Is there any truth in it?

Mr. ROSS:

No. Through "deprogramming" or cult intervention the only issues that are addressed focus upon the specific group and group involvement. The subject of such an intervention subsequently may leave the group and go on with their life reassuming their own basic individual values and beliefs. They may retain certain aspects of the group's worldview such as vegetarianism, meditation, pacifism or other human interests. But they typically will integrate these convictions/commitments into their own unique blend of ideas as opposed to the rather [cloned/closed](#) worldview of the cult leader.

There may be some difficulties during a period of adjustment. Specifically, picking up their life again and making their own truly independent decisions. But this [recovery](#) period will typically pass and is often assisted by helping professionals such as psychologists and counselors.

JAN:

Are deprogramming methods more effective at early stages of indoctrination? Are there any simple methods, which will help parents or friends to stop the programming process or reverse it earlier while the damage is not that extensive? And what should they do in later stages?

Mr. ROSS:

Most often the earlier a cult member is approached through an intervention the more likely they are to be responsive. Specifically, the group has had less opportunity to indoctrinate and influence that person and they probably have less personal entanglements within the group.

The best method for preventing destructive cult involvement is preventative education. If students and the public at large are more aware of destructive groups beforehand they may better understand and resist their recruitment efforts.

Parents should encourage discussion and [reading](#) about controversial groups likely to recruit on a campus their child will attend. This should be done before sending them off to school.

Also, schools share some responsibility and should offer helpful orientations that include general information about such recruitment efforts on their campuses. This can be done effectively without naming certain groups, but instead by simply offering information about the techniques they may employ for recruitment, possible approaches and easy to understand "[warning signs](#)".

When families observe a later, deeper stage of cult involvement they may find it necessary to consider the involvement of a professional such as myself in an [intervention effort](#).

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: GLOBETROTTERS
(A grotesque story from the 1982 socialist Czechoslovakia)

By Jiří Nezval, nezval@msmt.cz

Dear readers, please, believe me, I was not one of those two principal actors of our story. I am merely trying to revive and save for posterity the event as accurately as I once heard it. There would be really no reason to deny - with an exaggerated modesty - one's contribution to the team-work result, that should certainly enter into the annals of the long distance travelling. So, this good and enchanting if perhaps a little bit delicate episode, took place without me and a long time ago. None of the two people involved told me the story, it came from a third person. This confession allows you to suggest that a fantasy was at work here. Maybe, some minor details were added by the joyous teller, nevertheless, honestly, the essence of the tale is really as true as the fact that the best stories are mostly written not by the professional writers, but by life itself. Even today, I can recall his words as he himself stored them in his memory.

"Well. We, that means both the protagonists and I, had been working in one research institute in Prague for several years. There is certainly no need to go into details as to the research area concerned. The exact name of the research field is, in fact, of no significance whatsoever. Yet, I can proudly state that something like natural sciences stood in the focus of our interest. At least I had always - despite all perfectly confusing signs - thought so and I do it until now. Our institute was situated on the periphery of Prague. In spite of a long and sometimes very exhaustive distance from the geographical centre of the capital, the institute soon realized the advantages of its position.

Unlike with other similar institutes, our cohabitation with the city was truly ideal. As if some tacit gentlemen's agreement were concluded, our mutual relations were that of

respect and tolerance. We certainly did not disturb the quiet and contented life of the city by some exciting, heart attack causing news from our laboratories. The city, for its part, showed also a great deal of understanding. It knew very well the power and recognized the importance of absolute, attentive and undistracted concentration, and behaved accordingly. Thus, practically nothing interfered with our almost holy dedication to work. And, luckily enough, the least of all we had to fear were the dangers of the demoralising fame. Who could have ever dreamed of better conditions ?

But there was, after all, one minor trouble in the otherwise perfect state of matters. Not altogether disagreeable trouble, at least from time to time. Namely, conferences. To ignore the existence and implications of such wide-spread undertakings was simply unthinkable. Generally, there is a countless number of opinions on the significance and importance of the scientific conferences, opinions which are very often quite contradictory. But, please, don't be afraid, I am not going to bother you by an attempt to present some exhaustive or even objective analysis of that now so fashionable and most modern a problem. Nothing can be farther from my intention.

To cut the long story short, most conferences were considered by our bosses as the very good ones, some other conferences as the still better ones, but only a small handful as sufficiently worthy of their kind attention. To the uninformed viewer the corresponding criteria and measures of the suitability for this or that assesment would most likely seem somewhat mystical. Totally and completely wrong would be an attempt to introduce into the evaluation process some simple, precise mathematical formulas, as for example the relation of direct proportionality between the assigned degree and the distance of the city in which the conference should take place. On the other hand, the one, who would therefore suppose the absence of rationality, would be wrong just the same. The estimation process was a mysteriously deterministic procedure, faultlessly eliminating any occurence or any touch of a chance.

The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants (a precise expression by the way) - truly and literally the scientific masses - of our institute took regularly part in those very good ones. The participation in those at the higher level of information exchange was of a much less massive character. The number of people which represented our colours - it means the scientific honour of our institute - at the conferences belonging to the top ones was naturally even more sharply limited. It was, by no means, easy to infiltrate into this starry constellation constantly shining upon the institute's sky. The patriotic desire to raise - no matter what were the state's costs - our banner in far away and interesting countries was really not only moving and exemplary, but also literally infectious. The selfless willingness to leave one's family for a week or even two, and readiness to overcome (fortunately mostly by plane) long distances was surprisingly wide spread and strong. No wonder then, that in remarkable accordance with the Darwin's theories

(applied here coarsely and unscientifically), only those possessing the strongest and most intense feelings of self-sacrifice and sense of social responsibility managed to pass through all the severe selection filters. By the way, those curious people interested in the game of physiognomy, would have probably noticed in this case an unexpectedly conspicuous relation between these noble feelings and ... well, expressively, characteristically looking shape and nice size of the carrier's - collar.

Our two colleagues, who also belonged to the above mentioned special community, were getting ready to participate at the regular conference in Moscow. The conference had a very good reputation and the people from our institute never missed the opportunity to take part in it ever since the very birth of the undertaking. As Moscow is about two thousand kilometers from Prague, our specialists had always, traditionally used a plane. This time however, our envoys were to have experienced a breakthrough, with respect to the travelling tradition. All seats aboard the appointed plane happened to be hopelessly taken. There was no other way left, but to use the good old train. The whole thing had suddenly to be rushed as the journey to Moscow takes almost three days and the time pressure was already more than critical. Fortunately, all went smoothly and all the necessities were arranged. The time of the departure, due to the timetable, was at 11.05 pm. of the same day. Consequently, time began to run for our two conference-participants with ever increasing speed. And though the hurry was a thing to which they were quite unaccustomed, and entirely contrary to the dignity of their respectful position in the institute and their worthiest age, they with the efficient help of their wives, truly admirably managed to pack up all the necessary proprieties, all necessary personal documents and papers for the conference, and to come to the *Prague Central Railway Station* just in time.

In contrast to the empty and tranquil streets of the already slumbering capital, the railway station was full of people and life. From time to time, almost regularly roared the loudspeakers, as if desperately trying to bring some order to that perfectly random motion of human beings. Nevertheless, the chaotic character of the motion did not change a bit. Almost nobody bothered to listen, and those who did could not simply understand. These sound-helpers produced just clusters of inarticulate, sharply disagreeable noise. Yet, our friends already beheld a movable cushioned microbiosphere, which was likely to become their headquarters for the three days immediately ahead. Furthermore, the sleeping carriage suddenly emerged luckily near them - apparently the last one in the near end of the train. The extremely tired boys did not hesitate long to enter the quiet, literally sleepy carriage.

To get inside the compartment was no sooner said than done. A hard day's night, they were really going to sleep like logs. Yes, the first phase of the journey - due to the time of the train's departure - is in a sleeping compartment definitely very comfortable.

Czechoslovakia, although tiny, is a strip-shaped country, with the strip's longitudinal axis oriented in the east-west direction. Thus, even to a speedy express with only one or two stops, travelling eastward, as was the case, it takes several long hours to reach the country's easternmost border. All the official and exhausting procedures accompanying the border crossing could therefore come no sooner than after the dawn. Little surprise then, that our experts did not waste much time, neither by an interesting game of cards nor by a brilliant analysis of the day's weather nor by any of much more prosaic talks. More surprising however, was the fact that not even the future trends and prospects of optoelectronics, which were to be treated and discussed at the conference, seemed to excite much of their interest. Our travellers' one and only acceptable idea was to regenerate their burnt-out strength as quickly as possible. "I hope my wife didn't forget to pack the pyjamas" echoed rather lately in the anxious heads of both scientists. And, as it naturally happens in scientific circles, there immediately followed an attempt to re-iterate general life's truths. "One can't, after all, rely on anyone but himself." Next minute however, proved to deny the absolute validity of that quick and bold philosophical adventure. "Heureka !" With that problem finally removed, nothing could now prevent them from spending a quiet, sweet night.

And the night was pleasant, indeed. In fact, during the night they both woke up once or twice for a while, they both were quick enough to realize the rhythmical far-off sounds of the moving wheels. Yet, the non-intruding soft monotony of the sounds made them quickly fall again into the realm of dreams. The night ran smoothly and comfortably away. Sometime after the daybreak they were awakened by a relatively violent motion, such as that when a train makes an intricate maneuver in a station. Seeing the daylight, the same idea flashed through the two different heads at once. "Cierna pri Cope." The last station on the territory of Czechoslovakia and the border-crossing at the same time. A frightful look at watches confirmed the idea. The time corresponded precisely to the timetable. "It is the highest time to get up and get ready. In a while the customs officers will arrive and it is surely more suitable to greet them already washed and properly dressed." From that time on the speed of events began to grow rapidly. A thoughtful jump from bed was followed by a short outstretching of arms and a curious look at the place, for them entirely new. "So far from the capital as it is, however they have it really nice here, one would even say that...." Then came the moment of crippling hypnosis. Their fresh strengths, regained by the healthy sleep, left them with a speed of light. Only the force of inertia kept them up on their legs. To both bewildered pairs of staring eyes seemed the dirty, inconspicuous four-worded note hanging in front of them, as sharp and incredible and painful as menetekel. It ran: ***Railway Station - Prague South.***

Regretfully, nobody has ever recorded the powerful outburst of inner feelings that was then set into motion in *homo sapiens*. There is no eyewitness of their feverish retreat from the scene either. Nothing is also known of their following hideouts. But quite

certain is the fact that our institute, for the first time in the long history of this conference, was not that year represented. "

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE CALLING

Will's father had three sons: the first son, George, was expected to inherit his farm and the second son, Tony, already had a college education, so he got his share of money beforehand. Third son, Will, was not scheduled to get anything, he was just out of luck. So when his father died, he could either work for his brother George or leave their family farm. Nothing would actually change: he already slaved for his father, just for food and nobody ever had a good word for him. He was just an outcast among his own people. Why? It was nobody's fault, it was simply the way they were. His mother died when he was just a little boy and when his father re-married, he revealed to Will he is not his natural son, only a living proof of his mother's sin. Obviously his stepmother was told too and convinced his father to take Will out of his will.

Life was tough and no jobs around, so Will left their mountains and headed south. He was used to hard work and he took any odd job which came his way. He worked mostly as a farm-hand, carpenter, cowboy and he even did deliveries when there was nothing else. But the money he took with him were pretty soon gone and the jobs were scarce, too. Faced with the choice between starving and begging, he chose the latter. It was easy but hardly any better: while he was standing at the corner with a hat in his hand, people passed him without throwing money or even a glance in his direction. He was just a newcomer and they saved their money for their local beggars.

The third day, when he finally recognized it didn't work, some old lady came and gave him few coins, so he could buy himself a measly sandwich which could hardly kill his hunger. He found himself an old barn and slept till morning, when he woke up even more hungry and went back to the corner and his hat routine. But it was even worse than the day before: no angel of mercy appeared and he spent the night with a drilling pain in his stomach. Tired, he eventually fell asleep, only to wake up again, hungry and desperate. He never felt so low in his life: was it his fault or was that the world was really so difficult place to live?

Maybe I should go back, he thought. After all, slaving for my brother - he could never get used to call him stepbrother - wouldn't be so bad. And maybe, if he dies. . . He then remembered he had another stepbrother, Tony, who would certainly inherit everything if George dies. Tony was living in the city and most likely wouldn't want to work like some farmer - probably even wouldn't know how. And Will would have to slave for him,

which might be even worse since Tony was, as he remembers, a big spender, but rather stingy when he had to share with others. No, he couldn't come back. Will washed his face in the fountain and made his decision. In the barn, he found an old rope. He took it, went out and sat under the large maple tree. He started to tie some hangman noose on it, the way he used to do when he was kid and the others who saw the result, praised his skill.

Suddenly, somebody pulled his sleeve. It was the lady who gave him money, actually the only person who gave him that day any money. He quickly hid the rope behind him.

"Young man," she said, "do you want to make yourself more money?"

"It depends," said Will. "Actually I am just returning back home," he lied. "I live up in the mountains, you know."

She looked at the end of the rope he didn't have time to hide, but didn't say a word about it. Instead, she said: "Well, you look to me like you are really good with tools, and I need a handyman, you know. My old farmhouse needs fixing and I am a widow, I have nobody to do it. I will pay you reasonably well," she added.

"How do you know I am good with tools? And why me?" asked Will.

"My, oh my!" she exclaimed, "so many questions! Can't it wait after breakfast? I am really hungry and I believe so are you. Let me show you my house, it is not far and you can make your mind then." So they went and Will gladly took her offer. He did whatever she asked him to do: he fixed the roof, painted the sidings, and yes, fences too, even the shack. He repaired windows, chairs and stairs, water well and tractor, which needed it badly. After all, he was a farmer, he knew those things. He actually worked so well that in three months, there was nothing else to do. He knew it and Martha - that was the old lady's name - realized it too.

One day she told him she wanted to talk to him. She seated him in her dining room, in an old sofa. He realized she had something important in his mind, probably to tell him his job was finished. She hesitated however, so they carry on with their small talk and then she finally wanted to come to the point. But before she could say anything, Will interrupted: "I guess you want to tell me something. You want to tell me there is nothing more to do around here."

"Yes," she nodded. "You are right, unfortunately. It is of course your fault, you know. Other workers would probably try to make most of it and prolong it as long as they could. There could be only two reasons for that: either you were in a hurry to leave again or you are just too honest. I think that the second is true. Now I have one more job for you to do - it is rather a favour, if I may say so."

"Sure," said Will, "I'll do anything you ask me to. You have been very nice to me, so I'll do it for free. I will do even the most difficult, unpleasant job - just ask me."

"Wow, wow! Don't promise anything yet - it is not an easy job. I have to be sure first that you do it voluntarily and I have to tell you that you cannot change your mind some time later," she explained.

"O.K," he said, "you tell me first what kind of job it is."

"It is a rather long story," she explained, "so have some cookies here while I go and make us a cup of coffee. I'll be back in a while."

Will was sitting there, trying to figure out what job could be possibly so difficult. Before he could come up with anything, she was back with coffee and carried on: "You already know that I am a widow - I lost my husband two years ago. And some time ago, my doctor told me that I am terminally ill.

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Will and he really meant it. "Isn't there any hope at all?"

"I wish it was, but no - it is an incurable disease. Still, there is something else which happened to me recently, it may sound odd and I hope you will not laugh."

"Why would I laugh?" replied Will, all confused.

"Well, one night I saw my husband Paul in my dream and he was talking to me. I told him I wanted to die, since I am old and of no use to anybody. The only thing I am afraid of is the last pain, just before I die. I was told it would be excruciating. He said it could be managed, but there was something I had to arrange first. Are you sure you want to hear about it?" she interrupted her story.

"But of course," said Will, "I bet it there is something for me to do for you. But I do not understand -"

"You will, just let me finish. Paul wanted me to find the messenger, the person I could send to him."

"And what message should your messenger carry?" asked Will, all flabbergasted.

"No message, he just has to make a trip to see my husband. It would be enough if he goes and sees him, Paul will then give him a message for me."

"Is that all?" asked Will. Suddenly it dawned on him: "But he is dead, he could somebody see him? The messenger would have to -"

"Yes," she said, "he would have to die first. It would have to be his - shall we say - *calling*, the mission, you know, like if he is destined for higher things. At least that was what Paul said, I myself do not understand those things."

"No that sounds little bit crazy," agreed Will. "But after all, it was just a dream!"

"Well, I had the same dream several nights in a row and also this note - " Martha handed Will the piece of paper, with some illegible writing on it.

"But I can't read it," said Will. Then he added: "Wait a minute, one word is clear enough. It says here "a messenger", but that of course does not mean anything."

"Sure it does," said Martha. "It was me who wrote it, during one of those dreams."

Will didn't give up: "Maybe it was just a vision, it happens when -"

He didn't finish. The look she gave him convinced him she is not imagining it and that it happened the way she said it was. There was of course no way to explain the unexplained, he knew that. Besides, if she believes it will help her, there is nothing else to be done to convince her otherwise. But the idea of human sacrifice . . .

"Somebody could have drugged you. I was told there is one kind of mushroom - " he started again.

"Where? Here? There is nobody around here except you. Have you drugged me, William?" she laughed.

"Well, maybe it was in your medication," he suggested.

"I don't take no medication any more, it wouldn't help me," she said.

"Not even against pain?"

"Not even that. They told me it won't help when the pain would be getting too intense. I want to get used to it, to resist the pain without painkillers. But I know now I could never get used to it and it scares me."

"And you think I could be that messenger?" he asked. Actually it was more like a statement, it was that obvious. "True, you gave me a shelter, gave me a job, you even -"

" - saved your life when you were trying to hang yourself?" she completed his sentence.

"You knew about it? So you did help me just from mercy - oh no, I understand it now: you did it so I could do this favour to you in return, right? And I thought that there were still some unselfish people in this world . . ."

"Don't be silly," she said. "At that time, I didn't have those dreams yet. Besides, I would do it for you even if I knew you wouldn't help me. that was my *calling*, you know? I don't want you to do it from sheer gratitude. I want you to do it, because it is a good deed, your *calling*, crazy as it sounds. But of course, I cannot and will not ever force you to do it for me."

"No," he said, "but you put some moral obligation on me. How can I say no?"

"But of course you can say NO! What is a pain of an old woman like me with comparison with young life like yours!"

"Wait a minute, there must be some solution. Didn't he tell you how I am supposed to go back? That's it, I would die, but instead - like in some fairy tale - I would certainly come back to life again!"

She looked at him sadly and then dispersed his hopes: "No, he didn't say anything like that. It wouldn't be that simple, *that easy*, you know. I cannot promise you that, it would

not be fair. But listen, you have something to think about. I will leave you alone, you figure it out. Think about it and you will let me know at suppertime, will you?" And she left Will alone. He went to his room in the attic, laid down in bed and realized he really had a problem to cope with.

He knew he couldn't do it. Who does she thinks he is? Sure, he spent few good months here and yes, she was very nice to him, but the price she wanted was too high. And why was she so much afraid of the last pain? It couldn't be that bad, could it? Well, probably it could, doctors wouldn't lie to her. But one thing is the pain and the other thing is to die. One can stand pain if he knows he wouldn't die. True, on the other hand, if she knows she is going to die, how could she fight her pain? What for? It would be better then to finish it all. But she is probably too religious for that.

Will, on the other hand, was not religious at all. he was, but then he couldn't forgive God he made him illegitimate and thus to rob him of everything - before he was even born. And Will's prayers couldn't change that either. He looked back at his life and he realized that he also had his share in spoiling it. After all, he was a failure and once, he even wanted to kill himself. Most probably he would have never done it - Martha probably didn't save his life after all. One more thing not to be thankful for. But then again: what if she was just testing him?

But why? No, it didn't look like she was testing him, she looked too serious. But wait a minute, why would she need his sacrifice? Maybe she just wants him to leave - she is probably afraid he might kill her for money, and she tries to scare him away.

Nonsense, he concluded later. The whole idea is a nonsense. It is just a silly imagination of an old lady. She is afraid of pain a she thinks it can be avoided. How could it be? Maybe he could really make her happy by simply saying "yes". Even more: she could really wish it away, Will heard of such cases. However, she might kill him to achieve her goal . . . But she might kill him just the same, even if he says "no". Yes, she must be crazy, that's it. That's the only explanation. He has to tell her "yes" to suppress her suspicion and then run away, as far as he can. Happy he solved the puzzle, he went downstairs, to tell her and to have a last supper.

Martha wasn't surprised when he told her. Again, she said it was voluntary commitment and that he was a nice boy - which she of course knew from the very beginning - since the first time she saw him, she said. " But are you sure?" she asked again. "Sure, " he laid. And so they both went to their rooms, both happy, each one for different reasons.

Will shortly fell asleep. At first, he didn't know where he was. He suddenly appeared to be in front of some door. He knocked and somebody behind the door asked: "Are you the messenger?"

"Yes," he answered and the door slowly opened and the man in executioner's cape grabbed him by his shirt. His assistants locked Will in chains and dragged him down in some dungeon. He expected to be killed or what, but they tied him to the rack and then started to torture him. They stretched his limbs, burned his hips and feet, scorched his soles, poured hot water in his mouth and whipped him so much that his blood was all over the floor. They then poked him with red hot irons, both arms and legs, and poured boiling oil in his wounds.

He lost his consciousness several times, but they always revived him and carried on with their torture. How long it lasted he wouldn't know. He didn't understand what they wanted - they didn't ask him any questions and or pressed him for any confession. Finally, he had no more strength and he begged them to let him die. The executioner poured some potion in Will's mouth. Few moments later, he put his hand on Will's closed eyelids, lifted them and said."He is gone." He leaned to Will's ear and whispered: "Tell Martha I am expecting her."

At the very same moment Will woke up, sat on his bed and tried to recover from the nightmare. He was tired, deady tired, and the dream was so rela. He looked at his body, there were no traces of the torture. He uttered the sigh of relief. Then he remembered the answer he gave to Martha and his decision to run away.

He packed his bag and decided to run away right after breakfest - he will need some strength for his escape. He entered the empty dining room, then went to the kitchen, but she wasn't there either. He decided to see her if she was O.K., he had to know that much before he goes. Thinging sadly what coward he was, he went upstairs to her bedroom. The door was slightly open. He called her, but there was no answer. He entered the bedroom and saw Martha in her bed. Her eyes were closed and she didn't move. Will came closer, calling her name. He then checked her pulse and realized she was dead. Her face was lit with a peaceful smile - it looked like she just fell asleep. On her night table was a letter, addressed to him.

Will opened the letter and read:

*"Dear Will,
thank you for taking my pains on yourself, it was very courageous of you. I am leaving this world to see my Paul again. You made me happy and if it is any compensation for what you did, I want you to keep my farm. You are a good boy, just live and be happy,*

BITS: VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT
(the one he never wrote and nobody can read)

The year is 1912. The American antique book dealer and collector, **Wilfrid M. Voynich**, discovered amongst the collection owned by Jesuit College in Frascati near Rome, the manuscript which has been ever since called *The Most Mysterious Manuscript in the World*. Voynich judged it to date from the late 13th century, on the evidence of the calligraphy, the drawings, the vellum, and the pigments. He bought it and realizing, that it is written in some indecipherable code, he made the copies available to anybody, who wanted to try to decipher it. That's why the manuscript is bearing his name, while the author - and especially the content - of the manuscript is still unknown, even today. In 1961, a New York collector, **Hans Kraus**, bought the manuscript and later donated it to Yale University (it was then valued for half a million of dollars, today it is priceless). The Voynich Manuscript is now at the *Beinecke Rare Book Library* of Yale, it's last resting place. Who cannot rest however are many code-breakers, who are attempting apparently impossible task of deciphering its content.

As I already hinted, there are two mysteries connected with the manuscript:

- 1) who was the author (authors?), and
- 2) what language and code the manuscript is written in.

Obviously, there was a lot speculation about the first question, based mostly on partial guesswork or code-cracking method and the "results" obtained. As early as 1921, professor **William Romaine Newbold** of the University of Pennsylvania claimed victory on both accounts. For a while, he was a celebrity, but it was only few years after his death (1926) when his answers - the second one for sure - were disproved.

Who was the author according to him? Nobody else than **Roger Bacon**, the thirteen century English Franciscan friar and among other things, the manuscript was supposed to indicate that Bacon build and used microscopes and telescopes 400 years before Galileo. Of course, there was somebody else who already mentioned Bacon in connection with manuscript, long time before Newbold - but more about it later. In 1976 Captain **Prescott Currier** gave a paper in which he showed that, judging from the handwriting, the Voynich Manuscript must have been written by at least two different people, and that the two texts differed markedly in the frequency distribution of their letters and combinations. That of course didn't make the search for author(s) any easier.

The first *documented* history of the manuscript starts in Prague, then capital of then Czech kingdom, the seat of Roman *Emperor Rudolph II* (1552-1612). And the first owner was apparently an Englishman, *doctor John Dee*, the mysterious - but very real - scientist, astronomer, mathematician and yes, astrologer, who lived in Prague between years 1582 and 1589. The manuscript was then probably sold to the emperor himself, by mysterious person who we shall name *Mr. X*. After the death of the Emperor, the manuscript is believed to pass into hands of *Jacobus Horcicky* (later bestowed with the title "*de Tepenecz*"), whose name actually is - or was - written in the manuscript (it cannot be seen by naked eye: it was erased by somebody and is seen only under ultraviolet light). Horcicky left Prague in 1618 and died in 1622. The manuscript then passed into hands of unidentified individual who we might call here *Mr. Y* (unless there was another owner before him). Mr. Y in turn left it in his will to Dr. Marci. In his letter, found with the manuscript and addressed to his friend *Athanasius Kircher*, *Dr. Joannus Marcus Marci* mentioned discussing the manuscript with another friend, *Dr. Raphael Missowsky*. After Mr. Y died, Marci sent manuscript (1665 or 1666) with that letter to Kircher, a Jesuit priest in Rome and both documents were found almost 250 years later by Mr. Voynich in Italy.

Now there are already some interesting points here: the named persons really existed and we may reasonably assume that so did Mr. X and Mr. Y. Of course we cannot be sure if the letter or even the manuscript are genuine. They both could have been written any time later, using some old parchment and prepared ink, of course with the intent to look older. But if it was so, we may reasonably assume that it was hardly done by Mr. Voynich or his accomplices, considering all minor details and coincidences confirming Marci's letter, including some facts which were not known in Voynich's time. We may then start by assuming that the manuscript already existed in the seventeenth century and and that it is - most likely - the one stored in Yale.

There are however some uncertainties in the data presented so far. Let's start with the mentioned letter. Marci had obviously three friends: the one was Kircher, another person he calls Dr. Raphael, who was a tutor of Czech language to Ferdinand III, king of Bohemia - that is of course the above mentioned Dr. Missowsky. The third one whom Marci called an "intimate" friend, is our mysterious Mr. Y. who, he says, in his last will "bequeathed to him the manuscript" which Marci "as soon as it came to his possession" sent to Kircher. Kircher apparently knew Mr. Y, since he was once received the sample of the same manuscript from Mr. Y. (or by Marci as intermediary, it is not clear from the letter) and who was asked by Mr. Y for his opinion as an expert. Mr. Y is never really named in above letter, either because of concealment or it wasn't necessary since Kircher knew who was Marci talking about. For starters, we cannot assume that Mr. Y is Dr. Raphael, since he already died in 1644. Marci also mentions sending some written

attempts by former owner to crack the code, but either they were the additional scribblings in the manuscript or were destroyed (it was never mentioned they were ever found). Thus we have only Marci's letter as the most reliable information, actually the only *first hand* information.

There is of course some secondhand and even the "third hand" information in his letter. According to Marci, Dr. Raphael told him the book once belonged to Emperor Rudolph II, who bought it for 600 ducats from the person whom he called the "bearer" - which does not necessary means the owner, but rather some intermediary. As we already specified, the bearer was either Mr.X himself or somebody representing him. The question is: how did Dr. Raphael know about it? He died 11 years before Marci wrote that letter, but he was less then 6 years old when Mr.X supposedly sold the manuscript to Rudolph. This we assume happened in the year 1586, when Dee mentions in his diary he received 600 ducats (a large sum, even for Rudolph!), but of course Dee did not mention from whom).

While both Marci and Missowsky talked about the manuscript many years before Marci's letter, none of them apparently owned it at that time (Missowsky could, but then he would have to pass it onto Mr.Y). Why was Marci talking about the manuscript already 11 years before he got it? It seems that there was more people knowing about it, many probably even tried to decode it and so we can qualify information from Missowsky as a pure hearsay. That of course does not mean it is not true: it is interesting that the number 600 pops up in the letter - of course Dee was never mentioned by name, but he did posses quite a number of antique manuscripts. That would make him the first candidate for being Mr. X.



Now another puzzle: Mr.Y, as an owner, should have known if Rudolph was the owner and John Dee before him, at least he should know the rumour about it. Why? Wouldn't you ask the seller who the previous owners were? He should even know that Horcicky once owned it, too, Horcicky's name was probably still visible there. Of course, if it was Mr.Y who erased it, he would hardly advertise it. Well, maybe if he also inherited it and there was nobody to ask around - but than again, the donor would most likely mention it, at least in his will. After all, what's the use of book, if you cannot read it and know nothing about it. None of this is mentioned. Such lack of curiosity from owners is hard to believe. I guess it was known but for good reasons was not passed on in writing, just by the word of mouth. One has to understand that was still the time of witch-hunts, burning of heretics and slip of tongue could mean a disaster. Both Marci and Kircher lived in more moderate times and after all, they were one way or another associated with Jesuits, therefore beyond suspicion.

Another mystery: who erased signature of de Tepenecz and why? It would have been for any owner a great proof of antiquity! One thing we know from Marci's letter: Mr. Y tried to solve the puzzle, but failed. He then contacted Kircher for help - or at least a comment, probably on recommendation from Marci, who knew Kircher was successful code-breaker. So why he didn't then left the book to Kircher directly, in his will? Marci even mentioned Mr. Y didn't want to send the whole document to Kircher for deciphering. He gave it to Marci instead, who immediately sends it away to Kircher - why? Of course Marci was a scientist himself, he probably helped Mr. Y with solution and knew there was no use in trying. I would venture a bet Kircher did try to solve the riddle - and he obviously failed too. For what we know about him, he would hardly keep his discovery secret. Unless there was something Vatican wanted to suppress. That does not seem so silly, it is believed now that Vatican scientists actually knew Copernicus was right, and probably some time even before he did.

At the end of his letter Marci claims "*he* believed the author was Roger Bacon". Since there are three persons mentioned in previous sentence, it is hard to tell who did believe that: the Emperor Rudolph II, Mr. X who sold him the manuscript or Dr. Raphael himself (most likely, since he was the one who told him that information). But if the code was not broken, how could then anybody guess the name of the author? Obviously somebody knew - or claimed to know - more about the manuscript history. The answer is simple: who else than Mr. X?

Now back to Mr. Y. Why is Mr. Y so important? Because he is *the last link* to the manuscript before Marci. Marci knew his name but didn't tell: why such secrecy? Actually who was *Dr. Marci*? He was born in Landskroun (Lanškroun) in Bohemia (1595) and was of Czech nationality (so were by the way Missowsky and Horcicky as well, judging by their Czech names). He studied in Jesuits college, however left them and graduated as a medicine doctor from Charles University, Prague, where he later became the rector. He took one diplomatic trip to Italy (in 1639), which may explain his friendship with Kircher. He wrote several scientific books, mainly about medicine and physics. Now get this: in 1665 he became the personal physician of Emperor Ferdinand III, which explains his acquaintance with Dr. Missowsky, who was also in employ of Ferdinand III. Before Marci died, he was finally admitted in Jesuit order, apparently on his own request.

Now how about *Athanasius Kircher*? Born into rather poor family in neighbouring Germany, he became a Jesuit priest and might have been actually known to Marci via Jesuit connection even before Marci's trip to Italy. It could have been a visit to an already longtime friend. Kircher taught mathematics at the Collegio Romano, wrote several scientific books and spent the rest of his life in independent studies, under patronage of

the Pope and other benefactors. He was known for his efforts to decode different kinds of hieroglyphs and as an author of "Polygraphia Nova", a book on cryptography. He died in Rome (1680). Now comes another link to Emperor Ferdinand III: Kircher dedicated some of his books to him, for which he received a comfortable pension. It seems that that Dr. Kircher knew how to get his patronage, but then again, he was a celebrity on hieroglyphs and antiquities.

Less is known about Dr. Missowsky. He must have been also a longtime friend of Marci, who discussed the manuscript with him at least 11 years before he inherited it. Interesting is the fact he knew the story about Rudolph II - sure, he was living in Rudolph's time, but it is doubtful if he himself was on the secret, if there was any. As we mentioned, it could have been a hearsay - Marci is not even trying to confirm that information, especially one about Roger Bacon. Come to think of it, Marci might not have a high opinion about the manuscript: he disposed of it very quickly, at the same time apparently doing favour to Kircher, who once wanted to see the whole book.

. Rather mysterious person is Horcicky, the director of Rudolph's botanical gardens and was probably in very good terms with Rudolph, who raised him to nobility. At the same year he got his title "de Tepenecz" (or rather later) he became the owner of the manuscript - judging by this title-name there. That also suggests that there was another owner between him and Mr. Y. (Jacobus de Tepenec apparently fled from Prague in 1618 or 1619 and died abroad in 1622) Mr. Y. died 43 years later (Marci's letter was dated August 1665). We do not know *when* Rudolph bought the manuscript, actually we have only the word of Marci *that he did* (and he only *quotes* Missowsky). The possibility that the book was donated to Tepenecz by Emperor Rudolph (hardly sold and if so, certainly not for large sum of 600 ducats) is of course only speculation by some, in order to fill the gap in the broken chain of owners. The year this note appears in Dee's diary, in June that is, both Dee and Kelly had to leave the country while falling out of favour with count Lobkowitz, the high officer of Imperial court. But in September they were both back in Southern Bohemia, on invitation by very rich and powerfull Czech count Rosenberg, who could as well be the one who really bought the manuscript for himself. It is also possible that Horcicky got the possession of the manuscript only after Rudolph's death (1611) or when Rosenberg died (1592). But Horcicky might have even invented the story himself, to make the book more desirable.

As we can see, Mr.Y is still eluding us and we may never know who he was. The suggestion it was Ferdinand III has to be denied on two accounts: being his personal physician, Marci could hardly call him an "intimate" friend and besides, at the time the letter was written Ferdinand III was still alive and well.

Now let's look closer at the times of Rudolph II. Choosing Prague as the capital of his

empire, he made it also the virtual centre of European science and art. It was well known fact that he had in his employ Johannes Kepler and Tycho de Brahe. He was also buying pieces of art or historical value in enormous quantities. There is no doubt he would buy something like "Voynich" manuscript and even pay unheard sum of 600 ducats for it. And it is doubtful, if he would ever part with it voluntarily, unless of course he would learn it was a fraud. Then, as a joke, he could donate it somebody, say for instance to Horcicky.

What happened with the manuscript after Rudolph died is of course only a speculation. We do not know how Horcicky got it and we don't even know how he lost it. It is unlikely he would sign it if he expected to sell it: or maybe his name was written there as a dedication by somebody else. His leave of Prague in 1919 could be explained by the ongoing revolt of Czech protestant nobility, but since they were still in power (they were defeated only later in 1620, at battle of White Mountain, near Prague), it does not look it was for religious reasons. Forced catholicization of Czech kingdom, execution of the leaders of revolting nobility (1621) and persecution of protestants and their mass emigration started only after the defeat of Czechs. Most likely, during the time of religious persecutions the manuscript remained in Prague. At the end of 30 years war (1648), Swedes ransacked treasures collected by Rudolph and moved them to Sweden - some of them being returned to Czechs as late as 1950. It is most likely that it was hidden somewhere in Prague in order not to get in their hands. Then 17 years after the end of war, the owner - or custodian - Mr.Y dies and Marci sends it to Kircher.

Now how about mysterious Mr. X? The lead to Roger Bacon, if it is true, would obviously suggest he came from England. While Marci is offering Rudolph as a once-time owner of manuscript, the year he bought it - if he did - is rather obscure. Interestingly enough, Dr. Dee was in Prague almost hundred years before Marci's letter and the mentioned 600 ducats might be only a coincidence or worse, a sum payed for another, completely different manuscript or even for something else. Rudolph might have bought the manuscript much later - Dee died in 1608 and the thought about Mr.X as being the middleman between Rudolph and the estate of deceased Dr. Dee offers itself at first sight. After Dee's death, Horcicky could have become the owner of the manuscript as early as 1608, which is by the way the year he got his title. Coincidence? Was it for the services rendered to Rudolph or could it be that he was the one who gained the manuscript for Rudolph? Was he the mysterious Mr. X?

Rudolph might have already known that Dee had the manuscript - he probably had it with him when he was trying to get in Rudolph employ in Prague and he could also mention Roger Bacon as an author. In his diary, Dee mentioned some mysterious manuscript he (or Kelly?) had in his possession, which was supposed to help them to

produce more of the mysterious "red" powder (discovered by Kelly in Glastonbury and claimed to be an ingredient for the transmutation of lead into gold). When leaving Bohemia, the manuscript might have stayed with Kelly, who was already employed by Rudolph for manufacturing gold. Or it could be that Dee might have taken the manuscript with him to England - unless he sold it to Rudolph some time before his departure, of course. Surprisingly, Rudolph never mentioned the name of Mr. Y to anybody, while he did apparently revealed the name of Roger Bacon - if it was the way it got out.

There is an indication of Dee's possession of the manuscript: there are numbers on pages in the upper right corner (it was confirmed by comparison with Dee's handwriting from Oxford's Bodleian library that it looks similar to his). Seeing the numbers however one can wonder: written apparently by quill, the numbers look so perfect, more like printed matter, so uniform they are. Dee stated in his diary he received 630 ducats in October 1586 and his son Arthur noted that Dee, while in Bohemia, owned "a booke...containing nothing butt Hieroglyphicks, which booke father bestowed much time upon: but I could not heare that hee could make it out." So here you have it: it looks like a certain proof. But is it really?

Besides: a proof of what? Only that Dee might have sold the manuscript to Rudolph. It certainly does not prove it was genuine and certainly not that it was written by Roger Bacon. True, Dee owned a number of Roger Bacon's manuscripts, however this one was surely special. Come to think of it, how about that manuscript Dee and Kelly were supposed to use when they were trying to find the buried treasure - or rather motherlode of gold - for count Rosenberg of Trebova in southern Bohemia?

Consider the fact that Kelly was apparently nothing more than con artist and that he gained the confidence of trusting doctor Dee only via spiritualism. Kelly didn't even succeed to make some gold for Rudolph, which was the reason the former put him in prison a Kelly later died from injuries caused by his tragic escape. It looks more likely that those two manuscripts are the one and only, the pages surely look like some book of magic, procedures how to communicate with ghosts, use of Philosopher's Stone or what not. The more obscure the fraud looks the better impression it makes. And that brings to us another possible author of the manuscript - Kelly. It is interesting that Vatican was at that time already interested in Dee's secrets, the manuscript apparently being the main attraction. According to Dee, Vatican sent an agent provocateur to lure both alchemists into hands of Roman inquisition. Considering the fame of the manuscript, it would not be surprising the church considered the book to be a part of black magic rituals. Or could it be Vatican wanted to beef-up its own gold reserves?

Last but not least, let's look at suggested author: Roger Bacon. The name was undoubtedly mentioned in connection with Dr. Dee, probably by alchemist himself - he

owned several Bacon's. manuscripts and was greatly influenced by his teachings. It was Dee who introduced the work of Roger Bacon to his namesake, Sir Francis Bacon. It may as well be the manuscript Dee's son mentioned later, the one Dee couldn't crack himself. Bacon was the thirteenth century scholar, mathematician and professor in Oxford who later, probably due to bad health, joined the order of Friars Minor, better known as Franciscans. There he was persecuted by his superiors, who were opposed to his scientific work and experiments. And, *voilà*, here we should have an explanation why he wrote in cipher, to conceal the content of his writings. Unfortunately this does not hold to real scrutiny, the pages as we can see are already conspicuous at the very first sight - not even talking about the pictures of nude women - and it would certainly increase the risk of accusation of heresy or even worse, of witchcraft. He would have to hide the manuscript very well and if so, why would he then have to use the cipher at all? It is hardly understandable why would such wise man foolishly risk this kind of danger - after all, he was once put in prison just for novelty of his teachings. Besides, he was never trying to conceal his ideas and while he worked on several kind of codes, he could possibly use something less conspicuous. After all, in his "Epistle on the Secret Works of Art and the Nullity of Magic" is a short discussion of cryptology, the subject Bacon apparently knew well. Of course, this is only a speculation, but so is the original hypothesis. If Bacon wrote the manuscript - and I stress the *if* - there were some other reasons for encoding the text, but we will get to it later. Even the pictures of flowers seem to be some kind of code, since they do not represent the existing flowers accurately. The other option is that somebody else wrote it, even before his time - just because the manuscript was allegedly found among his manuscripts does not necessary link him to authorship.

So what do we really know about the manuscript author *for sure*? The simple answer is - nothing. We know little about owners, too. The only "documented" owners were Marci and Horcicky. The most reliable document seems to be Marci's letter (when he quotes his first hand experience) and even then, he had it for very short time and knew only some hearsay about it. The next lead is the dedication to Horcicky, which was erased by somebody, but looks real. There was no apparent reason to plant it there, especially such complicated way (it is invisible to naked eye and could have easily escaped the attention). The mysterious Mr. Y seems unquestionable owner, but of course he is not. It could have been just a deliberate misleading by Marci - actually he might be Mr. Y himself. Why would he use such deception? Giving the manuscript away, he tried to dissociate himself from it. It is conceivable, that he did work on deciphering before and he had his doubts it was genuine. The other reason might have been he didn't really want to disclose how did he get in possession of it.

While Missowsky information was secondhand only, the story about Rudolph sounds reasonable enough. However neither Missowsky nor Marci knew about Horcicky and

that is really strange: if Horcicky owned the manuscript *after* Rudolph, how could it escape their attention. At least Mr. Y should have known! It also proves that neither of those two erased his name, unless they of course wanted to conceal it, which is less likely (Horcicky's name would prove their suspicion of Rudolph's connection with the manuscript. Dr. Missowsky is interesting in different way: while apparently not connected to manuscript at all (or was he?), he knew a lot about it, actually more than Marci.

We can only guess that Mr.X was the last owner before Rudolph, unfortunately the most important one, since his name could lead us to the author and thus to the possible language and code used in the manuscript. It is rather unusual that while assuming the manuscript really originated in thirteenth century, we have information about it dated only from 16th and 17th century with two large gaps before and after. Or was there anything before at all?

On the other hand, we may safely assume that the manuscript was laying the last three hundred years quietly in Italy, changing place only when the other collections he was located with also moved. But even that is hard to believe, if we consider the importance and mystery surrounding such document. Is it really possible that nobody tried to solve it, for almost three long centuries? True, people usually do not brag about their failures, but still . . . But enough of guesswork, let's face the facts: not knowing the author, we are practically where we started and each code-breaking must certainly start from scratch: everything is possible and nothing could be taken for granted. Otherwise we would only repeat mistake of Mr.Newbold who apparently took the rumour about Bacon's authorship seriously and designed his deciphering methods accordingly. It is easier to find something, if we know what we are looking for . . .

The villa the document was found by Voynich in Frascati was built by Altemps family in around 1570. In 1582 Pope Gregory XIII issued from there the bull reforming the calendar. In 1620 the building was donated to Vatican library. In 1865 the villa became a Jesuit college which was finally closed in 1953. The question remains: after Kircher obtained the manuscript, did he bury it in his papers, gave it to Vatican library or even to somebody else? How did it appear in villa? Was it there before 1865 and why? Its sleeping history came alive again after Voynich discovered it. And he didn't explain too much about his discovery either - for nine years he didn't even reveal the place of discovery. Then he named frater Strickland to be the one who helped him. He apparently concealed something about the chest the manuscript was found in, from bussiness reasons - after all, he was the dealer with old manuscripts. From a piece of paper which was once attached to the Voynich manuscript, it is believed that the manuscript once formed part of the private library of *Petrus Beckx S.J.*(1795-1887), 22nd general of the

Society of Jesus (Jesuits).

More than 30 manuscripts bought by Voynich were described elsewhere and from these descriptions it would appear that Beckx removed a number of manuscripts from Vatican library Collegio Romano in 1870, and these were found in the chests mentioned by Voynich. The letters received by Kircher were there too, bound together with other material and this is now the collection of manuscripts called the '*carteggio kircheriano*'. There is also the volume which contains 35 of 36 letters from Marci to Kircher, and many other letters from Prague and Bohemia - apparently Kircher knew more people there. It shows that somebody was interested in collecting all possible data about manuscript. Why? It also confirms Kircher received the manuscript, but the Voynich manuscript *is not* mentioned specifically in the first published catalogue of Kircher's museum.

From the latest discoveries (R. Zandbergen, G. Landini, "Some new information about the later history of the Voynich Manuscript") we learn that it was also reported that a letter sent from Prague to Voynich indicates that Marci at one time inherited the alchemical library of one **George Barschius**. There is one letter from him in the carteggio kircheriano and he is also mentioned in one letter from Marci to Kircher (who calls him Georg Barsch), documenting that Barsch visited Kircher some time prior to 1639 and sent him a letter in 1639. Marci also writes there - after his own visit to Kircher in 1640 - that he is forwarding Kircher some notes drawn up by Barsch, the man quite knowledgeable in chemistry. Apparently this might confirm that our mysterious Mr. Y is indeed Barsch. If he was, he apparently told Marci very little about the history of the manuscript or was it still another manuscript? The cooperation between Kircher and Marci now gets in different light. Could it be that Kircher heard about manuscript and asked Marci to get it for him? According to letters, Marci and Kircher had already some correspondence on deciphering Swedish military code letters (let's not forget there was still war against Swedes, till 1648). Some time before that (1663) Kircher also published the book on cryptology.

Now you may ask what happened with radiocarbon dating. Well, according to experts, it would be possible to say if the manuscript is from 13th *or* 16th century, but there will be no way to distinguish 16th century from 19th century. Considering however several additional notes, written by owners and/or code-breakers from 16th and seventeenth century directly on the margin of the manuscript, we may comfortably assume it is at least from 16th century. Of course the age of vellum could tell us only when the animal died and the ink could have been applied anytime later. On the other hand, nothing else proves it is older than that but it could be Bacon or somebody else already bought it from somebody. There is no record Voynich manuscript was ever carbon dated. But the additional new information seems to check pretty well and proves the manuscript is at

least 350 years old and at the same time clears Voynich from any wrongdoing.

To sum it up, Voynich manuscript poses so far more questions than answers. That's where its real value lies: it is the one of greatest challenges of today's codebreakers

ATTACHMENT

(The historical events related to the manuscript)

1214 Roger Bacon born

1292 Bacon dies

1492 Discovery of America

1526 Ferdinand I Habsburg elected Czech king

1527 Dr. Dee born

1547 First resistance of Czech nobility, defeated

1550 Aksaham's Herbal published

1652 Rudolph II born (to Maxmillian II)

1562 Maxmilian II (oldest son of Ferdinand I) crowned as a Czech king

1565 Ferdinand I died

1572 Ferdinand II born (nephew of Ferdinand I)

1576 Maxmilian II dies, Rudolph II (oldest son of Maximilian II) crowned as Czech king

1580 Missowsky born

1580 Rabbi Loew of Prague creates Golem

1582 Dr. Dee arrives in Prague

1586 Dee notes in his diary he received 600 ducats

1589 Dee returns to England, Kelly stays in Prague

1595 Dr. Marci born

1595 Edward Kelly dies

1602 Kircher born

1608 John Dee died

1608 Horcicky got his title de Tepenez

1609 German Protestant Union established, Frederick Palatine as a head of Protestant Union

1611 Czech crown goes to Mathias, brother of Rudolph II

1612 Rudolph II died

1614 Fama Fraternitatis - Rosicrucian Manifesto, first issue

1617 Ferdinand II crowned Czech king

1618 Czech resistance, Prague defenestration, the true beginning of the Thirty years' war

1618 (or 1619) Horcicky leaves Bohemia

1619 Mathias died, Czech protestants elect Frederick Palatine as their king Cezhs elected

Frederick Palatine as czech king
1620 Battle on White Mountain (near Prague), Ferdinand II the defeated Czech protestants, Palatine runs away.
1622 Horcicky died
1637 Ferdinand II dies, his son Ferdinand III becomes Czech king.
1640 Marci visited Kircher in Italy
1644 Missowsky died
1648 Peace of Westphalia, end of the Thirty years' war
1654 Marci got his title (de Cronland)
1665 Marci official physician to Ferdinand III
1665 (or 1666) Marci's letter to Kircher
1567 Marci died
1675 Ferdinand II died, Leopold I Czech king
1680 Kircher died
1912 Voynich buys manuscript
1961 Kraus buys manuscript
1969 Manuscript donated to Yale

(conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*here is another accompanying text for teh exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague.. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for June exhibition, with one little correction: they are two artists in one exhibition. The reason - you guessed it: they are the husband and wife.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **visit the Gallery and see inividual pictures**, in medium or large scale and there is the Web address at the end of my essay.*

THE CAPTIVATING BEAUTY OF FRAGILITY

(The exhibition of Prof. Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova)



I was still a young student when my friend Werner took me with him to see the glass-works in Dolni Polubny. He worked there as a glass-blower and it was my first acquaintance with molten glass. It looked to me like a marvel: to work with something which flows like a fudge in the mixing machine of some candy store, radiates heat and glows, requiring the supreme skill of an artisan-artist. Later, I also saw the casting in forms, drawing glass rods in Josefodol (for making glass buttons) and glass-

cutting in Albrechtice, Jizerske Mountains. But the real capitals of glass-makers are Zelezny Brod and Novy Bor, the places which are intimately known to artists Prof. Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova.

I have a confession to make: I fancy glass, I admire glass, I love glass. And I also have a great respect for those who can create the objects of art from glass - it does require very special talents. Glass is the material unlike any other - it has its own life. Get it wrong and you never make it into an object of beauty. Glass is neither solid nor liquid, its molecules are in non-crystal disorder, but have enough cohesion to produce mechanical rigidity. One really has to understand this "frozen liquid" to be able to enhance its qualities. Add to it the transparency, reflectiveness, the smoothness or coarseness of the surface, its crystal look-alikeness and you get other ingredients of the real glass magic.

Get it wrong and you can only spoil it. Glass is also plastic when it is molten, so we can cast it, press it, draw it, blow it, and roll it. You can embellish it when it is cold: cut it, carve it, engrave or etch it, sandblast it, paint it, polish or guild it and I am sure there are still other methods both artists have up in their sleeves - some of them invented by their own ingenuity. All it takes is to get it right, right?

Well, it sounds simple, until you try it. After you handle the difficult techniques, you still have to force your design onto this elusive material. The result is what is sometimes inaccurately called *a decorative art*. Inaccurately, because it is also used for beautification, enriching, illuminating, prettyfication, synthetization, complementation and accentuation of the otherwise lifeless environment. What's more: those objects are the art of its own. Each has its story to tell: the beauty we can see, the surface we can touch, shape we can feel, the idea we can grasp.

The masterpieces of both artists who have been already working together for quite a long time, are demonstrating not only the amazing use of advanced, innovative techniques, but also their sense of composition, insight for shapes, space, colour and transparency - something we laymen would probably call "an excellent taste" for the lack of the right word. Prof. Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtova thus bring up an old tradition of Czech (Bohemian) glass, raise it up to a new level and spread it all around the world in their exhibitions.

But the glass is also a very fragile thing: like a dream or distant melody. So are the designs of our artists - charming and gentle. No wonder we are attracted to them: every one of us would like to own such little wonder, the object of captivating beauty and fragility, something which looks like it is made - well, made of glass.

Surprisingly, glass is actually produced (more or less) from sand, the most common

material on earth. And come to think of it, it contains silicon and we make computer chips from it, too. It looks like the mankind came a long way: from playing with sand-castles to producing objects of usefulness and of a real beauty.

June 1999, see the pictures at: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 7A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

No viruses this week - oh, what a relief it is! One cannot help wondering how much mental energy is wasted on petty exhibitionistic creations by some bright - yet stupid - people. They do not realize that even if their viruses destroy everything, their achievements will be only destructive and killing the work of other people does not give anybody a great satisfaction, at least not for too long. Because it is in human nature to be happy only when one creates something useful. As a destroyer, one would always be inferior to those, who can create something good.

Have you ever seen a happy murderer? of course not. He knows what he's done was wrong. He can try to justify it for himself, get over it, but it will be always on his mind, because it does not let him forget. And you know what? Eventually, he will be sorry, one way or another and he will wish he hasn't done that. He will eventually feel some regret and to suppress it, he will have to lie to himself till the end of his days, which will only make him even more inferior. So why not think about it ahead of time - is it worth all this?

The virus designer is of course not only a murderer, he is a mass murderer. He counts his victims by millions. They are various databanks, important files and years of work done by us, innocent victims of the prank which turned dangerous. Because virus is not selective, it can erase the hospital files, attack navigation computer, almost any computer - you name it. And then we will have real victims and real killings.

While there is a dark side of that software menace, there is a related scientific discipline, which is working along similar lines but for completely different purpose: it is called the *Artificial Life*. I already wrote here about it and expressed my opinion that one day, it may enormously enhance our thinking capabilities, help to study our brain and maybe even create the new ways of thinking. That would be decent challenge for our virus designers, but I am afraid it would be too much difficult for them. All they can do so far

is to misuse the loopholes left in some carelessly designed software systems - the achievement which takes only so much intelligence as does the stabbing somebody in his back.

Another freeware: *Multilingual speaking clock* by Leif Porsklev can be downloaded on <http://www.abc.se/~m8501/spclock/> Have you ever missed the visual alarm on your screen? Or did you do reset with mental note just to forget about it the very next minute? Then the speaking clock is for you (and me, of course). All you need is a sound card and a speaker. Also, another **great freeware** called *HOT POTATOES* is discussed in our exclusive interview below.

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH S. ARNEIL AND M. HOLMES
Life:	THE END IS NEAR . .
Short Story:	THE LIBERATION OF RODRIGO
Bits:	VOINICH MANUSCRIPT (continues)
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Miluše Roubíèková - Kytková and René Roubíèek)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"The sixth sense is nonsense."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH S. ARNEIL AND M. HOLMES

It all started when I was browsing WEB for some testing programs - testing of students, that is. Something practical, simple enough to use and portable enough not to be dependent on the type of computer I used. Also, I didn't want any prefabricated stuff, I wanted to write the tests myself. Such conditions of course drastically shrunk my choices: while eliminating some, they greatly limited the use of others.

In short, I was not happy. Until I discovered **Hot Potatoes**. You may wonder about the name of the program, but "What's in a name?" as Bill Shakespeare already once asked. It is a collection of several programs: *JBC* creates multiple-choice quizzes, *JQuiz* creates short-answer quizzes, *JCloze* creates gap-fill exercises, *JCross* creates crossword puzzles, *JMix* creates jumbled-sentence exercises and *JMatch* creates matching or ordering exercises. And what's more: the program is free to download and most importantly, it works like a charm.

Hot Potatoes is a product of a team called **Half-Baked Software** (don't let the name fool you, it is *well done*, if you pardon a pun), consisting of *Stewart Arneil* and *Martin Holmes*, both from the University of Victoria Language Centre. Of course they have much more to offer - the programs for test evaluations, marking, learning programs, on-line English writing course etc. Just visit their page at <http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/> and see their on-line tutorial on <http://web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked/wintutor/intro.htm> They demonstrated Hot Potatoes at the **EuroCALL conference** in September 1998. Another article, *Juggling Hot Potatoes: "Decisions and compromises in creating authoring tools for the Web"*, is due to be published in July 1999 in the online edition of the **ReCALL journal**, and in the Fall in the print journal **College & University Media Review**.

Stewart Arneil (sarneil@uvic.ca) is the head of research and development at the *University of Victoria Language Centre*, Canada, B.C. He holds an MA in the philosophy of computationalism and certification as an instructional designer. He provides Macintosh and web-based programming services to support language teaching and research at the university.

Martin Holmes (mholmes@uvic.ca) is currently a programmer/consultant in the *University of Victoria Language Centre*. He holds a BA in English, an M.Phil, and the RSA DipTEFLA. He previously taught EFL for 15 years in several countries. He provides Windows and web-based programming services to support university language teaching and research.

From: Martin Holmes
To: Jan Hurych
Subject: Re: interview for Hurontaria
Date: June 18 , 1999

JAN:

*You are authors of the program called **HOT POTATOES**, the successful and popular set of authoring tools for creating WEB-based exercises and tests. In comparison, I have found Hot Potatoes much more effective than other programs which are just attached to others or even parts of on-line interactive systems. What makes your hot Potatoes attractive is the fact they are of **HTML type**, so the tests created by them are truly portable, be it via net or just in the classroom. What made you choose this format and how was it accepted by teachers and students?*

ARNEIL & HOLMES:

Our facility has a small drop-in CALL lab (30+ stations), which for many years now has been full of students from early morning to late at night. Traditional CALL required that students come to the lab to use the programs installed on stations there; we realized, however, that with an expanding student population, we could not continue to work in this way, and so we would need to allow students to access our materials from outside -- both from other labs on campus, and from home. We needed to create materials that could be delivered fairly quickly (over slow connections, for those at home), and at the same time, we could not be sure what browser version or operating system the student would be using. We were basically forced to support a wide range of browser versions on both Windows and Macintosh, and the combination of HTML and JavaScript has proved the most effective way of doing this. In addition, we don't run a server of our own, so CGI scripts and other server-based solutions were not open to us; thus we have tried to do as much as we can with client-side JavaScript. Hot Potatoes evolved as a way for us to create these kinds of exercises for the projects we work on without tedious and repetitious coding. The current version of Hot Potatoes (3) and the next version (4, due to be released in the Fall of this year) both support versions 3 and above of the two main browsers (IE and Netscape) on both Windows and Macintosh.

JAN:

You have extensive experience in teaching languages and your programs are advertised mainly for that particular branch of knowledge. But I have found your programs quite useful in quite different environment as well: they could be used in various courses, seminars, in business and in industrial contexts. The amazing thing is that one can use

practically any WEB browser in any computer to be able to run the tests. And with a little twist, they can be turned from testing into teaching, training, exercising and what not. Well, you have already written teaching programs as well - what benefits may we see in this WEB-based system of teaching today?

ARNEIL & HOLMES :

While Martin's background is in language teaching, Stewart's is in instructional design, and in fact our jobs entail support for all of the Humanities Faculty at the University of Victoria, so we regularly work with philosophers and historians as well as language teachers. However, since Hot Potatoes began evolving, most of our recent interactive Website projects have been language-related. Since we're constantly using Hot Potatoes ourselves, we tend to add features and exercise-types that we need for our own sites, and thus we tend to think of HotPot as oriented towards language-teaching, and to present it in that way. However, we're always intrigued and excited to see other people using the tools in different ways; Some recent examples are [Computer Science](#) at UVic, [Radio Operator Training](#) in the US, and [Philosophy](#) in Belgium.

We should perhaps clarify that we don't see Hot Potatoes as testing tools; we're not really very interested in testing, and are more oriented towards interactive learning.

JAN:

The multiple choice tests (probably more popular in America than in Europe) have several limitations: they are usually prefabricated, very formal and most likely common for the whole group of students. They can judge students only by results and only seldom by their thinking process - and if they do, such judgement is basically hidden in the "confusing" questions. Still, one minor mistake in thinking process (or calculation) can lead to erroneous results, just eliminating the otherwise capable student, which is less likely to happen in oral examinations. But - maybe with help of artificial intelligence - we may see in future even more sophisticated test methods. What is your opinion about that?

ARNEIL & HOLMES:

We almost never write testing materials. Our main focus is in creating materials that enable students to learn by interacting with the machine. JBC multiple-choice exercises are designed so that when a student chooses an answer, right or wrong, some specific feedback is delivered; this means that both right and wrong choices can be opportunities for learning. For example, in a vocabulary exercise, the question might be:

"What tool is used for banging in nails?"

- a) screwdriver
- b) trowel
- c) hammer

The student might choose the wrong answer "screwdriver"; rather than simply saying "Wrong, try again!", a well-thought-out exercise would probably come back with something like this:

"Sorry! A screwdriver is used for driving screws -- here's a picture of one [PIC]. The tool used for banging in nails looks different -- here's a picture of it [PIC]. Try again."

The point here is that, by choosing "screwdriver", the student has demonstrated that BOTH "hammer" and "screwdriver" are problematic; we can take advantage of this to provide helpful input on both words, and the student can benefit from the wrong answer. Similarly, extra information can be given in the response to a correct answer, reinforcing the learning process.

This is very far from artificial intelligence on the part of the computer, however. The intelligence here is in the creator of materials. Instructors and materials creators are likely for the foreseeable future to be much more intelligent than computers. It seems to us that providing a basic level of flexibility and functionality in our exercise construction that enables intelligent instructors to be creative in this way is likely to be much more effective and realistic than constructing (or waiting around while someone constructs) a mighty robotic intelligence that can parse a student's answers. We tend to favour the creative and imaginative use of what works easily, rather than unreliable and expensive cutting-edge solutions. We may indeed see more sophisticated computer-human interactions in the future, but we're a very long way from having a computer system that can make the kind of elementary judgements about student responses that any novice teacher makes without thinking. We're even further away from delivering such computing power over networks to large numbers of students.

JAN:

I remember the first computer programs used for testing and their advanced versions developed for learning - in the case of wrong answer, they used various references (or jumps) toward the accompanying text (to study) and then offered the questions of lower order first. Authors even used to write the "programmed" books, where one had to jump back and forth across the book, depending on his skills. The advantage was the possibility of individual approach and accommodation of different speed of learning (or comprehension). It just occurred to me that tests generated by your software would be

just perfect for that option, for instance in multiple questions - if one can put corresponding link in the "feedback" section. What is your opinion about "programmed learning"?

ARNEIL & HOLMES:

Hypertext is a natural medium for this kind of learning, and it's easy to do with tools like Hot Potatoes. In fact, our earliest multiple-choice questions back in the days of Netscape 1 used only hypertext jumps to get to and from feedback. It's certainly possible to have complex sets of learning materials through which each student finds his or her own path, concentrating on problem areas and skipping unnecessary work. This is, in fact technically simple; what is not simple is assembling a team of people skilled and competent enough to plan and create a set of materials which adapt themselves to the needs of a variety of students. Again, the intelligence resides (and must reside) not in the machine, but in the minds of the materials creators. Institutions seeking to implement computer-based learning tend to spend a lot of money on hardware and software, but we think it's far more effective to focus on recruiting and developing individuals who have the intelligence and skill to use whatever computer tools and technology happen to be current, cheaply available, and reliable, in ways which promote effective learning.

On the other hand, there is a lot to learn from the careful analysis of student responses, using database tracking and expert systems. Once students are interacting with SOMETHING, we can begin to learn about them and about the areas in which our teaching is effective and ineffective. This kind of analysis is, however, much easier to do when the activity is procedural, or involves a self-contained realm of knowledge (such as radio-operator call signs, for example). It's much more difficult to analyse such data usefully in the field of language teaching.

JAN:

Thank you very much on behalf of our readers and let me wish you a success in your future endeavors.

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: THE END IS NEAR . . .
(Czech version publishe in Neviditelný Pes)

I thought I wouldn't miss it for nothing, but I did. And for nothing. You probably guessed it - yes, the end of the world, the doomsday, the Apocalypse and what not. And not even that: I probably missed *several* ends of the world already.

Well, according to Nostradamus, or better yet, according to *Nostradamians*, his

interpreters, it was supposed to happen this year, on the 4th of July (U.S.A. probably excluded, because they had their holiday). The "man of Our Lady" - the literal translation of Nosty's name - was apparently predicting it already in the sixteenth century. Well, he could, it had a long way to go and nobody could accuse him of any error - the lecture which our today's forecasters haven't learnt yet.

While we may conclude that "nothing really happened", it was not so: it happened plenty. In Abilene, Texas, the followers of country singer *Bill Hawkins* spent the whole day praying in their cult compound, waiting for the coming of death. When it didn't come, they probably went to sleep in great disappointment. In Japan, *Shoko Asahara* who was already in 1995 suspected for releasing some gas - poisonous that is, not the natural one - had run with his followers for the mountains, expecting great flood. To play it safe, just in the case it wouldn't happen, he extended his alarm for the whole month of July.

The psychic cloud was seen over China - according to Internet - and Washington psychic *Jeane Dixon* obviously knew something was going to happen, but she believed it was only postponed. She believes it will happen on the 5th of February next year. I was always puzzled how accurate are those predictions - they even give you the day - considering that all in all, it does not happen at all. Maybe the seers are getting it wrong? What if our Cagli-Nostro meant different calendar? Say old Jewish or Aztec style? Or maybe the old Egyptian one?

Well, we've been close already. Remember *Hale-Bopp* comet? And *Charles Schramek*, who took a picture of the Saturn like object, apparently UFO, hiding behind the comet? Well, we survived that, except for small number of those who left us through the *Heavens Gate*. Two weeks before their exodus I had an interview with *Alan Hale* where I suggested that media should try to educate people so they wouldn't listen to prophets of doomsday.

But the disciples of the Gate *were* educated people, and according to my recent interview for Hurontaria with *Rick Ross*, it seems that cults are actually *more* successful in recruiting people with *higher* education. With the coming year 2000, we already had one Y2K computer panic (our army promised they will keep an order and one church already offered the special prayers). And according to Mister *Scallion*, mother nature would apparently pretty soon behave very naughty, too.

Maya calendar also ends with year 2012 and presumably all Mayans will then go to see their Creator (Carl May excluded, he *is* there already). That it may happen to non-Mayans like me, is the yet subject of many speculations. Astronomer R.C. Monglard actually calculated that the end is not the year 2012, but 1997. Well, either I missed

something then or I am missing it thirteen years from now. Well, I am not of Maya religion or descend, so my world will not collapse, I suppose. Besides, I checked it out and discovered we can have more digits in our calendar, so I suppose that would not be the main problem.

But it would be easy to blame the forecasters of doom for my own negligence. It was *me* who was supposed to remember, it was *me* who forgotten to mark it in my calendar. You may say: "So what - there was no end of the world!" Well, it is easy for you to say, but what if there WAS and I missed it? What if we now live in another, presumably better world? So if you noticed anything like that, please let me know. One thing is for sure: every next 60 minutes, we will be one hour closer to the real end of the world . . .

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE LIBERATION OF RODRIGO

That evening, Rodrigo felt very unhappy - he was in love and he couldn't think about anything else. That little *chica Paloma* was still refusing his advances and he couldn't make any sense of it - and he actually used to be very successful with women. You see, he had some sixth sense that told him which one would be easy and which one more difficult. Well, it didn't work with this girl.

So he went to see *Rosita*, his first and never forgotten love, the reliable medicine when he was unhappy. But in the most intimate moment he forgot himself and screamed the name of Palomita. Rosita jumped up and screamed from the top of her lungs - and very beautiful they were, indeed. You know - *gitana* - she called him "a rooster who should go back to his dunghill" and even worse things. Rodrigo didn't wait to hear the rest of it and headed for local *cantina*, the only place of comfort which never failed him.

Cantina was of course full of people. Some of his friends were there, drinking already, while the others were drinking still. It was like this: if you met one of them on the street, you wouldn't be able to tell if he is going *in* or *out* of that place, but surely it was only one of those two options. The owner, *Consuella*, welcomed Rodrigo with open arms and without asking anything, she poured him full glass of his favourite wine. Actually he favoured all wines and all women. Somebody handed him a guitar - he was well known around for his playing and singing - and before you knew it, he sang a song. It was a song he wrote, as he said, "for our beautiful Consuella" and which was actually written for Paloma.

But Consuella who suspected nothing was pleased as well - even if she didn't want to show it. The others soon joined Rodrigo in singing. Each refrain of course called for a

drink and there were quite many verses. No wonder that before the song was over, they were all pretty drunk. All except old *Manuel* who was pretending he was too so he could carry his secret mission - he was a prophet of another revolution - and that, as we all know, has to be done when one is entirely sober.

Manuel sat by Rodrigo's side and tried to get his attention. It was not easy, because Rodrigo knew him well and figured out what Manule would say and which he soon did: "Listen Rodrigo, I knew your father, he was a real revolutionary, the real zapatista - why, he even remembered Pancho Villa! And your grandfather - he fought against Emperor Maximilian! Now is your turn, but apparently you do not want to do anything about it, eh? I thought: like father, like son, but I was wrong! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Fooling with *señoritas* - yes, but ambush? No! No Sir, not even one stupid stinking bomb! Are you just lazy or what?"

Rodrigo heard these speeches so many times he was not interested in them any more. Just to say something, he explained that his father also died for his cause, which is more than one can say about Manuel. And his grandfather didn't fight Maximilian, he was just shot by *austriacos*. He was mistaken with somebody else and he was later pardoned. Unfortunately the pardon came when he was already dead, so they gave the paper to his wife. "But I do not want to die," said Rodrigo and carried on in half drunken, half sleepy voice: "I am too young for it!" He then remembered Palomita and added with no apparent logic: "She does not love me, Manuel, she does not love me and I am going to kill myself!"

"What a hero," commented Manuel, "such a crybaby! No, with people like you, we cannot liberate our country. But we are going to liberate it, make no mistake about it! And with the help of others, we will liberate even you, my friend, want it or not! Luckily for you, there are still some pepole who are willing to sacrifice everything, even their lives." In reality, Manuel was in no hurry to sacrifice his life or even less. For that reason, he always sent somebody else in his actions. He was determined not only to win, but also to survive the revolution, because he was expecting to gain for himself little bit more than just "a victory of people". He knew that when the tyrant is dead, the new one will always need people like him. In the meantime, he was also afraid of jail, since he was told that one has to work there and the word "work" was not in Manuel's vocabulary. He noticed that somebody was watching him and so he quickly finished his glass of wine - which belonged to one of the drunks snoring under the table. And he went to fight his revolution at some safer place.

Rodrigo also got up and left, without particularly knowing where he was going to. He was apparently lead by his conscience, since he suddenly realized he ended up under the very windows od his lovable Palomita - not his first or second, but his last love - you

know, that unhappy one. First, he wanted to sing something for her, but his voice failed him and so he rolled down in the grass and fell asleep. Later, he was disturbed by solitary dog, licking his face. First he thought it was Paloma, but when he realized his mistake and he was so touched he started to cry. After a while, he forgot why he was crying, so he stopped and tried to remember why he was so *muy triste*, so sad.

He couldn't figure it out, so he screamed some nasty comments about the inhabitants of his little town, forgetting he was also one of them. He wanted to add some more adjectives when he suddenly overheard the marching steps of the military guard. *El commandante* of the guard spotted Rodrigo at distance and gave him an order to get lost, the suggestion which our hero totally ignored. On the contrary, he picked a stone and threw it in the nearest window just to demonstrate he would not take orders from anybody. Of course, when soldiers started to chase him, he quickly changed his mind and run away.

He didn't remember for how long he run, but he finally stopped at some small deserted *plaza* and rested. Again, a stray dog came to him, but this one didn't look too friendly. He tried to shoo him away, but the dog bit him. Rodrigo tied his scarf around the wound and complained bitterly and loudly. The window above him opened and some male voice screamed: "Go home, you bum!"

"You are a cuckold!" replied Rodrigo, without even bothering to find out whose voice it was.

"What did you say?" cried the other one.

"That your wife was sleeping with me!" explained Rodrigo.

"You bastard, you'll pay for that!"

"Oh no," disagreed Rodrigo, " I already paid to her, *estúpido!*" The stranger slammed the window shut and that was the end of their conversation.

Rodrigo picked himself up and slowly limped away. On his way, he woke up several more people and received few more insults in return. Finally he realized that he couldn't be more unhappy than he was now and that the moment came he should bid the world good-bye. But before he would finish it all, he decided to go and see Palomita, to explain her why he was going to kill himself and why she should be sorry for the rest of her life. He returned to the house of "his last and only love" , entered through the portico and climbed the staircase. But he didn't get too far, since he fell asleep on the sixth step.

Something woke him up. There was some light downstairs, in the basement. About a dozen men were sitting there and whispering together. Once a while somebody said: "*Viva la república, viva la revolución!*", but that was the only thing he could understand.

Suddenly, one man looked upstairs and noticed Rodrigo. They picked him up and dragged him down. "What are you doing here?" asked one of them, apparently their leader. Rodrigo thought about it for a while and then said: "*Viva la revolución!*" They gave him some wine and tied him up. Then their leader took the others aside and said, without any emotion: "We have to kill him, otherwise he will betray us to the police!"

Some of them knew Rodrigo and didn't like that solution. After some arguing one of them volunteered to do it. He was just pulling out his knife, when armed patrol broke in the house and arrested all conspirators. They took Rodrigo too, in spite of the fact he was a prisoner already. After interrogation, when the men honestly proclaimed that he was not one of them, and based on the fact that Rodrigo was still more or less dead drunk, *el capitán* released him and sent him home. To give him a good start, he even kicked him in his buttocks.

But it seemed to be written in the stars they had to meet again. While the preparation for execution of the arrested revolutionaries was in full swing, the fate brought again Rodrigo and them together. After spending the rest of night sleeping in the park, he had to pass through *Plaza de la Libertad*, which was ironically also the place of public executions. Many people came, some because they were forced by soldiers, the others just from curiosity. Several of them even pushed the bystanders aside so they could see better and fathers raised their children on their shoulders, to remember the event.

The condemned conspirators were already standing on the platform and to cheer themselves, they sung the old revolutionary song. Rodrigo noticed they were missing a tenor, and since he just finished a bottle of wine for breakfast, he couldn't help himself and joined them in their singing. Some people in the crowd were encouraged by that, joined him and pretty soon the whole plaza was singing too.

It was so spontaneous that Rodrigo even forgot where he was and to show them guys on the platform he remembers them, he waved his hand and shouted: "*Viva la revolución!*" The commandant recognized him and told soldiers to arrest him. He also gave an order to put him next to the other prisoners and to be executed as well. Rodrigo proudly stepped in line and they all continued singing. As they were leaving for gallows, one after another, soon the number of singers was reduced to three, two and finally just Rodrigo himself.

Then somebody in crowd recognized him and screamed: "Who do you call cuckold, *cobarde!*" and threw a large stone at Rodrigo. "Speed it up!" cried *el capitán*, who was afraid his prisoner might be killed before he could be executed. Soldiers made a circle around Rodrigo and dragged him to gallows. Some collaborator even brought the stool,

which fell down from the platform during the commotion. Rodrigo stepped on the stool and at the same time he remembered his grandfather. No, he cannot be executed by mistake like him, without any reason! So he started to scream: "Down with the tyrant, long live the liberty!" And since the soldiers have forgotten to tie him, he took the noose from the executioner's hand, pulled it over his head and tied it around his neck.

Suddenly, the scream was heard all over the plaza: "The tyrant is dead! Long live the revolution!" and the fighters of the revolutionary army started to take over the square. Soldiers were willingly handing them their weapons and joined them in the celebration of their victory. Only those on platform were putting some resistance and even wanted to carry on with Rodrigo's execution.. At that very moment however, Rodrigo realized that he wanted very much to live. He slipped the noose from his head, pushed away the nearby soldier and was ready to jump down, when *el capitán* himself blocked his way.

The revolutionaries already reached the scaffolding and one of them, a cavalry man, swung his sabre at the officer. *El capitán* ducked and the sabre cut Rodrigo instead. It nearly missed his belly, but inadvertently cut him in his midsection. Somebody screamed: "Quickly, call a doctor, our hero is wounded!"

The doctor fixed the wound as well as he could. When they were carrying Rodrigo away, one woman standing nearby asked him: "*Señor médico*, will he live?" "But of course," said that good man, "unfortunately, he will not be able to love any woman any more."

And this is the whole story how was Rodrigo liberated.

[Back to index](#)

BITS: VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT, PART II.
(the one he never wrote and nobody can read)

In the first part, we discussed the possible authors and more or less realized that any assumption - as much as it is needed, because it could suggest the "open" language of the manuscript - was leading nowhere, so far. Now let's discuss the real facts, that is what could be *really* seen in Voynich manuscript.

(Note: All information was gathered from Internet, for instance from pages

<http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/users/mrr/voynich/index.html> and

<http://www.dcc.unicamp.br/~stolfi/voynich/>, and

<http://sun1.bham.ac.uk/G.Landini/evmt/evmt.htm>,

which also lead to other sources, too many to mention here).

The facts.

The manuscript has a size of 6 by 9 inches, with 204 pages and 28 others are presumably lost. The covers are of vellum and are separated. Beside the text, it contains also a lot of pictures (some in colors) and diagrams. There are also various scribbled comments, apparently written after the manuscript was completed and presumably by those, who were trying to decipher it:

- pagination and gathering (signature) numbers,
- several "key-like" sequences throughout the book,
- some old German writing (most probably added later),
- names of the months in the astronomical section (also probably added later)
- few instances of extraneous writing (different from the rest of the manuscript)
- text not in "Voynich script" in the last folio, reading something like "michiton oladabas..." suggesting a key to decryption...

The writing is smooth, almost beautiful and it was definitely written by skilled hand - that is skilled in writing, except for marginal comments, written later and by somebody else. For some time now, it was accepted that the manuscript was written by two (some say "at least two") persons, discovered by comparing the handwriting and different frequency of words. Of course, it could have been also two *copyists*, but hardly two "languages" - even if we consider two authors, they would rather have *two dialects* of the same language and we may assume the coding system would probably stay the same as well. Why? Well, for the starters, we don't know any one of those "languages" and usage of different words even with the same language would be quite natural if it was written by two persons writing about different subjects.

Either way, nobody could so far explain *why* would the manuscript have two authors, at least not both at the same time. It is also a known fact that handwriting of the person changes with age, physical disability and mental conditions - not mentioning the different pen or brush. After all, some handwriting experts agreed that it all could have been written by one person only. Usage of different words of course suggests two authors, but for different subjects, the vocabulary might weigh heavily to different words anyway. Such unusual combination of two authors could be the indication that the second writer was a student (or colleague) of the first writer who was the master, just continuing in his steps or ideas. This is however not too important fact for the cracking the code anyway - it would only indicate the level of difficulty which lays ahead.

Conclusion: The text has very few apparent corrections - in other words, it suggests it could be a well prepared copy or some original. There were also done the measurements of entropy and the text follows roughly the 1st. and 2nd. *Zipf's laws* of word frequencies

- that suggests there could be a natural, real language behind the code. The 2nd. order entropy is too low for an European language to be using a simple substitution cipher - if it was written in European language, it could be via more complicated coding or even cipher.

Transcriptions.

In order to be able to handle the rather *iconic* - nowhere else known - fonts, they devised a system for transcribing it into the Roman alphabet. Of course there is no way of telling which symbols should be ascribed to which letters; the transcription scheme chosen is essentially arbitrary, by graphical similarity only. Several systems were devised: by Tiltman, by FSG - First Study Group lead by William F. Friedman, by SSG (Second Study Group), by Captn. Prescott Currier, Mary D'Imperio (who by the way wrote the most comprehensive book about Voynich manuscript: *M. E. D'Imperio, The Voynich Manuscript: An Elegant Enigma*. Fort George G. Meade, Maryland. 1978), also the scheme by J. Guy (Frogguy), Landini and Zandbergen. *Frogguy* has the capability to represent complicated ligatures and additional diacritical marks. In addition a few special characters are used together with the PC Voynich editing tool 'VOYEDIT' (written by Jacques Guy). As a result, it is possible to represent the same Voynich text in a few different ways, which can be of course unified.

There is also *European Voynich Alphabet* (EVA), which is a superset of FSG and Currier. It is also of analytical rather than synthetic nature. This allows representation of many special ligatures not covered by FSG or Currier, but relatively frequent in the manuscript.

The latest transcription effort is described in the Web pages of *Gabriel Landini* . There is also on Internet the *European Voynich Manuscript Transcription* (EVMT), the first complete transcription of all text of the manuscript. It differs from previous transcriptions in that it does not start from scratch but that it incorporates all available transcriptions at the time. Furthermore it intends to unify the transcription *rules* used.

Some of the symbols used in the Voynich manuscript are similar to symbols in other scripts or notations. In particular, the following similarities have been noticed: Alchemical Symbols, Early Arabic Numerals, Latin Shorthand Abbreviations, etc. Some even tried to generate approximate *vowel/consonant* distribution, so that the human language recognition capabilities could be maximized.

Conclusion: Lot of work was done in this area. The whole manuscript was transcribed several times, last one being agreed to be most workable at all. Unfortunately, there will be now no more excuses for the researchers that they need proper transcription. Let's face

it - the real cracking didn't need to wait until then. Besides, the irregularities discovered during this stage may not be the most important of discoveries after all.

The text.

Both Prescott Currier and Mary D'imperio (she used cluster analysis) confirmed that the text de facto contains two "languages", or shall we say "dialects", or even better "the usage" of different "words" - as "the groups of letters separated by spaces" are called.

Cluster analysis algorithms (widely employed in the social and natural sciences) was conveniently used by computer programs. Those programs were proven in applications such as classifying collections of objects into subsets based on similarities and dissimilarities with respect to a list of scores or observations. Frankly speaking, I consider this to be interesting, but rather superfluous detour. True there may be two languages, but those could be also two different types of coding, after all. Or to say it bluntly: if you compare say the language of electro-technical book with book on chemistry, the differences might be even greater.

Even within the same subject, two different persons would have not only different style of writing, but also the usage of different words, but not necessarily as much as varies the scientific lingo for different subjects.

The two different encodings by a single author looks like a rather complicated matter: why would anybody use two systems of encoding, unless he knows both? And to what purpose? On the other hand, one half could be say in English, the other one in Latin (well, some other languages then), I know, which would fit nicely the theory of two languages rather than that of two authors. However, the differences would be probably bigger than they are in seen in the manuscript. Again, it would have been of course easier for two authors to write two books, each in different language and possible in different code. But why not start with simpler assumption, divide the manuscript along these "languages" and try to solve one part first?

As far as syntax is concerned, let me quote D'Imperio (with assigned ambiguous letters):

- The same "word" may be repeated 2, 3 or more times
- Many words differ by only one character and are found in each other's vicinity
- Certain symbols occur characteristically at the beginnings, middles or ends of words, and in certain preferred sequences
- Certain symbols are very rare
- There are very few doublets. Often these are "c" or "i" and rarely "y", "d" or "o".
- There are very few single-letter words, mostly "s" and "y".

Conclusion: While none of the above is a symptom of known languages, it makes perfect sense when we assume scientific languages or "lingos", full of abbreviations, formulas and whatnot. The other option is of course to consider the method of encoding: for instance, nobody paid too much attention to the meaning of spaces between words - it was assumed they do not carry any information. True, it was not proven otherwise, but why simplify our assumptions here and make the complicated ones somewhere else? If the space *is* a special "letter", that the "length" of words is of course a pure nonsense. After all, the spaces between words is only our convention, we could read the plain text without spaces as well (wecouldreadtheplaintextwithoutspacesaswell).

The language.

First identified by Capt. Prescott Currier, the two different "languages" used are popularly called 'A' and 'B'. The weak point is of course the term "language": the statistical tests would qualify it so, but they are not specific - it was admitted it could be even two dialects. Either way, until the manuscript is cracked, we have to wait for real proof. We already discussed the alternatives to this option and possible way to handle it: solve each part separately, in other words, double the work effort.

An important aspect is the fact that the pages written in language A also show different hands - now we really got in the mess, unless of course the author used right hand for one part, left hand for the other one :). On the other hand (pardon the pun), two different handwritings elsewhere could suggest two different languages - but how does all this help us to solve the mystery?

The new trend is to consider the language of the manuscript (they even coined the name "Voynichese" - or is it for script only?) as some unidentified - most likely European - language, living or dead, some even think it could be artificial language. From what I have read, I just could not figure out if they were talking about language A or B or both - or some none of them:)? Very little attention was so far paid to the fact it could be just scientific "lingo", that is the mixture of natural language with various technical terms, abbreviations and maybe Latin. No wonder it was ignored: scientific lingo was never too popular with true linguists anyway.

Some researchers believe that we have to discover first what language(s) the manuscript was written in, otherwise we cannot decode the text. True. The others believe we have to keep decoding, until we discover which language it is written in. Also possible, but more difficult and requires continuously switching both methods anyway. In this equation $X \& Y = Z$, where X is the language and Y is the coding, we know only the result Z and even that only in its scriptural, so far meaningless, form. In the case of artificial, i.e.

really "unknown" language, we may never be able to find a solution, of course. The idea of artificial language was supported by this: if we assume that real, un-encoded language is used, how comes that 1327 different word types have either (ee) or (eee) and 62 different word types have ? But that of course can be also explained by some sort of encoding. There is of course still another option, but more about it later.

How about the case where there is no language - or only part of it - underneath the script? Impossible? And how about some letters being actually numerals - or better yet, if the language is not important and it is only the meaning which counts? Obviously there is such a case: when it is written in ciphers. Again, it would be very difficult to assign the meanings (or even objects or verbs) to individual group of letters, especially if the cipher is not repeated too often. Enciphering every word is probably not the case - even today's military use ciphers only partially, because of the translating drudgery. So their text is the mixture of ciphers with plain text or better yet - they switch to encoding of the complete text.

Using rare or "unknown" language would in itself be such enciphering and without knowing such language it would be impossible to crack it. that is probably the main reason the manuscript was not cracked yet. In the Second World War, Americans fooled Japanese using Navajo language. It was an idea of Philip Johnston, who believed Navajo answered the military requirement for an indecipherable code because Navajo is "an unwritten language of extreme complexity". Its syntax and tonal qualities, not to mention dialects, make it unintelligible to anyone without extensive exposure and training. It has no alphabet or symbols, and is spoken only on the Navajo lands of the American Southwest. One estimate indicated that less than 30 non-Navajos, none of them Japanese, could understand the language at the outbreak of World War II. Then recruited Navajos could encode, transmit, and decode a three-line English message in 20 seconds. Machines of the time required 30 minutes to perform the same job.

Statistical tests also excluded the possibility that the manuscript text could be a series of random letters, that is truly random and nonsensical. But what about just partly random, interposed? What's more, there are other indications that the language of Voynich *is* some natural language. Interestingly enough, there was an attempt to assign sounds to each symbol and the acoustic presentation then sounded like some natural language. This strengthened the suspicion that either the language is still unknown - but exists - or the known language was encoded by transposition or substitution.

Conclusion: From the ease of the handwriting, it looks that the already encoded text was then copied by somebody, who understood the transcript. There are almost no mistakes, which could have been plenty when encoding directly in paper or even when one copies the text he does not understand. It was for long time suspected - and experts are returning

to this idea again and again - that manuscript was written in "open" language but in special alphabet, that is in special script. In that case the original might have been also in open language and possibly written in Roman alphabet. After a short-time experience, anybody could have rewritten it in other "alphabet" without many mistakes. That was surely the case if the *transcriptor* was the author himself or his student, but certainly not a plain untrained copyist. And what would be the point to let anybody on the secret if you want to keep it a secret?

There are of course other *language&code* combinations, which were not pursued too extensively. For instance it is only assumed that the encoded writing is almost without mistakes. Well, there may be, but we do not see them - all we can see is the corrections. But that is a reasonable assumption that the more complicated the encoding, the harder the task and more corrections than we see will be needed. There is still one another explanation, of course: the special invented shorthand. Being the kind of encoding itself, or rather a cipher, is also unintelligible to non-initiated, but it can be in general so well that there are less mistakes than with true encoding. Apparently, due to the fact that very short "words" were mostly used, some sort of abbreviation or shorthand was already suspected. For instance, Latin abbreviations were used during Middle Ages quite frequently. The important thing is that in zodiac sketches, the names of months are in Latin alphabet. Even if the month labels there were written later by somebody else, the sketches alone suggest that the author knew them as well. And if they were not in the original text, why not?

Pictures.

Probably the most controversial part of the manuscript, the pictures actually gave the "names" to individual sections. But if "the picture is worth thousand words", it is not so here. According to researchers: the plants there are not recognizable (at least on this planet) and the naked women are either witches, muses or - well, naked women. According to some, they are attached to some indecipherable "plumbing" pipes, which are supposed to have their secret meaning, too.

Our hopes that the pictures would help to decode the text have failed so far and of course the opposite is true as well. While the short "labels" located in the vicinity of each plant are apparently the plant names, what help for us the unreadable names of unknown plants?

The pictures are (as listed on WEB) in:

Herbal section - mostly unidentified and fantastic plants,
Astronomical section - zodiac symbols,

Biological section - some "anatomical" drawings and human figures,
Cosmological section - circles, stars and 'celestial' spheres,
Pharmaceutical section - vases and parts of plants, and *Recipes section* (with many short paragraphs).

Some other symbolics is used as well , for instance Christian cross - one person depicted is holding a crucifix.

Conclusion: General opinion is that the pictures are representing real objects and people, and not some code - as it was suggested - since it would be rather elaborate way to provide very little information indeed. They might be very important in connection with text, but how much helpful they could be in cracking is still to be seen. One thing is for sure - while it was least expected, they are mysteries of their own. The question is - why?

To sum it up, all above mentioned sections are overflowing with the work done so far. Without trying to bagatellize the achievements of all researchers, we have to qualify it as "an important but only preparatory" stage. In our next steps, we will observe how far they got in real cracking and make few suggestions of our own.
(conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*here is another accompanying text for the exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for July exhibition, with one little correction: they are two artists in one exhibition. The reason - you guessed it: they are the husband and wife.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **visit the Gallery and see inividual pictures**, in medium or large scale and there is the Web address at the end of my essay.*

IN PRAISE OF ROUND OBJECTS

(The exhibition of Miluše Roubíèková - Kytková and René Roubíèek)



The world was created as a round one - well, I do not mean just the Earth itself or stars and planets; we can see the roundness everywhere. True, there are some straight lines and flat planes, but as our mathematicians are telling us, those are only the special cases. Nothing in the world is actually *that* straight. So why not indulge in the roundness, its curvatures and the multitudes of shapes we have in store?

And if you really want to go for a treat, see the collection of glass artworks of *Miluše Roubíèková - Kytková and René Roubíèek*. They are, by the way, already the third married couple of "artists in glass" I am writing here about. I wonder - could it be there is some special attractive force in glass which our physicists somehow missed?

Many years of working and exhibiting around the world made this couple the unseparable part of Czech glass tradition and rightly so. But if you ask me what artistic style or school they followed, I could hardly put my finger on it, probably because there is so much originality in their work which resists any usual pattern. But one thing strikes me immediately: the roundness of their sculptures and objects - they not only have curvatures, they enhance them, they magnify them. It is partly because they use two techniques which create mostly the curved shapes: moulded glass and blown glass. Both techniques are probably the oldest ways of forming the glass and it takes a lot of inspiration to be able to come up with something new and strikingly beautiful. They are also very difficult methods, but the results are well worth the efforts.

Of course here their similarity ends: moulding is the technology for creating mostly massive, heavy objects, which are impressing us more with their weight, their three-dimensions. Yes, the beauty of melted glass, frozen in the solid shape. Looking at it, we can still imagine it as a flowing liquid, filling the form through its streams, folds and ripples, and settling down by its own weight.

Blown glass, on the other hand, is nothing but a shell "full of air" and looks like some bubbles, balloons or what not. We are seduced by its lightness - it seems to be suspended in the air, ready to fly away with the wind. Well, they are so fragile we may be even trying to hold our breath in order not to blow them away. Many times I was watching the glass-masters to create the blown glass and every time I was amazed and impressed. Like a balloon, the melted shell of hot glass was slowly growing as the glass-maker blew into it, but at the same time it had also a trend to bend down by the gravitation. There is a remedy, of course: you have to spin it, straighten it, keep it moving in right direction, sometime using wooden "shaper" to give it the proper shape. When I watched it, it all looked so easy - until I tried it, of course.

And if you try to do this for many years, you may eventually acquire not only the necessary skill, but also the feeling for "the soul of glass" which is somewhere in there, you just have to break the magic spell to get it out. The artists Miluše Roubíèková - Kytková and René Roubíèek know all about it. They use other techniques as well: cut glass, flat glass, make chandeliers, artistic windows and others. But I was enchanted mostly with the round shapes: tempting me to touch them, to feel them, to squeeze them. So much they reminded me the beautiful, living objects on this well rounded world. You may guess which of those glassy objects I liked most - of course, those which represent

parts of woman's body, so smooth, so beautiful. So nicely round.

The exhibition is on: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 8A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

I think we are somehow ignoring the fishes - we usually think that only dolphins have some kind of intelligence and the ordinary fish, the very old branch of Darwin's evolution tree, we rather underestimate. True, the dolphins in Californian Marineland were jumping above their outdoor concrete tank to be able to see me a little bit better - so curious they were. And when I was diving at Hanaimo Beach, Hawaii, one little fish came to me and since I had nothing in my hand - you are allowed to feed them there - she nibbled on my finger and then gave me rather reproaching look. All those, however, were fishes who were used to the presence of a man. What happened to me last year here on Huron, or rather *in Huron*, is truly incredible.

The bottom of the lake near Kincardine is full of stones and especially the rocks under water level are large and treacherous; well, in our harbour, we have five shipwrecks to prove it. Those are located closer to the lighthouse, but here, where we live, are just stones. And if you want to take a swim, you have to walk some distance between them before you get in deeper water. It is rather uncomfortable, you may trap your ankles between stones and so before I start swimming I usually rest a little while. So I was standing there, submerged up to my chest, when I suddenly saw a shadow in that clear, transparent water. It was approaching and soon I recognized, to my surprise, that it was a lake salmon. I guess it was about twenty inches long and he swam closer, slowly and without any caution, as close as six feet from me. He stopped, watched me for several seconds without any timidity and then he swam away - just like that. I reckon that you don't believe me and if I wouldn't see it by my own eyes, I couldn't believe it either. And what's more: I am no fisherman, so I have no reason to lie about it . . .

New issue of attachment Priloznik is out, you can find the address on Hurontaria Title Page. We are looking for English authors, details are there and everybody is welcome.

Another freeware: INFO RAPID's "Search and Replace" is a super-fast finder of any

word or text. On my hard disk, it searched 1 Gigabyte in few seconds and displayed all sentences from all files which contained the searched expression. And not only that: you can change the sentence (or sentences) on the spot, without the need of any wordprocessor. It can do conversions, reads almost any format from any wordprocessor and yes, you guessed it - it is absolutely free, for private use. It was designed by Ingo Straub and you can download it at <http://www.inforapid.de/sr/sr.htm>

INDEX: [A - ENGLISH PART](#)

Other Dimensions:	THE MANAGERS WITHOUT MANÉGE
Life:	FARMERS' MARKET
Short Story:	THE ROSY ROMANCE
Bits:	VOINICH MANUSCRIPT (continues)
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Václav Cigler)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"There two sciences whose work against each other: ecology and gynecology."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: THE MANAGERS WITHOUT MANÉGE

Last time when I was in Czech Republic, I was talking with my friend in Prague about managers in western countries. It was just a small talk, but I was surprised by his opinion that they must have almost superhuman qualities. True, after 50 years of communist rule, any managerial efforts in former Czechoslovakia were replaced by central planning and/or party commands and in comparison, the western success might look like a real miracle. I assured him however that there is nothing miraculous in that and our strength is in the system and tradition. The manager is in reality only a connecting element which can either work - that is work well - or not at all. Surely, the good system is an incubator of good managers, but good managers do not necessarily make a good system.

Of course, we have excellent individuals, but without system they would not be able to achieve anything. Another "old ladies tale" is the independence of managers: a good manager is the one who can achieve the maximum result in sometimes very *limited* conditions (money, people, material, time and marketing). By the way, manager is not the one who can "barely manage", but the one at control, not just a boss, but a real *leader*. And of course, I have in mind both men and women, since ladies are now reaching managerial posts more than ever before.

I do not know how many schools are in United States or Canada which produce "graduated managers". If they are, they are hiding them rather well. The average superior never studied to be a manager, he just *became* one. In other words, he was *promoted* and here is the core of all problems. Person, who served enough years (and has enough influential friends) or the employee who performed well in his field, is suddenly becoming somebody who is in charge, without having a slightest idea what he can expect. Nobody warns him and there is no words as in Dante's Inferno: "Lasciate ogni speranza, che voi entrate." (Give up all hope, you who enter.) So he/she starts giving orders and is surprised that nothing is running as well as *lipizzaner* horses in some circus *manège* (riding academy).

So he starts to take courses: those provided by his company, video sessions, private workshops and even those provided by the life itself, called appropriately "experiences". And since we all learn by mistakes, the more mistakes our manager makes, more experiences he get. Or sometimes vice versa: instead of gaining one hundred experiences, he might get *one experience hundred times*.

The managerial mistakes can be roughly divided in three categories. In the *first category* belong managers who want to do everything themselves (and don't ask me how did I found out!). The mistakes by indecision belong to *second category*: our manager does not know his place between his superiors and his subordinates. He sometimes plays one, sometimes the other side, but in either case he is *not managing anything*. The mistakes of the *third category* are caused by *good* application of *bad* methods or by *bad* application

of *good* methods.

1) Managers of the first category, the "principals" (i.e. circus term),

are those who believe in the saying that "he who got the office got the brains" and that giving *good orders* will solve everything. They are of course in wrong place: it only works in *manège*, with lipizzaners and a good whip, but unfortunately, it does not work anywhere else. Other think - with good intentions but bad results - that they have to know everything about everybody, they have to decide everything themselves and work-out the minute details of what has to be done anywhere, and decide when and how. They usually collapse under stress, to which state they are joyfully pushed by upper management, who - if such managers prove to be successful - do not hesitate to overload them more and more.

Here also belongs the manager who assigns the most difficult work to some of his people who cannot handle it, mostly for simple reason that nobody else wants it - which is, by the way, the same reason he was given it by his superior. Others are overloading the productive employees while keeping the incompetents without work - again the result of people shortage, since he is not persuasive enough to get more skilled people.

2) Managers of the second category, the "obedients",

can be recognized easy: they were chosen to be managers because of *their* obedience, mostly by their superiors, who happened to be "principals". They are either the young ones, who do not know any better or the older ones, who never made any mistake, simply because they never did anything important. Neither of them dares "to rock the boat". The upper management loves "obedients": It can extend its authority through them and even most senile orders are then followed without any reluctance, doubt or even dubious smile. Unfortunately, the most important link is then missing: the *feedback* or as it is officially called, "the information from below". Thus the "ship captain" is watching with confidence the approaching shores, ordering oarsmen under the deck to go faster and faster. Meanwhile, there is a big hole in the hull, his rowing slaves have water up to their chin and faster they go, faster the ship sinks.

I worked once for the company where the reports were written to please the upper management: they were always nice and encouraging. There were no lies in them, just the successes were enlarged and the disasters were conveniently forgotten to mention. That was of course the best recipe for disaster. When it came, they called in foreign consultants who recommended drastic changes. Some "ship officers" were fired and replaced by others "who will surely put things in order again". The rest of the management became alarmed and suddenly got very much interested what was happening in their departments. Since there was no change in the system however, everything soon returned back to the state it was before, waiting patiently for another

earthquake.

The managers of first two categories should be actually called "*bosses*". The real managers, the *leaders*, are mostly making mistakes in the remaining category only.

3) *The third category.*

Instead of writing here about *the ways how to do it right*, I will refer you to Hurontaria 7A/98, where is my interview with Dr. Gerard Blair from the University of Edinburgh and the link to the series of his articles about management <http://www.ee.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/publications.htm>. In next issue, I am going to point to mistakes which should be - and can be - avoided.

(conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: FARMERS' MARKET (Czech version published in *Kanadské Listy*)

We were invited there by our friends; they probably knew I like those things. True, I have seen markets in Italy and Hawaii, flea markets in London and Paris, even Mexican marketplaces, but those in Northern America are quite different. I have in mind those markets, which open once a week or so, are located in the country and you can buy there almost everything - except cars, of course.

The markets are intended for country folks, the farmers and their families. You can leave your car parked in the fields, it is free of charge and the market is in the stone's throw distance. Considering this year's hot summer, it is smart to cover your car's windows with some screen or foil to protect it against the sun, since you may be spending several hours browsing between stalls.

The market consists of several buildings where they sell stock, that is horses, cows and bullocks, also poultry and other small animals, followed by stalls with food in general and at the far corner, they sell the other stuff. My wife and my friend's wife attacked the stands with summer dresses from India and Philippines, while my friend went to buy "something for his car" and I devoted my time to browsing and enjoyment alone.

When I was still a child, I liked the composition called "In a Persian Market"; they used to play it from a record to accompany the old silent animated cartoons which were played to us kids in some shack behind the soccer field while our fathers could watch the game without being disturbed. Later, somebody added some lyrics to the melody and

made it into a song, performed by famous singer Karel Gott. I tried to apply some words from the song on this market, with not too much success. Yes, "the scent of thyme" could be smelled in one stall, where they sold all possible spices - but to be accurate, thyme is now rather common and can be grown anywhere in the world, Arctic excluded. Also, I never met in Ontario "the caravans with saffron" and I saw camels only in a zoo or tobacco store. Still, local markets have their magic which is very difficult to describe in words, never mind if they are in Alberta or Ontario.

I went into the hall where they sell poultry: turkeys wrapped in large bags, sticking out their long necks and little heads, hens and chicken of any kind, roosters and other domestic birds. There were also little rabbits, pressing to each other, cuddly and defenceless, little goats (so called "kids") and lambs bleated noisily - well it was like "Old Mac Donald had a farm" in stereo and surround-sound as well. The *auctioneer* was walking from one vendor to another and the bargaining went on. But don't you dare to raise one finger or even nod your head if you do not want to end up owning one of those animals. The animal you never wanted in first place, but which was nevertheless sold to you irrevocably, based on your thoughtless sign.

Horses, mares, colts (young horses, not weapons!), cows and bullocks are sold through another auction, in a little amphitheater. Those are the main actors, they are introduced by a *barker* who is periodically raising the price, both in loud voice and quick *staccato* - more like a machine gun - and the audience is the serious buyers or just *gapers* like me. And of course, there is an ever-present man with the brum and shovel. Whoever wrote the song "The Hay and Barn", celebrating the smell of the country, would certainly appreciate the aroma of this place, which for us, kids from the city, was always fascinating. Well, not for all of us, some preferred to choke in the smoke from thousands of chimneys and factories. That day, there was no auction; but we could come in Thursday - they said. I couldn't help and asked them why, because I thought the stock is being sold only at fall. "Why in fall?" they wondered. "Well," I said, "because one does not need to feed them another winter." "You'd make a helluva farmer," said one of bystanders, but I am not sure if he wasn't laughing at me.

At fruit stands, I bought some strawberries, rasp-berries and mango - which most probably came from abroad, since you can hardly grow mango in Canada. Vegetables and fruits were perfectly clean, which I consider quite normal. I was surprised only many years ago, when I saw the cleanliness of Viennese market - and also other places where growers were selling their own produce and were proud of it. And I couldn't help buying some peaches; they were just ripe, thanks to exceptionally hot summer.

But here I have to raise a complaint: in Ontario, one has tremendous difficulties when

trying to buy a horse-radish, that is the root of it. It is sold here mostly by Italians while the other shopkeepers really don't care. Sure, you can buy it grated and soaked in some vinegar, but that does not taste so sharp as freshly grated, especially when you want to dress your roast-beef with it. And another puzzle: they serve fresh grated horse radish in every restaurant, but when I asked them how they got it, they were suddenly mute.

Next to fruit stalls are those of butchers, where I bought me some *Czabai kolbas* - here called a Hungarian sausage - and pork *cracklings*. I had a real problem to get those in Montreal, Toronto even in Prairies. Meat stalls in farmers' market also sell Italian *soppressato* salami, *cacciatori* and Polish *kolbasa*, as well as other tasty stuff. And of course "cowboy style" *jerkies* in the shape of dried strip of beef or more civilized stick, about half an inch in diameter, a good substitute for chewing tobacco and also a nourishment as a quick snack. When it comes to meat, they sell there anything which does not need to be kept in refrigerator. Many butchers are coming here from far away palces and it would be rather difficult to drag the fridge with them. They also visit the other markets, depending which one is open which day. Bakers and pastry-makers are there as well, selling cookies and other goodies. And of cause even the cakes, European or Canadian style, those round ones, called *pies*.

At the far end, they sell the rest of goodies, that is everything else, *mishmash*. No food there, only candies, but real stuff: new and used tools, videotapes, any tapes, carved wooden art, *kitchy* pictures painted on wood or steel, canvas, paper or tee-shirts, and dresses of all kind. Also cowboy boots, leather hats from Australia, cheap stuff from Pakistan or Korea, furniture, equipment both useful and useless, and also flea market things that their grandfather couldn't remember how he got them and so they are called "antiques". There are also other treasures - real *El Dorado* for children - no wonder that the toy industry never suffer any crisis. You wouldn't find here any weapons except for knives, but no switch-blades, since they were outlawed long time ago. Next to *machettas* I saw a large *Bowie knife*, almost as large as they were. I wonder if David Bowie ever suspected that our Czech "tramps" would wear its imitation (no, not real tramps, those are recreational rambles; they just call themselves "tramps" and are enamored with wild west and cowboy style life).

In one stall, one man was selling famous English rubber brooms, rather cheaper than when they advertised them many years ago on TV. According to that salesman, armed with big microphone and amplifier, you can do almost anything with them. I impertinently asked him if they can be for flying, the way the witches do - but he didn't hesitate and said they were working on it. Next to him another inventor was selling the medication for "curing everything", the stuff they once used to call "snake oil" or "elixir" and now has proud the name of "the scientific medication for increase of human body immunity". I suspect that the content is the same, that is something innocent dissolved in alcohol - after all the healing qualities of alcohol are well known:). It obviously provides

also the immunity against stupidity and it starts working when one realizes what kind of garbage he apparently bought.

I was pushing my way through the crowd, next to the lady who was firmly clutching her two English brooms; two for the price of one, which costs about five times more than ordinary broom). I tried to make it for the line before the portable toilet, since I could already feel the effects of the local beer. The restroom cabinet looked like some medieval carriage (without wheel) destined for nobility and carried on the shoulders of those, who were less noble. This one was however stationary and served all common folks, but for less noble purpose. When my turn came, some kid tried to skip the line and jump in the box. Since I knew that trick from my early years - I might have even used it myself, I don't remember - he was simply not fast enough. While he was still holding the door and tried to get in, I was already sitting there, thanked him profoundly and slammed the door shut.

It was the time to return back. My friend was waiting there. He just bought some shiny gadget for his car, but our wives were still somewhere infatuated by oriental dresses, so we had to wait. At the exit, there was now some small van with the cage in front of it. In it was a puppy of a husky dog, being apparently sold by young girl there. It was a kind of Eskimo dog and his grandfather was a champion - she said. One farmer asked her if the dog has any papers, meaning if the dog is pure-bred. "No," she answered, "but my dad said that with paper it will be worth eight hundred bucks (dollars)." Finally, one lonely cowboy decided to buy the dog as a companion.

The girl took his money with her little shaking hands and her eyes were full of tears when she was opening the cage and said: "Good bye, Rover, and be nice to the gentleman." Her voice was somehow tearing my heart and I bet she will never ever forget *this* market . . .

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE ROSY ROMANCE

The boy was dreaming about a rose - he was young, you know. He felt in love with her and then went to look for her. Nobody told him where to look, but he found her lead by her sweet, illusory smell. It is the mission of roses to smell nicely so it was not difficult to find her, beautiful, red and still a rosebud.

He was coming to see her early morning, when the rose was most beautiful. The diamonds of dew were shining red on her perianth and our rose slowly, very slowly opened her blossom. She attracted bees and butterflies and enjoyed everything, just

everything. She liked our boy, too. He had big, dreamy eyes, which devoured her beauty and his childlike lips were whispering thousands of most foolish and beautiful verses. She liked that very much, as well as his shy hands and his simple soul of an innocent child.

One morning he skipped his visit. Our rose was disappointed since she got used to his presence and didn't like to be alone. Then he came again and she forgave him. It looked like nothing happened, nothing changed, but still - his love to her was afterwards somehow different. He reproached her for being cool to him and often accused her, mostly unjustly. Once, when he waved his hands, he stung his finger on her thorn and one drop of red, human blood slipped on her leaves. When he noticed that, he started to cry and to accuse her. And again, she forgave him . . .

One day, a gardener from the village walked by. He was a good gardener and he could recognize the real beauty. He noticed our rose and decided he would give her all attention and care, so her beauty may excel and please even more. He used to come on evenings, removed weeds and gave her plenty of water. She like that very much. It is a mission of roses to blossom and fascinate. And the gardener knew that too.

At the beginning, our boy didn't have any idea about that, but after some time, he sensed that something happened to her. There was something new in her aroma. And while they used to talk before, she was now quiet and it looked like she just barely tolerated his presence. Again, he blamed her and threatened, then begged again, but it didn't help at all - he was not forgiven any more. Later he realized that it was useless, but he didn't stop seeing her anyway.

The gardener however started to come irregularly and didn't stay for long. She was angry at him since she loved him. One day, our boy met with the gardener at rose's place. Then and only then he understood why she was so cold, so strange. He challenged the gardener to a duel, but the other one laughed at him and declined. He was busy - he said - and anyway, he had no reason to fight.

The boy then left and was not coming any more. He locked himself into his sadness and nurtured it - his only feeling when he had nobody to love any more. After a while, even the gardener stopped coming. Our rose was alone again. Strange, she didn't miss the boy at all, but gardener's absence bothered her very much. And so she waited for her master to return.

Finally, he did. He caressed her and then pulled large shears out of his bag and cut her off . Why did he do it? Well, every gardener is proud if he can show the results of his care. He took her home and put her in some vase. His friends were coming, admired her

beauty and praised him.

He gave her to his girlfriend, the one he loved very much. And she liked the rose, because it was from her darling. She gave her fresh water and our rose was happy, because the gardener was coming very often. Even if he didn't pay too much attention to her any more, she could at least see him again and please her heart.

One day, her mistress had a quarrel with the gardener and full of anger, she threw the rose out of the window. Our rose was laying there on the heap of dry leaves and nobody came any more. And so she died before she even blossomed out. It is a mission of roses to die young, we are told. One day, our boy walked by and noticed the dried out rose. He recognized her, picked her up, pressed her to his face and his tears were falling into her dry blossom. He was so sorry for himself . . .

[Back to index](#)

BITS: VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT, PART III.
(the one he never wrote and nobody can read)

In the second part, we discussed facts, transcripts, text, language and pictures in Voynich manuscript and described the work of code-breakers, which up to now can be still clasified as preparatory. (Note: All information was gathered from Internet, for instance from pages <http://www.cl.cam.ac.uk/users/mrr/voynich/index.html> and <http://www.dcc.unicamp.br/~stolfi/voynich/>, and <http://sun1.bham.ac.uk/G.Landini/evmt/evmt.htm>, which also lead to other sources, too many to mention here).

Script.

So far the results indicate that Voynich manuscript does not contain any known script, that is *it is not written in any known alphabet*. Still, some "characters" and "words" repeat themselves, like in ordinary language. What's more, words have different length, again like in a living language. So why it had to use the unknown script?

We do not know the answer, but should it be written in unknown script without additional encoding, it would be rather easy to decode individual letters, providing we find the language of the plain text. If it is not so - and that is most probable - it must have been combined via substitution or transposition cipher or maybe both. For the time being, we do not even know if the "character" in the manuscript represents a real character, syllable, prefix/suffix, some mixture of all these, or just a code. Also unknown is the function of the "space separator" and for the time being, it was considered as a

space between two "words". Some code-breakers were pointing out the graphical similarities: Alchemical Symbols, Early Arabic Numerals, Latin Shorthand Abbreviations etc. Mike Clarke (see above info on net) discovered another interesting thing: by counting the pen strokes, he found that it could have been written by brush, like Arabs do - and of course from right to left. There was also suggestion of application of some "abbreviated" vocabulary.

Conclusion: While the so-called "transcriptions" are based on elements to which the Voynich text was broken, it is assumed that those elements are merely characters. If in reality they are not, do we have to start all over?

Codes.

Obviously the main interest in Voynich manuscript is based on assumption that it CAN be deciphered, not only that created by the unknown script, but also breaking the possible system of additional encoding. And since we COULD NOT - so far - figure out the script, we are trying to find out something about the coding, futile as it may seem.

"Cryptography," Microsoft(R) Encarta(R) 96 Encyclopedia. (c) says:

"Cryptography, science of preparing communication intended to be intelligible only to the person possessing the key, or method of developing the hidden meaning by cryptoanalysis using apparently incoherent text. In its widest sense, cryptography includes the use of concealed messages, ciphers, and codes."

This brings out several questions:

1) *Was the text "intended" to be legible only to the person possessing the key?* The answer is obviously YES, otherwise why would the author even bother? And how many people were possessing the key? Certainly only few, maybe only one. In marginal case - the fraud with nonsensical text - the answer is of course "nobody".

2) *Could it be it was written in script which was already used by some people somewhere?* After thorough search, none such script was found, so answer is almost certainly NO.

3) *Was the language used actually once in the existence, that is was it a "living" language?* Here is the answer more complicated. One thing is for sure: if not, then the manuscript is indecipherable. After all, without converting the text into some *known* language we could hardly claim we found any solution . . .

So we have to break the mystery in two parts: the plain text language and the system of encoding. Well, the language usually goes together with one or more, but rather limited

number of scripts (even Japanese have only three alphabets). We do not know for sure what language the manuscript was written in neither we know the code or cipher used. But again, it is more likely that the script was never used for normal public communication. In other words, we do not have here the case of French Egyptologist Jean François Champollion, solving the hieroglyphs with the help of Rosetta stone or Czech orientalist Bedrich Hrozny, who cracked the mysterious language of Hittites. Deciphering Voynich would be probably more difficult.

Now back to definitions. In the same above encyclopedia: "**Codes**, in which words and phrases are represented by predetermined words, numbers, or symbols, are usually impossible to read without the key code book". **Ciphers**, on the other hand, are "...methods of transposing the letters of plain-text (non-encrypted) messages, or to methods involving the substitution of other letters or symbols for the original letters of a message, and to various combinations of such methods, all according to prearranged systems."

So there you have it: ciphers are depending heavily on the alphabet and language used. The *codes* on the other hand, somehow bypass the requirement for particular language, because they deal mainly with *the real meanings* of words. Unfortunately, they are almost impossible to decode without any codebook, and that is even if we know the script. Let us see what David Kahn has to say about Voynich manuscript.. He noticed that pictorial part to the manuscript resembled herbal and the writing "*looks like ordinary late-medieval handwriting, symbols resembling the letters of that period*" - which they are not, as he also points out. "*The writing flows smoothly, as if the scribe was copying the intelligible text; the symbols do not seem to have been printed one by one.*" He also noticed that some letter and even words repeat themselves. In short, the appearance of the manuscript is confusing to say at least.(David Kahn, "The Codebreakers", MacMillan, NY, 1976, pp.870-871.)

At *first*, the code-breakers considered that the language *is known* and the text is not enciphered, so it was only a question to crack the script. Unfortunately, any comparison with existing and even artificial script was so far dismissed as not working. Next step was the breaking of text into "letters" or should we rather say "signs", in other words "the disassembling" of the script. This feat is still going on and there are several schools of opinion how to do it. The *second* approach considered that the language exists but the text is enciphered. One can easily imagine the difficulties with converting of *unknown* characters (which were shifted or transposed) into known language, especially when the *code-breaker is not a linguist*. Or the difficulties of the linguist who is not trained in code-breaking, for that matter.

The *third*, probably the most advanced stage considers all three: unknown script,

unknown language and unknown system of enciphering. Well, not completely unknown language, it has to be similar to some existing language, so we can compare the similarity, grammar, maybe some overlapping vocabulary etc. Unfortunately this is much more difficult task than the first two: something like one equation with three unknowns (but with only one solution:)). Such work require extensive efforts and there is more ahead - and so far only small part of existing world languages was tried. Another difficulty lies in the fact that the cipher is not known beforehand so it has to be discovered during the process.

So how about codes, could it be those are in reality just codes? Well, modern coding is usually via letters or numbers. It may or may not look uniform, the codes may have same or dissimilar number of characters or numerals (or both). Signs are sometimes used too, and other means than writing, especially in military. Decoding is the most difficult task for cryptographs and usually requires the rebuilding of whole code-book. We are however tempted to believe that no extensive codebook was used for Voynich manuscript, because the obvious ease the groups of letters were compiled and striking smoothness with which they were written. Neither it is easy to believe that more difficult encoding was used - sophisticated maybe, but not complex. After all, it looks like the book was intended *to be read with some ease* and for that reason, the simplicity was a must. Interestingly enough, there exists only one copy of Voynich manuscript, while medieval manuscripts used to be copied in multiples and very often. This confirms our suspicion that the secrecy was the main reason for encoding, but does not explain why such secrecy was needed.

It was also suspected that some codes are hidden in the pictures alone, but so far no satisfactory system was discovered. After all, there was hardly any need for combining two systems of encryption - one encoding is difficult enough, at least for us, and besides, it is rather clumsy: one cannot hide in pictures as much information as he can do using letters.

There are also some plain texts in the manuscript: the erased signature of Jacobus of Tepencz, erased character tables, unreadable comments e.t.c. Those all seem to be "later" comments and from what we know, they do not hint to any solution either.

Conclusion: To tackle the problem, several approaches were undertaken, mainly based on some simplification (either using known language or script, plain or encoded). This analytic methods didn't help too much and created the feelings among the code-breakers that they probably missed the point and the case is even simpler, but so far no other suggestion was offered.

Enciphering or Encoding?

Cryptography is the art of concealed messages, mostly in ciphers and/or codes. *Ciphers* use the text in plain language and by substitution and/or transposition create new text. Such text is generally possible to decipher providing we know the language or part of the plain message, or at least its purpose. *Codes*, on the other hand are some kind of "translations" of their own, using predetermined words as substitutions for other words, numbers or symbols and are almost impossible to read without the key code book. Cryptography of course is a science and therefore depends on several other sciences such as mathematics, statistics, linguistics and their advancement:. And of course it can conveniently use computers to ease the drudgery of code-breaking.

In transposition *ciphers*, the plain message is usually written in rows of letters arranged in a rectangular block. The letters are then transposed in a prearranged order, but the arrangement of the letters also depends upon the size of the block used (rows are transposed into columns , etc.) Solution of such ciphers can be done even without any key, by looking for probable words until the method of encipherment is discovered. In substitution ciphers, each letter is replaced by another letter (by using substitution alphabet). Such ciphers are recognized by the occurrence of normal letter frequencies for certain letters. We are also looking for doubles, common word prefixes and suffixes, terminal letters, and frequent combinations of doublets (i.e. SS) or other combinations, such as TH, RE, etc.

Simple ciphers usually constant shift (say five letters to the left) while more sophisticated ciphers (polyalphabetic) use irregular shift, which results in each character, say "S", being converted every time into different one. In such case, the letter frequency analysis cannot be used. Still, checking the frequency can help to establish something: if it is flat, it is surely polyalphabetic cipher. It is then solved by finding the length of the keyword and try to solve so many substitution alphabets. Obviously the author of the text is using the key, which he keeps secret. With the arrival of computers the deciphering is becoming rather easier - but so is the enciphering and today, many messages on Net are enciphered, for the reasons of security.

Codes on the contrary require two identical code books by both sender and receiver. Today, some symbols, such as a five-letter group, can even represent the whole sentences. Difficulty of having extensive code books limits their use and are mostly used in army or somewhere, where the code-books can be effectively guarded.

Conclusion: Historically, the secret codes and enciphering are as old as the need not to write the message but to conceal the content of the message. The Bible, a Greek Polybius Square, Caesarian cipher (or shift), all that was known and further developed by medieval scholars. It should not be surprising if some kind of encipherment or even encoding was

used in Voynich manuscript. For all practical purposes however - that is to be able to use the manuscript *without* any need to rewrite it first in plain language - we may assume that the system of concealment was easy - with minimum requirements for human memory, that is by simple substitution and definitely no codebook. How much is this assumption correct is still to be seen.

Computers.

Computers are used extensively by the code-breakers of Voynich manuscript. We do not have here place to list or discuss all of them, so just as example:

BITRANS - a transliteration tool. Includes the translation rules for conversion between the different transcription alphabets: Currier's, FSG (First study group) Basic Frogguy (by Jacques Guy) and EVA (European Voynich Alphabet)

FQ - program to produce tables of word-adjacent frequencies

MONKEY - a programme to calculate the entropy of texts

VFQ - a program based on Sukhotin's algorithm to find vowels and consonants in a symbolic sequence

VMSVIEW - for inter-linear display and PCX output of the Currier, FSG, Frogguy and EVA transcription files

VTT (Voynich Transcription Tool)

We already mentioned the use of statistical tools by M. E. D'Imperio. G. K. Zipf described a number of common properties of natural languages including two "laws" of word frequencies.

The "rank-frequency" law - the tokens in a text are sorted by decreasing frequency and a rank number is assigned to each token. For tokens with the same frequency, the sub-sorting and ranking is arbitrary. The plot of $\log(\text{frequency})$ on (y axis) versus $\log(\text{rank})$ on (x axis) approximates a straight line of slope -1 (for high frequency tokens)

The "number-frequency" law - the plot of $\log(n)$ on (y axis) versus $\log(\text{number of tokens with frequency } n)$ on (x axis) approximates a straight line of slope -0.5, where n is the frequency of a token. This applies more to low frequency tokens).

Conclusion: If we consider that the space indicates a word separator and the script represents a non-cipher (but perhaps an abbreviated version) text consistently, then the tests for Zipf's laws confirmed that the manuscript may be written in some natural language. The word and token length distributions are shorter than those in the English and Latin samples investigated. This may indicate by some an "abbreviated" script in which the characters may be letter as well as syllables, but such conclusion may be premature, until all other possible languages are tested as well. While computers were a

big help in those preliminary stages, it would probably require some programs with artificial intelligence (i.e. with learning capacity) to assist the code-breakers and move the work closer to the "solving" stage.

(final conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*Here is another accompanying text for the exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for August exhibition.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **directly visit the Gallery and see individual pictures**, in medium or large scale and the Web address is below.*

THE SPACE FOR CONTEMPLATION

(The exhibition of Václav Cigler)



Recently, my friend asked me a curious question: how do I find out what is the particular object of art supposed to mean? Well, I am not trying to find *that* and these essays are not some kind of explanations of "what did the artist have in mind by this". That is not the way I am reacting to art. No, I am looking for *my* impressions, *my* comprehension, *my own* - shall we say - absorption of it. Am I being too self-centered? Not at all! I am the "receiver" and I have a *personal* interest in the message the art is conveying to *me*. And so what I write are rather free associations and not a recipe what should one see in the art in question. And God forbid - I do not intend to spell any suggestions what *you yourself* should think. If anything, it may start you thinking in *your own* direction, which is perfectly all right with me.

Describing art in words is difficult, some might even say impossible. Especially some art - like the works of Mr. Václav Cigler. Well, if I knew how to do it, I would rather get hold of brush or maybe write a poem, compose a short musical piece or use other artistic means which leave more space for imagination. But words? Or to paraphrase Hamlet whose author said it long time before me and three times better: "Words, words, words!".

I have here one confession to make. I always thought that music is some special kind of art - so volatile and elusive. Now you hear it and now you don't, only the impression remains. You have to admit that it has a very difficult task to make a really lasting

impression. It is also time dependent: it has the beginning, parts are in sequences and also the end. Painters, sculptors and similar artists - I thought - have it easy: the objects of their work are static. They are here to stay and you can see them, turn them around and study them at your leisure, any time - all the time.

Well, music is the special kind of art, but otherwise I was wrong. Those artists do not have it easier and neither have we, the viewers. There are artistic objects, which are dynamic, more like being alive, strange as it may seem to be. Every time you see them again, they tell you something different, something new. Needless to say, the works of Mr. Cigler are like that. They almost evolve in front of your eyes, reminding you what your last impression was and giving you, almost as a bonus, another, deeper insight. It's like if your eyes are opening wider and wider and the process never ends.

And to make it even more difficult, Mr. Cigler uses the most elusive material - glass, with all special properties it possesses and through many technologies available. I already admitted here my weakness, my adoration of objects made of glass. Maybe it is because they can also mesmerize, combine the optical effects with the message itself, mix the context with the style and form, all that in order to create the multi-dimensional meaning. Yes, all those dimensions the artist leaves for you and me, in order to exercise our own thinking. I guess that's what the real art is all about, after all.

And what's more: his objects never are only what they seem to be. It is thanks to his art - the art so much impressive, because it does not present the ideas in simplistic way - that Václav Cigler is well known around the world. His many exhibitions as well as his lifetime work are outstanding examples of the effect he made on us, the "receivers". His is not an easy art, it requires from us to find the right "frequency" and fine tune-up, but whoever said that it was going to be easy? In our world, so over-filled with ready-to-made manuals or "cook-books" for everything, it is refreshing to see that the artist believes in real values, the ideas in our minds. The values, which are not-so-easy to come by and therefore so much more precious.

The exhibition is on: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 9A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

Recently, I have heard on the radio an interesting discussion about one book.....but you can read more about it in the section 'LIFE' of his issue.

I finished painting my house - outside painting that is. Not that I was too enthusiastic about it, it was mainly my wife's idea, but now when it is done, I feel good about it. I am proud on myself and I am proud on my wife who knows how to get me going. I am scratched all over, painted all over, my knees hurt, my shoulders are in pain, I am tanned all over and I may not be able do it again - but in the meantime, I am proud. And also happy that it is over, may I rest in peace.

Another issue of our attachment *Priloznik (T-Square)* is out, you can find the address on Hurontaria Title Page. We are looking for English authors; details are there and everybody is welcome (pls read an article 'Write to us' in Priloznik).

The story *Waking the Dead* about Czech immigrants from last century written by Gloria McMillan, who is also a reader of Hurontaria, is on <http://www.enteract.com/~flynn/default.html>. The research of material took full eighth years.

Another reader of ours, *Eva Lewitus*, has an exhibition of her very interesting photographs from Peru on her page *Galerias de Fotos* <http://WWW.interaccess.com.pe/infotunel/artevia/eva/> fotografie z Peru. Eva is the professional photographer - and the pictures are just beautiful..

New magazine *Czech Express Country Homepage* is on <http://cech.cesnet.cz/>, is written in Czech and issued every day. We received a letter about it from it's redactor Klára Jiøinová and after we looked at it, we can recommend it sincerity to your attention.

Another freeware: I was already *speaking* here about the *speaking* clock - *Multilingual Speaking Clock* that is. It tells time and you can set an extra speaking alarm as well. Now we can proudly announce that thanks to our reader *Michal Málek and especially his wife Anièka* - who gave her voice to the clock - they now have also Czech version of it. Of course, if you prefer some other language, you can get it there also, at <http://www.abc.se/~m8501/spclock/>. The author is *Leif Porsklev* and you need just soundcard and a speaker. Whole-heartily recommended.

INDEX: **A - ENGLISH PART**

Other Dimensions:	THE MANAGERS WITHOUT MANÉGE (conclusion)
Life:	WHAT IS ART FOR?
Short Story:	THE KING IS DEAD - LONG LIVE THE KING!
Bits:	VOINICH MANUSCRIPT (conclusion)
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Bohumil Eliáš)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"They say I feel too much sorry for myself, but let me tell you - I am the best person to do it, nobody else can feel it so sincerely, so profoundly."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty:* we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: THE MANAGERS WITHOUT MANÉGE (conclusion)

a) Technicalization of problems

When I was working for *Sperry Univac* (U.S. company, Canadian branch) I was surprised by the fact that some superiors didn't have university - meaning technical - education. Later I understood why: it was not so important to find the best *technical* solutions to our problems, but *the very best* solutions, period. Being a young engineer, I felt offended - after all, why did they ask me for my opinion at all? I simply saw everything only from my own, technical dimension. I forgot the other variables: the production, material, money, customers and also the situation on market. That one is especially important, since poor marketing can make really big blunders and in few instances can cost company the whole project.

So what else should our managers know? Ask me what they do *not* need to know and the answer would be rather short. No wonder some managers once thought that computers would give them all the magic answers. And after so many years, some are still trying - like the souls in purgatory - to find solutions for their complex problems on computer keyboards . . .

b) Frozen planning

Planning is probably the most difficult and therefore the most important part of managerial control. The best plan of action can be of course written only after all tasks are already finished - but then it is rather superfluous:). Various computer planning programs are still not flexible enough (whatever else they might claim) to change and recalculate the results hour after hour and at the same time to optimize the plan according to rather non-predictable changes in material and people reserves, delivery or time restrictions. Still, it does not mean we should stick to fixed plan at any cost - but we have to modify it less frequently, for major changes only and "while marching". The situation requires our best guess and there you have the reasons for mistakes.

c) In-capability to deal with people problems

This point is very important: too many managers treat people impartially, as any other material and forget that people are generally difficult to handle and even small mistakes may have serious impact - even a domino effect. I remember being the head of the department of the *Test and Quality*, responsible for few engineers, several technicians and about eighteen inspectors. Ladies inspectors that is, whom I said hello every morning and on individual basis, so each of them could think she is the most important one. Why did I go to such length? I needed them to work overtimes on Saturdays and Sundays, since the production was very often delayed and shipping was scheduled for Mondays

while Test had to make up for the lost time. Of course, I didn't know about due overtimes until Friday morning. So I had to ask my ladies to contact - or rather to convince - their husbands to cancel their weekend picnics, because they will be working overtime. In fact they were doing me only favour and I needed most of them to come. Now imagine that was even before they decided to join the union :).

Every employee needs to be approached little different way. Only when you find his resonant frequency you are able to get in return his maximum efforts. Above all, good manager has to inspire people and not everyone knows how to do it.

d) *Bad application of good methods*

Unexpected successes often create the impression that there are some "miraculous" methods of managerial control. This fairy tale was most likely originated by people who were envious of other, most effective managers, without realizing that behind every success is first of all a clever brain. The good idea is not like some hat, which will fit any head of the same size. Even the best concept can be spoiled if improperly used.

Everybody knows that no idea can fit every kind of enviroment, state of technology, every branch of industry and definitely not every company. Still, we all think it must surely work for us and keep dreaming until is too late.

Let me show example: in North America, we applied some Japanese methods and there is no secret that some of them had no special spectacular results. American employee simply does not have the working responsibility of Japanese workers, their sense for accuracy and quality. Methods like JIT (Just In Time) or ZG (Zero Defect) didn't fit well in American scene. Some companies employed professional advisers who soon convinced them about it and saved them time and money. Some companies succeeded, but only after drastic "americanization" of such methods. The rest didn't know and learned that expensive lesson too late.

e) *The lack of personal courage*

When the manager realizes that the *very best* solution for his problems is rather *new* and wasn't tried yet or ir rather unusual - or is rejected for whatever reasons by his superiors - he must take a firm stand. Obedients, alibists, over-careful managers or those who cannot make their mind will choose the more comfortable solution. They will use solution which is not-so-effective but was previously tested or the one which senior management likes to follow-up. Sometimes it even works, but it mostly causes stagnation , production drop and I even worked for company that went bankrupt because of such conservatism. On the other hand, the gamblers, high -risk takers and naive experimenters will never be good managers either.

By "courage" I simply mean that the manager stands by his people when they are right, when they need help, when they deserve a salary raise or in similar situations. He may not see good results immediately - the trust cannot be developed overnight - but he may be pleasantly surprised later.

In last twenty or so years, the "managerology" underwent a great developments. Even managers improved in time, but not all of them and not to the same degree. By gaining more experience, the boss can either become better decision maker or just start to believe in his lucky star and base his decisions on his past. And series of lucky guesses will slowly calcify his brain and turn him into our famous "principal". Well, the old methods do not work in the age of modern technology and new organization of work. Neither can fit in any manager of old type. New techniques such as *video-conferencing* caught up rather quickly, but they turned even more quicker into idle *video-meetings* which are even less productive than the old ones.

Then a novelty appeared: the *team-work*. . Yes, we can call it a novelty, if we neglect the fact that it was here already in the Middle Ages. And again, we believe it is a miraculous elixir. Yes, we have good results on one side, but not everywhere. So called "teams" there depend on few hard-working individuals, while the others are only taking a free ride. The reason is quite simple: team-work requires the new kind of management and even very good manager has to learn a lot before he becomes really good *team-leader*. (the end)

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: WHAT IS ART FOR?

I was recently listening to my car radio and there was an interesting discussion: several ladies and gentlemen of the jury, the *critics* that is, were discussing the new book of an author who was not known to me. Their opinions ranged from "readable" to "rather boring" and from "not so accurate" to "quite remote from real life".

Well, the differences as those are quite acceptable - we all have different opinions and we are quite free to voice them. But hearing them from a bunch of critics who were supposed to give us, the readers, a decent judgement of that book, one may wonder - are their opinions really fitting? And even more important: do they really have something to say to us or are they just massaging their own egos? Suddenly, one of them said something smart: " But the author cannot please everybody - this is not a propose of art at all!"

In a moment. they all realized how egotistic, how individualist and - at least according to my opinion - how stupid they all were. They, professional critics, completely lost the track of their mission: to help readers to appreciate the good parts in that book, something the artist surely had in mind. They apparently believed we are supposed to find it by ourselves. Net profit of their critical views was only the fact that the reader who listened to them would probably never buy the book. And that is bad, very bad - they threw out the water from the tub with the baby as well.

They simply were not impartial and just. True, even critic could not please everybody - and should not! - but they were too much postmarked by their profession: they considered themselves the guardians of the Holy Literature and "superb" taste. The false feeling that they are here *to criticize* only, sometimes at any cost, was too deep under their skin. They did not consider the other part of the coin: to stress good features, to praise where the praise is due, to evaluate *without prejudice*. Yes, they thought they were only paid for criticizing, nitpicking and downplaying . . .

Well, they should have known better. Fortunately for us, common folks, their opinion means very little. True, we may not recognize which art is really the best, but we know what we like, what pleases us and what arouses our interest, right? No - not entirely, this is unfortunately *not* enough and never was. That is not to say that we, common folks, have bad taste or that we do not understand what was meant by this and that. It may be partly true, but it is *not* the point.

The whole history of mankind is mainly the history of politics and art. While the politics runs in circles and the proverbial saying "we never learn too much from history" is probably rvery true, as far as politics are concerned, the other part - art - reflects the continuo, neverending process. It is the quest for perfect cooperation, for humanity, for turning the mankind into a decent, intelligent community. That of course requires continuous progress, improvement and searching. And often we have to look back and compare - are we doing it better or are we just repeating the same mistakes? Are we coming up with new ideas or do we just recycle the old or superficial ones?

Of course, we have one big problem: good art is not in saying things the easiest way, art does not simply post announcements nor gives the orders, it does not strictly specify what should be done and how. There is a real need to do it that way: to leave some space for thinking. Art is encouraging us to have our own thoughts, nudging us to evaluate other people thoughts - sometimes not fully understanding nevertheless feeling our way through. Yes, I have in mind the art which is struggling to find new ways of communicating the ideas - the visions if you want - anything which makes our lives more valuable, richer, more meaningful.

No, I am not trying here to define the art - really accurate definition is imposible anyway. I am just trying to figure out what is art for me alone. You see, it went like this: from early childhood, I was attracted by music, books, paintings, statues, you name it. Then I became a radioamateur and finally studied engineering, something which really interested me and still does. Long time after that, I run an I.Q. test on myself and discovered that the right half of my brain (the art, visualization, imagination) is actually better than the left half (logic, mathematics, technical things). Only then I understood the cravings of my childhood, the urge to write stories, poems, play accordion, paint and what not.

Then I decided to give it a chance. For three years now I write, for two years in some magazines, paper or internet style and for last 20 months in my own magazine, Hurontaria. It does not matter how good or bad I am - I just had to try it. It was rather easy: I never rally stopped writing, painting, singing anyway. And I find real satisfaction in what I am doing, in creating something and publish it. Most of responses were encouraging and I *will* continue, at least for some time. But do not get me wrong, I also accept negative critiques of my work. At least once a year, anyway:).

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE KING IS DEAD - LONG LIVE THE KING (Part 1)

As he was entering the gate, Alan overheard the guards talking about it. He asked one of them who used it as an opportunity to patronize him: "Don't you know it? It's been a week now. The Queen is mourning and the priest already served three Masses for poor king's soul. I guess his soul was in very bad shape indeed!" The guardsman suppressed his smile or rather a grin. He knew pretty well he was talking treason and in normal situation, Alan would certainly report him, but he was so shocked with news that he ignored the nasty comment.

He run up the spiralling stairs of an old castle, leading up to his quarters, but suddenly felt so weak he had to seek the support of the banister. It can't be - he thought - his king was not an ordinary mortal being, he was a king! He could not be vulnerable like other man . . .

Alan sat behind his desk, where he usually spent some time copying the documents - he was king's scribe and historian - and looked through the window. It was very familiar view and every time he was not writing, he used to watch this picture, never bored by it's unchanging reality. Down there, below the castle wall, the slow, lazy river was running, framed by rows of white poplars on each bank. In the background, grey hills were

raising, partly covered with green forest - dark green in the front, misty at the distance. On the left, there was a road to the city, a solitary road disappearing in the woods.

Deep in the forest, there was king's private lodge - he used to hunt there and afterwards, he rested in comfortable chair, drinking old wine and dictating Alan his biography. It was an interesting piece of writing, dedicated to posterity and was expressing the thoughts of wise, yet still young ruler, who was describing the life he knew or believed he knew. His experience was rich and his views were unorthodox. Sometimes, he interrupted the account of his life; that happened when he got some idea how to solve this or that, problems mostly. He then forgotten that Alan was merely a youngster without any experience and discussed it with him.

Such occasions were however rare - they were there mostly accompanied by his servants, mainly the cellarmaster and dogkeeper and fellow hunters, who were also his drinking companions. The cellar master took care to bring a full carriage of village girls, who were willing to oblige the king and his friends. Those, who were not willing, were simply sent back home on foot, even if it was ten miles walk. Then there was some drinking and dancing. And singing - the king had a nice voice, very much in contrast with the hoarse howling of the cellar-master or monotone sound of the dog-keeper who had no musical ear at all. No wonder they all let king to sing solo and he gladly did. He sung some old ballads, mostly about the love betrayed, sad enough to bring tears in the eyes of those old bastards and their whoring companions.

Alan never participated in those celebrations since the king had enough sense to send him home before anything improper happened. That does not mean the boy didn't know what was going on there; he just felt sorry for his king, who had a young, but rather cool wife whose favours were apparently given only in small doses and long time apart. Besides, he felt that his king can surely do anything he pleases . . .

As much as he spent most of time there in the company of his two cronies, when inside the castle, king sometimes preferred to have only Alan around. He even admitted that Alan reminded him himself, the years when he was young, when he was a prince yet, innocent and idealistic. He also loved the way Alan blushed when somebody around talked dirty and claimed that even girls don' blush that much, at least those he knew - and he laughed himself to tears. Not only that: he even teased him, mostly about Alan's idealism, about his taking things too seriously, measuring everything by some rule of morality and truth. "Good lie, my boy, is not a lie," he told him, "if it is a beautiful deception. We are lying to girls all the time and sure enough, they lie to us. You have to lie, laddie, or you soon end up in some monastery."

True, Alan didn't know too much about life: being an orphan, he spent all his childhood

in the castle, first as a page and then, when they discovered he was gifted, he got some education and later was working as a scribe. The king was for him some sort of father figure, since he was the only one who cared for him. And Alan loved him like his own father and he would gladly sacrifice his life should he ask for it.

One day king gathered his army to fight the neighbouring king and Alan offered to go and fight for his king. But he refused him: "I cannot afford to lose my historian," he said and laughed. That made Alan very sad, but he took no offence, he loved him very much. Then the army returned back victorious and everybody believed it was due to king's military skills and bravery.

Something happened there however, since after his return the king was never the same. He didn't dictate in his biography what actually happened there - just some phrases, less modest than ever before. The young scribe felt it would deserve more - he even asked king for details, but never got any. Once the king even went mad and told him to get out. Strange as it was, Alan gladly forgave him again. After all, he was his king and hero. But he noticed that the king also became more melancholic, sometimes almost sentimental.

He once asked Alan what he would want to do with his life when he gets older. "I want to be a brave knight, fight the glorious battles and win many great victories for my king," he announced, with full enthusiasm of his age. As you did - he wanted to add, but somehow he felt his king wouldn't like that. But his sovereign was amused and asked him: "How about king - would you like to be a king?"

"I don't know," said the boy and king exclaimed: "Smart boy, smart boy!" and patted his shoulder. And he laughed again; the first time since his return from war. But he didn't say anything else and his scribe could not figure out what he meant by that. Why wouldn't his master like to be a king? Such honourable, distinguished and noble profession! More than that - it was like a mission, like a destiny! Yet Alan was the only one who ever saw the king complaining about his difficult lot; he never complained to others - or did they know already?

One day, Alan was present when king was discussing something with his priest. Father Alonso was a simple man and his heart was more on the side of common folks, with their everyday troubles and pains. As usual, he was begging the king to help his people. "My lord," he said, "our people are suffering. They work from dawn to dusk like slaves for the nobles who are oppressing them, treat them like criminals and overload them until they fall from exhaustion. You cannot allow that. You have the power to stop it, to end that misuse, lower their burden and make their life more bearable. You have a power and you have a duty, at least religious duty. Don't forget they are also children of God Almighty and they deserve better."

As he was talking, king's face turned more and more red. It was obvious that this time the priest went too far: "How dare you tell me what to do? 'Our people' you say? They are my people, mine only - you have no people, priest. And you say your God 'Almighty' is omnipotent? Why does not he help them then, aha? Why doesn't he help His children? My nobles - I need them because the country is in continuous danger of being attacked again. They pay taxes and send me their soldiers - I can't tell them how they should treat their serfs! No, nothing can be done here, they just have to suffer and that is final."

Alonso tried to reason with him, but he wouldn't listen. And when Alonso said that the uprising might be imminent, the king threatened the priest with prison. Alan was rather surprised by king's answer, especially with that new, hostile attitude, but in his mind, he was excusing him again. There must be some justification for his behaviour - he thought - otherwise he couldn't be that heartless.

Another war erupted with their old enemy. This time it did not last that long. King's army was defeated, maybe because many nobles didn't send their reinforcements any more, maybe because the soldiers were tired of war as well. The shameful peace treaty was signed, at the cost of some border territories which were lost of course with all local people who lived there. The king tried to raise more taxes, but the nobility wouldn't have it. So he arrested some of their leaders and the others revolted. The civil war lasted two long years and finally - they say with the help of enemy forces - the king won.

His revenge was bloody: all chief conspirators were hanged, drawn and quartered. Every third soldier of rebel army was beheaded in public execution. The piles of heads were then exposed to rain and rats, until they turned into white-clean skulls which were then assembled in monstrous pyramids reinforced by mortar. Alan was shaken, but he thought it was a severe but just punishment - after all, they tried to kill his king and they would have no mercy on him either.

It looked like everything turned normal again, at least for a while. People looked happy - not that they really were, but because king ordered them to. Oh yes, he actually issued a manifest that whoever was caught looking unhappy was to be sent to prison - then they would have a good reason to be unhappy, he laughed. But they were not only sad, they were mad at him. Underneath of their happy faces they hated him more and more. All of them: nobility, burgers, tradesmen, peasants, free men and serfs as well. He felt their hostility, but did nothing to alleviate it - he just made it worse, like if he really enjoyed it.

(conclusion in next issue)

BITS: VOYNICH MANUSCRIPT, PART IV.
(conclusion)

In his previously mentioned book David Kahn quotes *J.M. Manly*, who thoroughly discredited Newbold's 'solution' : "...*the attack has proceeded on false presumptions. We do not, in fact, know when the manuscript was written, or where, or what language lies at the basis of encipherment. When the correct hypotheses are applied, the cipher will perhaps reveal itself as simple and easy. . .* "

After another 68 years which passed since this statement, we can still very much agree with it. Great progress was of course expected from the arrival of computers: sometimes it looks like they are supposed to replace even our basic thinking. Naturally they did not and will not. They can solve problems only the way we define it for them and so far we were not lucky with our definitions. The real mental work remains the human burden, after all. The main obstacle - claimed by some - is the fact we would have to run the excessive number of tests. Even if we were able to run all those tests however, I do not think that would give us better clues. With such number, it is quite possible we would miss some of combinations or even discard them prematurely (just imagine, if we miss just one - but the right one!). Could that enormous waste of time possibly hit the target? It might - but only might - work. The results would grow exponentially and the evaluation of such gigantic amount of data would be even more confusing. There is a promising twist in using artificial intelligence such as neural networks, but that is still a distant music.

Accurate as this criticism sounds however , it does not provide the hint how to do it "right". Apparently until we "hit" *the right language*, we have no hope to crack the code. But if the text is encoded, how can we hit the right language without trying all possible coding in all possible languages? Yet, we still do have a lot of leads, which were previously neglected - according to my knowledge, anyway. It is my opinion that no natural or artificial language can be *excluded* after we are only half way through its testing - just because some minor language discrepancies appear - after all, it was written at least three hundred years ago. Many languages *changed their spellings* since that time - just compare the Shakespearian texts with ours, and *the vocabulary differs* as well. Agreed, the lengths of words in the manuscript are in average too short for many languages - but it might really do nothing with the language itself. If the spaces were deliberately misplaced, omitted or even represent some other letter (not talking about excessive use of abbreviations), we have a quite new ballgame in front of us.

There are many hints related to script, coding, pictures, etc. They cannot be taken on

individual basis however, but in some connection with other information. We could even try some methods, which may somehow strengthen the probability of specific solutions. After all, this is the special case where almost nothing is known for sure and we may try to build several scenarios, one of which may eventually show how the individual pieces of mosaic fit together best.

I am here presenting one such scenario. While I am not claiming it is a breakthrough - there will be surely enough points which can contradict it - it is however striking how many elements suddenly start to make more sense if considered in connection with historical comments. True, it may express wishful thinking rather than hard facts, but, as a brainstorming process, it may generate some new ideas or justify the above process of crossexamining and crossreferencing.

1) **The author:** Since we can verifiably trace the ownership only to *Jacobus Horcicky de Tepenez*, whose signature, together with word *Prag* (i.e. Prague in German) appears in the manuscript (even if later erased). It is obvious that the "signature" was put there only after 1608, when Jacobus Horcicky received his title "de Tepenez". Marci in his famous letter to Kirchner claims that manuscript was bought by Emperor Rudolph II of Bohemia, but he admits it is from second source, maybe only hearsay and we do not have no record of it (except for the coincidence between mysterious 630 ducats mentioned in Dee's diary and the price of 600 ducats mentioned by Marci). Some even speculate that Rudolph gave manuscript to Jacobus de Tepenez. Dee's involvement is also only secondhand information and Bacon's authorship checks even worse. The more logical conclusion that the manuscript may have been written *during* Horcicky's lifetime was apparently ignored. The age analysis of the parchment was not done - so it cannot confirm anything.

Who was Jacobus Horcicky? According to Czech sources (the book "*Kdo byl kdo*", published by Rovina, 1992), he was a son of poor parents and as a boy, he was working for Jesuits who discovered his talents and gave him higher education. First was working as an apothecary in some monastery and later was selected to work in Rudolph's laboratories as an alchemist. According to same source above, he somehow became rich and got his noble title "de Tepenez" - surprise, surprise - for loaning money to Emperor.

The Prague of his time was a scientific center of Central Europe: Rudolph II surrounded himself with famous scientists like *Tycho de Brahe* and *Kepler* who - while the value of their scientific discoveries is undeniable - were also involved in pseudo-sciences such as astrology. At those times the borders of sciences were simply not so strict and alchemists also ventured into chemistry and vice versa. Horcicky obviously was not only alchemist

but also botanist (he got involved with herbals while working as apothecary) and he was maybe more universal scientist than we thought.

Could it be the manuscript was written by de Tepenecz himself, say as a his personal scientific "notebook"? After all, we are not only signing the books which we somehow acquire, but more importantly, the books which we write *ourselves*. He was also the director of Royal gardens - that would explain the pictures of plants in the manuscript - and it would be only natural for him to write such a workbook. Or it could have been a draft of some scientific book he was currently writing - the draft which was intended for his eyes only, at least for some time. The temporary concealment of the content of such draft would be quite logical.

Also, the language it was written in could have been be highly scientific - or shall we say terminological - unlike the language of non-scientific manuscripts - and many expressions would certainly repeat rather often. Being myself a technical person, I remember I wrote many reports and notes in such "lingo", too many not to notice certain similarity, including the overall appearances of sketches. On the other hand, his name could have been written in by somebody, who received or obtained the book later, but that will not eliminate the possibility the book might be written by Horcicky. Why mysterious Mr. Y - the last owner of Voynich manuscript before Marci - didn't mention de Tepenecz's name to Marci, is another mystery. He probably didn't know it. Also, we do not know who erased de Tepenecz's name - except we can almost positively say it was himself. It would be however easy for graphologs to compare the signature with handwriting of de Tepenecz - there is surely some of documents written by him available.

Which brings up another idea: could it be Marci, who wrote the manuscript himself and played a joke on Kircher? Of course, he could also plant the signature there, but he would certainly mentioned it in his letter. That proves the fact it was probably erased already. Besides, it would be rather silly joke for the professor of Prague University (if not fraud) and moreover, recent discoveries found too many new facts that confirm the originality of the manuscript, but which Marci could not have known in his time.

2) ***The pictures in the manuscript*** look like some illustrations in a workbook. They are not artistic, rather like some sketches and quite unlike the fancy pictures we can see in medieval manuscripts. I do not think they contain any code. I believe they were strictly functional illustrations and they simply make no sense without accompanying text. And those strange plants pictured in the manuscript, similar to ours but with strange differences? Could it be those were some hybrid cross-bred plants he grew in the very same Royal gardens he was the director of?

Only two explanations come in mind for pictures of naked women: they might be descriptions of some witchcraft or simply pictures of human, say gynaecological, anatomy. True, there is hardly any accuracy there, but let's not forget how little was known about human body at that time. The first anatomical autopsy in Prague was done by Dr. Jessenius, the professor of Charles' University, in the year 1600. It was the first autopsy in Central Europe and probably then still considered a kind of heresy. Again the author of our manuscript - or rather the second author (who probably got the manuscript from Horcicky) could have added his observations from that field in the manuscript.

It is probable that the manuscript didn't leave Prague with Horcicky (1618) and stayed there until Marci sent it to Italy (1666). Before Horcicky left Prague, he could have given it to his successor or student, together with the secret how to read the script, in order to carry on or just to finish the manuscript. It was already observed that there were two handwritings involved there and it could explain the mysterious "second" author. The book was later apparently somehow passed to Mr. Y and from him to Marci.

In that connection, we should search the answer in the history itself. I have finally found the reason of the mysterious disappearance of Horcicky from Prague. According to above Czech source, when Czech *protestant* nobility raised against Emperor Ferdinand (1618), Horcicky took the *catholic* side. He was imprisoned and later exchanged for above mentioned Dr. Jessenius, who was arrested while negotiating alliance between Czech protestant government with Hungary. After exchange, Horcicky was expelled from Bohemia and he never returned back. Protestant army was however defeated in the battle of White Mountain near Prague (1620) and Bohemia was seized by Emperor Ferdinand II. Dr. Jessenius and 26 representatives of protestant government were publicly executed (1621). Horcicky died a year after, but the war continued on larger scale till the year 1648, finally ending by the Peace of Westphalia (that's why it is called the "Thirty years war").

3) **Many pictures** in the manuscript look strange: unknown plants, distorted anatomy - it all suggests that the textual content of manuscript could have been quite explosive, considering the time it was written. That was probably another reason for concealment: gynaecology was most likely considered a forbidden science, maybe even of heretic nature. The hybrid plants from de Tepenez's Royal garden - could have been considered as a dangerous meddling in God's business, too.

One can see of course the main objection: why would Horcicky, raised by and siding with Jesuits, engage in "forbidden" sciences? Again, we have to understand the spirit of his time: the Emperor Rudolph II (himself devoted catholic) encouraged all kinds of "forbidden" research, namely transmutation of metals into gold and the alchemy itself was then bordering with so called black magic. But even Rome was following closely all

scientific discoveries - so closely that even Dee complained he was surrounded in Bohemia by Vatican spies. And I doubt if it an accident that many persons connected with manuscript were catholics, some of them even Jesuits.

4) How about the *language* it was written in? If there was the second author, it is apparent that he should speak the same language as the first author, to be able to read it and write in the same script. De Tepenez was of Czech nationality. So was Marci and even Raphael Missowsky, who knew so much about it. Their native tongue was Czech language - has anybody tried to test the manuscript against it? After all, the connection with Prague, then capital of Czech kingdom, is already firmly established. While the Emperor Rudolph was German by birth, he chose Prague as his royal seat, and of course also the capital of his Roman Empire.

Czech language is basically the Slavic language but century lasting effect of German vicinity left a deep and lasting mark on it, more in vocabulary than in grammar. Also Latin and latinized names were used by Czechs at that time very often.

As early as in fifteenth century, Czech script was reformed by professor of Prague University *Johannes Huss*. Soft syllables, which were originally scripted by doubling or other letter combinations (English - *ch* - was for instance written as *cz*) were replaced with single -c- with sign above -è- (i.e. -c- with reversed ^, if your computer does not have Czech fonts). Also, the long vowels, originally written as doublets, were replaced with single letter with dash above, such as -á-. As ingenious as the manuscript's script was, to use similar signs would be an easy giveaway (it was Czech speciality), so most likely the old system was used, which would explain high number of letter doublets.

German language was always resented by patriotic Czechs while Czech language was too difficult for Germans to learn it properly. It is the language which has plenty of German terms, but mostly Slavic grammar; also, as it was the habit at that time, many words were latinized by using Latin suffixes. The Slavic verbs have six different terminations for *conjugation* (and ten different terminations for past tense and future tense). Slavic nouns and pronouns have seven terminations for *declinations*, each slightly different. If de Tepenez was de facto an author, it would be quite natural for him to use Czech language as a mean of natural concealment of his works against German competition.

All and all, the manuscript gives many indications that it was written in sixteenth (or beginning of seventeenth) century, say at the time of de Tepenez. The script of that period was *German Gothic*, later version being called *schwabach* (which still exists) and was used at that time both for German *as well as* Czech texts (with those Czech sings on top of it, of course). The similarity of that script with the script of Voynich manuscript was also already noticed by some researchers. It is obvious that the writer (or copyist)

was skilled in writing in it and the similarity of both scripts had probably deeper reasons. It is obvious that second author (if any) was quite "fluent" in the script of the manuscript as well. The numbering of pages was considered to be that of Dee, who of course lived in the same period and might very well be not his, but the original one.

Of course, the Czech - or other - language, being *natural* itself, was still not enough for concealment, so the brand new, *artificial* script was invented as well. Those two methods of concealment would pretty well serve as in modern cryptograms: Czech language as a special *cipher* and new script as additional *encoding*. For that reason, we can very well doubt if some other means of encoding were used - they were simply not necessary.

4) **Abbreviations**: In average however, the words in the manuscript are too short for English or Latin - but also short for Czech language. It was already suggested that the author used some abbreviations - it was normal for Latin of that time already. However, there still were needed some longer words - except if *shorthand* was used.

Here I have to admit that I did invent my own shorthand long time ago, for my personal use. I also found some similarities in Voynich manuscript. Of course, I further distinguished between "thin" and "thick" lines of various curvatures and directions. I used only some ideas of today's shorthand and developed it mostly my way. Unfortunately, I noticed another peculiarity: the system offers itself to continuous improvement which makes my older texts rather difficult to read:). Well, I am no linguist so I could not develop a relatively good system in a reasonably short time so I soon abandoned the idea. If the author of our manuscript really used shorthand, it can be shown that it must have been the final, perfect version, but that is hard to believe.

There is also one other thing with shorthand - it is language dependable, which would point to great difficulties in decoding the manuscript - it would be *almost impossible* for us without knowing the language of plain text and it would be *very difficult* even knowing the language.

And of course, each shorthand combination of signs is like a cipher of its own. I also noticed, when studying *EVA* transcription (alphabet) that the signs considered there as "characters" are of two kinds: some are simple lines, the others are composites - that is they contain as their part the characters from the first group, which makes it difficult to transcribe the text correctly. On the other hand, if we take the first group only, we just do not have enough letters for the whole alphabet, in any language. That may of course again suggest that some kind of shorthand may have been used after all.

Looking at the mentioned alphabet, I could recognize typical elements of shorthand, which have similar basic properties with modern shorthand: they are quite legible, easily

indistinguishable and relatively simple - actually so simple that they can be easily and smoothly connected into words. Our modern system of shorthand is using all kinds of signs for suffixes and terminations and takes long time to learn. Again, considering the ease the manuscript was written by hand and minimum of mistakes or corrections, there must be some easy explanation how this "shorthand" might have worked - if indeed it was shorthand.

5) At the beginning, one assumption was made: that the *spaces* between "words" are exactly that - the spaces. As fantastic as it may seem, they may just be another characters, while the remaining text could be written without spaces at all (and still could be easily read - as in this example). Or even better, the text being written without spaces which were instead inserted in random, thus creating groups of characters sometimes shorter than the real words in natural language. While it is hard to imagine why would the author resort to such trick, it is easy to imagine that nobody would consider it - making the document even more difficult to crack.

6) When talking about language, we have to realize that the difference between the *sixteenth century language* - any language - and today's version of the same language is really enormous. I would estimate that one third of words was then either different, disappeared with time or were *at least* written differently than today. This may add to our difficulties (as it was not enough of them!). Other problem is comparing the scientific "lingo", which is full of "scientific" terms with the common language. No wonder that half words would be indecipherable, even by linguists!

All of the above reasoning were at least partly justified. There are of course even more fantastic ideas. For instance, it is known fact that John Dee corresponded from Europe with lord Cecil (Lord Burghley) and maybe even with Sir Francis Walsingham. Several records even suggest he was actually a spy for Queen Elizabeth, but could never prove it. Especially Sir Francis Walsingham was surely interested in secret coding - let's not forget his success in breaking the secret code of Queen Mary of Scots, which then cost Mary her proud Scottish head. Dee was a mathematician and code-breaker himself, apparently. It would be a real joke to sell Emperor Rudolph a manuscript, containing some new code and thus testing the capabilities of Rudolph's code-breakers at the same time.

On the other hand, also in Rudolph's time, the old manuscripts were very good article for sale, worth they weight in gold: astrological almanacs, cookbooks for making gold, black or white magic recipes, etc. There must have been many forgeries around and there was nothing easier than to make one brand new one. The one which nobody could read and therefore cannot proclaim as a forgery - all that was needed was to write some gibberish

in more or less non-sensical script. Of course, it would have to have an appearance of something mysterious, but real. So add few more strange pictures and tell Rudolph that it contains the secret how to make gold. Not that we suspect good doctor Dee, but with Edward Kelly we could never be sure enough :).

But it seems more likely that Voynich manuscript *does* hide some real text. It's non-randomness was more or less proved already. That of course does not eliminate the possibility of fraud, but considering the pain it took to write it, it would be rather difficult to write something "*without any meaning*" and at the same time completely *non-random*.

One thing is for sure: the real value of Voynich manuscript is in the fact that it was not cracked yet. Solve the mystery and it will be soon forgotten. In the meantime, it is a great challenge for our code-breakers as well as linguists. It is apparent that there are some areas worth deeper investigation. While the script and language of manuscript are still elusive, the search for more data - namely historical - and coordination of findings may eventually bring up new hypotheses, which - as strange as they may sound - could finally point to right direction.

(the end)

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*Here is another accompanying text for the exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for August exhibition.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **directly visit the Gallery and see individual pictures**, in medium or large scale and the Web address is below.*

THE GIFT OF BEAUTY

(The exhibition of Bohumil Eliáš)



I remember how I was once, long time ago, thinking how would I describe the meaning of *beauty*, that is without going into some long definitions. True, any Thesaurus would give me a handful of "equivalent words", starting from *..adorable, aesthetic, attractive...* and ending with *... stunning, sublime and tasteful*. Any of those words gave me only one feature of beauty and each would be missing a lot; so best thing I could do was to put them all together and wrap it around with ribbon marked "*beauty*". No, I wanted something different, something closer to *real* nature of beauty, something common to all kinds of beauty . . .

I haven't succeeded then, but many years later, after I have written more pages in the book of my life, it came to me like it was always there - apparently I just couldn't see it before. It happened on my birthday. I was walking through the forest and once a while I stopped, and amidst the deep silence, I watched the trees and sky, all those colors and shades. I suddenly realized how wise and profound harmony was all around me. It was like a magnificent church, created by the best of all artists, and it was there all for me, for us, for eternity. I realized what a beautiful present it was, the best I ever got. And there you have it: I believe the beauty is simply *a gift*. The gift from somebody who created it for us, terrestrials, and we should all comprehend it and appreciate it. Unfortunately, only some can while some can't and the whole gift is somehow lost on them.

Nothing less than *beauty* strikes me like an appropriate word for the art of Bohumil Eliáš. He has a gift to think out the beauty and pass it on to us. Be it painted glass, the glass of strange yet admirable shapes, with colours which complement and provoke our thoughts at the same time, abstract paintings with very concrete meanings. The beauty, which is at the same time also *...adorable, aesthetic, attractive...* and *.... stunning, sublime and tasteful*. Simply because his art is all that.

The old English saying says. "The beauty is in the eye of beholder", meaning that we all have different ideas about beauty. I beg to differ: the beauty has to be first in artist's mind, then in his hands and eventually realize itself in the object of art. Then and only then can we, the beholders, finally watch it and appreciate it. And while we may differ in our opinions, one thing is for sure: most of us can recognize the real beauty.

And like that forest, so quiet and yet talking to me, so is the art of Mr. Eliáš. It talks in several levels - depending how much we can understand it - but all that talk is in one, universal language. That's why he is internationally recognized, all over the world. Yes, each of us can comprehend his art differently, but it's impact on us is the same. Be it painted glass, mixed media, stained glass or paintings, they all talk to our special sense - call it the seventh sense - the sense of beauty. They all show same kind of harmony, so much that one can almost hear the distant, lovely music in the background.

You see, all that confirms my theory: here is an artist who has a gift that he is sharing with us. As he would know that there is never enough beauty in our everyday life - the beauty which knows how to redirect our eyes from our everyday problems, pains, worries and disappointments. The artist is giving us another insight in our troubles, same way as if we are looking through the glass and see the other side, the brighter one. Yes, we need some hope, we need some assurances, that there is something else in this world, something satisfying and pleasing. Something like a beautiful gift.

The exhibition is on: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 10A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

So the fall is here again. I remember, I always liked this season, its colors and its beauty which sort of compensated the misfortune that my vacation was over and I had to go to school again. My father disagreed with me on that, he didn't like autumn at all - it somehow reminded him the coming winter. But I liked the dignity with which the nature yielded to its inevitable fate and prepared itself for a long, long sleep. It just sets itself ablaze with colors to say "Good night!", as she would know that after winter, there will be spring again, and then just wait and see! It is for this reason that I do not condemn the old cliché that the man's life is like the seasons of the year - mainly because for me, autumn is the most beautiful season and I am also in the autumn of my life.

And leaves are falling, even in our place, and the winds from West and North are prevailing, Huron is plowed by big waves and *Indian Summer* may not even come. I am piling wood for my fireplace and sometimes I go to pick some mushrooms, but surprisingly, I do not find that many. At the beginning of September, we visited Toronto, just to realize that we do not miss it at all. And even if we would, it is only three hour distance by car - comfortably *close and distant* at the same time.

NOTE: Sometimes happens - from reasons beyond our control - that some of our mirrors cannot be updated and for that reason, you may not find the new issue there exactly on 11th of each month. But be assured that we keep our commitment very seriously - just check the other of five addresses, it will be there. Beside that, you can use our free service: we can send you the issue by e-mail, true, without pictures, but it takes less than a minute and you can see it in your browser the same way as it is on net (see info below).

Dr. Jason Ohler, Director, Educational Technology Program, University of Alaska Southeast, whom I interviewed last March in Hurontaria, has published his new book, ***Taming the Beast: Choice and Control in the Electronic Jungle***. Feel free to visit his web site at: <http://www2.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/jason/bookquotes.html> .

Another freeware: *FerretSoft* is offering the whole package of utilities in one. Are you searching for some web page? Use **WebFerret**, it employs nine search engines (Altavista, etc.) at the same time (I have it for a year now and I am very happy with it). Do you need to check Net databases? Use **InfoFerret**. Are you looking for e-mail address? You can, in **EmailFerret**. How about files on net? Nothing better than **FileFerret**! How about a chat with your friends? Load **IRCFerret**. **PhoneFerret** can find phone numbers for you. Looking for newsgroups? Use **NewsFerret**! All that in one package or individually and - believe it or not - for free. But why should I do all that convincing, take a look at it yourself, at: <http://www.ferretsoft.com/netferret/index.html>

INDEX: A - ENGLISH PART

Other Dimensions:	INTERVIEW WITH WEBMASTER
Life:	LIFE IS . . .
Short Story:	THE KING IS DEAD - LONG LIVE THE KING! (conclusion)
Bits:	MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONLY ONCE
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Vladimír Kopecký)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language, is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

" My oncle lives in an old castle and they have ghosts there. Some of them are still alive".

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. **Novelty:** we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*

OTHER DIMENSIONS: INTERVIEW WITH WEBMASTER
(translated from enzine Zélos, editor Jitka Splítková)

JITKA: *First domain is Internet. When did you get an idea to publish Czech and English tri-weekly magazine Hurontaria?*

JAN: It was one awful evening during last autumn. I had nothing to do - and so in the morning, I created the first issue. But seriously, it wasn't that simple. At that time, I was already contributing to daily enzine "NEVIDITELNÝ PES" (as a Canadian reporter), then to AMBERZINE (I am with them for two years now) and finally, when Miloš Kaláb started his KANADSKÉ LISTY, he asked me to write a 6-part serial SAFARI CANADA. I received several letters with compliments so I added another serial GO WEST which I liked so much that I carried it on a on. . .

It was only after 15th (!) continuation that I realized it must be a chronic disease or something like that and I started my own enzine, HURONTARIA, as a cure. Originally, it was just an experiment, I had no plans whatsoever. The idea of bi-lingual magazine offered itself from the very beginning: while living in Saskatoon, I participated in several writer's workshops and kept few of my stories and poems still stashed away. I was also tempted to carry on with my interviewing of interesting Net- people, the thing I originally introduced in Amberzine.

JITKA: *Why did you choose the name **Hurontaria**?*

JAN: "Hurontaria" is actually the name of the never-never land made up by Filip Martinec in my story *Mr. Hurontario* - but you can read it yourself in [archive 1998](#), in the first issue of Hurontaria.

JITKA: *Do you have responses to your writings mainly from Czech readers living abroad? Any interesting response?*

JAN: Interestingly enough, the majority of readers are from Czech Republic; the countrymen from abroad constitute only about 25 percent. I guess it is because one third of readers knows only Czech, other third only English and the rest is bi-lingual (including foreign students who are learning Czech language or czech students learning English). We have readers in all continents (Antarctic excluded) and we also have *Hurontaria Bulletin*, sent by e-mail and announcing new issue, listing new readers and new links referring to Hurontaria. The same Bulletin is also kindly duplicated in Dr.

Èulík's BRITSKÉ LISTY.

The most interesting response is not related in Hurontaria but to my article for *Neviditelný Pes*. I wrote about the first golden Oscar award to Czech actor, my schoolmate *Ivan Jandl* - it is exactly 50 years this year. I received about 20 letters from Czech Republic, from people who knew him. They wrote about his life - he was already dead by then. The "interesting" was the fact that the majority of Czechs did not even know about him and his Oscar (since he acted in American movie, he was pushed by communist government into total obscurity).

JITKA: Name all countries with Hurontaria readers.

JAN: Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, yes - even Slovakia, France, Germany (also place of our mirror), England, Scotland, Ireland, Poland, Canada, U.S.A., Brazil, Australia, Japan, Jemen, Denmark, Norway, Hongkong and probably more - all those, who didn't write to me yet.

JITKA: Can you confess how many hours you spend in front of your computer?

JAN: No, I cannot; I can only divulge that it is more then 5 and less than 24 hrs. Half of the time is devoted to Net, as a passive *netizen*.

JITKA: According to you, can Internet change the world?

JAN: Internet is like the life itself. There are fans, good guys, villains, saints, sinners and even normal people. For me the world was definitely changed by Internet: it shrunk substantially.

JITKA: Now about something completely different. As a writer and poet: your poems are sad and ironical - at least they seem to me. Am I wrong about that?

JAN: Sure, they are sad - have you ever tried to write a poem when you are happy - I mean a really *good* poem? Moreover, I write because of my internal needs, in other words: I like it when people feel sorry for me. And the irony? It is just the irony of my fate.

JITKA: We will discuss Canada and animals some other time. Just one special question here: Are you inspired by nature and have you ever written poem about a tree? I am asking because I collect such poems.

JAN: I am surely inspired by nature, but I cannot write too much while I stay outside: I

feel so good there that I soon fall asleep. I used to go to one cliff above Vltava river called *Black Rock* while I was a student; there were many trees, some cemetery nearby and one great view down below at the river. As you see, I still don't know what inspired me most. One day, while I have fallen asleep while I was reading, I woke up and there was a bunch of children around me - the local Elementary School went outdoors to draw some trees. One little girl came to me and asked me to sketch one tree for her. After a while, the other kids came to me, too - I believe that was the same way Hurontaria spread among its readers. On that day, I got 9 A's, 5 B's and 3 C's. I do have my favorite trees here, on Huron shore. There are maples of course, and they inspired me to write a story called "Double Erable" - actually, I am glad you reminded me, I will publish it in next Hurontaria.

JITKA: *Who are your favorite poets, writers and painters?*

JAN: Poets - mainly Lords: Lord Byron, Lord Tennyson...but seriously: there is nothing like reading poems in their original version. That's the only way to find out "what was it that the poet wanted to tell us". Writers: *Robert Fulghum* (From Beginning to End, Our life's rituals, Argo Prague 1995, but I like his other books more). He is a philosopher and man of many professions. He spent many years in Japan, was a military chaplain, writer and even rock musician. When I discovered him, he was already famous; one day, I have to apologize to him for being late Next to him is *Terry Pratchett* - I have already interviewed him. Them and me, we have many things in common - mainly the long string of years around our necks. Painters? I like them all, that is until I am really good in it, then I will be more picky. In the meantime, I am only jealous.

JITKA: *You write stories of different genre, including sci-fi, which is right now pushed back and looked down here. How is it in Canada?*

JAN: How do you know I write sci-fi? I am trying to keep it secret! One time I wrote in Amberzine, let me quote myself (finally - I always wanted somebody to quote me): "...Middle Ages had their minnesingers, nineteenth century its romantics and this century has its *sci-fies*. I think we can look at sci-fi as a whole cultural discipline - or domain if you wish - be it expressed by word, picture, film or on Net. This culture originated from the need of our time, from the wish to cope with our technical revolution, both mentally and emotionally, the revolution which is all around us and also with another one, which may yet come." In Czech Republic, sci-fi is read enough but written less.

There are good sci-fi writers in Canada, but they are mostly published in United States. Who knows today that *William Gibson* (Neuromancer) is a Canadian? So is *Robert Charles Wilson*, who writes now in team with *Robert J. Sawyer*. There is about 50 good Canadian sci-fi writers, wherever they may live now.

JITKA: *After editing my sci-fi book, my editor told me: " It is very good; it's just a pity you put such deep thoughts in sci-fi book. What would be your response?"*

JAN: I'd say on the contrary - it is a pity, to entrust such book to that kind of editor. It is true however that not all sci-fi books are written with deeper knowledge of contemporary science, technology and thinking. And I am not even talking about books where some super intelligent creatures from cosmos are behaving like village idiots, even if measured by our human criteria only.

JITKA: *In one of your e-mails you wrote you intended to paint watercolors; which theme is really haunting you?*

JAN: Watercolor is an interesting technique, but not forgiving one. It has all features of other media and some more. I would be satisfied to do "still life" first, taken of course literally, that is the stationery objects which don't move. Surprisingly, it may include also Huron Lake, which of course is not static at all; it changes every day and every minute, its composition, color and mood - it is quite dynamic.

For some time I did some pictures with hot needle, i.e. burning in wood, but that material is the least forgiving. Still, if I have a time, I want to do pictures with old schooners on Huron, who were very popular here at the beginning of this century. In Kincardine alone, we have 11 shipwrecks, three of them very close to our harbour and I am not satisfied with just writing about them (which I did already).

JITKA: *To change the subject: you have travelled a lot. Could you show our readers some photos from your travels and even add some comments?*

JAN: Sure, I like to boast, after all I wrote a number of travel reports and stories. It would be better however if I write one of those for Zélos instead. I also film during my travels so I do not need to make-up too many facts when my memory fails. Not that it happens very often: almost in all those places I also lived and worked, be it England, Japan and various places in United States and Canada. I have learned two important things there however:

- a) wherever you go, the *most interesting* subject for observation are people.
- b) people everywhere are jealous that you are lucky enough to be from *somewhere else*.

JITKA: *You have dropped your anchor in Kincardine, Canada. Is it final decision?*

JAN: Sure, I said the same about Montreal, Toronto, Oakville, Saskatoon - why not here? Ask my wife, if she still believes me - I mean with this final "resting" place.

JITKA: *Many people are now talking about losing their roots, about returning home - it is a fashion to talk about ancestors while others may talk about being citizens of the world. I think you can comment on that. What were your feelings when you've "seen the world"?*

JAN: I have a confession to make: I have "seen the world" first time when I was born and never ceased to see it. Following the tradition of our legendary patriarch Èech ("Czech" in English), I also moved westward. You see, the *nationality* is more than just "the place you were born". Never mind that aforementioned forefather wouldn't be able to get today - based on government's regulations - his Czech citizenship, since he was not born in *Czechland*. Nationality is also more than *citizenship*: I have double citizenship, but I have only one nationality - Czech nationality. It just happened without my efforts, the medal should go to my mother instead. The Canadian citizenship on the other hand, is something I had to deserve first, it's something I achieved myself, me alone. I do not need to add that I am quite proud on both of my citizenships, just in different way.

I do not believe in *roots*: many geniuses had stupid children and vice versa. To belong to the same nationality is rather *cultural relationship* than some kind of *inheritance*. The grandfather's medals don't make his grandson a hero. There is some dynamics in it too - no nation lives in isolation, it has relationships with other nations. The values of our nation are not what we think about ourselves but how highly we are regarded by the whole family of other nations. My ancestors are not my possessions, they are rather the people I owe something. For example: my education was recognized in Canada without any particular problems, obviously because Charles' University in Prague had good name here. It pleased me, but it was also an obligation for me to measure up to it. Not all people however understand their nationality as their *debt to their forefathers*, the majority takes it as a right to hide behind the others.

The *language* is not a barrier between nations and the *borders* should not be either. Barriers (i.e. citizenships) were invented by governments who benefited from their invention. *Cosmopolitanism*? We all are citizens of this spaceship called Earth. *Nationality*? Sure, everybody belongs somewhere. And where do we *belong*? We all belong in one category only: to human race, with emphasis on the word "human" or even better - "humane".

JITKA: *At the end, I ask every person the same question: what is your life's credo, motto or what would you tell the readers of Zélos?*

JAN: I am an optimist, there is *nothing else left* for me :). That is of course a joke, but

philosophically speaking, I am rediscovering the wisdom of old stoics. It can be summed up in an old proverb:

"Dear God, please give me a courage to change the things I can change, the patience not to try changing the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to distinguish the first one from the other one".

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: LIFE IS . . .

No, no definitions today. We all know that life is *not* like a bowl of cherries, if you know what I mean. And if I say that life is beautiful, you may ask: is that all you want, a beautiful life? Life of comfort, peace and tranquility? Life without problems, without pain?

Of course that *is* what I want. I used to ask for more, much more, but as the life progressed, so did I. Once a while, I slowed down my daily pace, to sit down and think about things. Yes, I used to be young, I remember it well. I did have some plans and I even turned some of them into reality. After all, I should be content, satisfied and happy. But what if my choice of plans was wrong, what if my plans were very modest one, without enough imagination or courage? What if I failed myself already when I was making those plans?

I do not know. I could have - and probably should have - planned for more. But when I was still discovering what I was good for - if for anything - it was too early to figure out what I could do. It was not lack of courage, no Sir, rather the shortage of experience, orientation and determination. I did not possess that inner drive, which would tell me that I had to be a great musician, painter or what not. It was not easy for me to believe I would amount to something extraordinary, that I was maybe even a genius. Luckily for me, I was right not assuming those immodest, unreal and crazy notions. What a disappointment I was saved from!

So I made small plans - not so small, if I look around, just not too great by my later standards. I kept fulfilling them, one after another. What a drag, you say? Not at all, they were not that easy to fulfil and it was satisfying. It felt like being able to do something. No remorse, no regret, just everyday satisfaction and fulfillment. Meantime, the life went on. And soon I realized that I was getting old, that I was not planning any more for anything new, exciting, yet still achievable. The adventure was gone, the danger ceased. I realized there is no more time left. The activity was replaced by notions, the satisfaction by doubts.

At first, I panicked: was it possible that I was not be able to do this or that? And not only that - I lost that moderate drive I already had since the reason for it somehow disappeared. And in was then when I realized that even the way I carefully chose out of many was not the best - just comfortable, without any major risk. But was it what I really wanted? True, I was no fighter, no discoverer, no visionary. So what was I? Well, too many questions were popping in my head and there were no answers. Questions like: what did I ever achieved? A there it was, the former successes turned into minor achievements, previous satisfaction into the pile of almost-failures.

The most troubling of them all: did I do it right or did I waste my lifetime? Was it my fate or was I expected to deliver more, better or smarter goods? Was I supposed to obey my fate or revolt against it? Should I have pleased my parents, my friends or even my bosses or was it better to follow my heart only? So many questions and not enough time to answer them.

Then I realized that there is no escape from the labyrinth of my life except for "the last escape". And when the exit is getting close, why should I even look for it? It was like switchng to another doctor for second opinion: if the fist one says YES and the other one says NO, it is worse than if you get no opinion at all. But the world is not only black or white, bad or good, right or wrong. The life is a colorful process, where we sometimes do what we *want* and sometimes what we *must* do. And the rest is history. I remember how I once asked my grandfather how did he managed to live that long - and he smartly answered: "Whatever happens, Johnny, you just keep on living." Whom he really addressed I will never know: his name was John like mine.

Well, my grandfather is gone, for long time now. Something happened and he couldn't keep on living any more; pneumonia, I believe. But I am sure he died happy, satisfied and content. For one thing: he already found the answers I am still searching for. And when his time came, he was ready for it.

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE KING IS DEAD - LONG LIVE THE KING (conclusion)

Then the king wanted to replenish his treasure and so he raised taxes. And again. And again, so they had almost nothing left to live on. It didn't take too long for peasants to raise against their king and the others joined them - after all, when all you have is only your life, it loses it's precious value too. It looked like the whole nation was in arms. Excepts for those arms: they had no artillery, only some muskets, swords and homemade weapons. Still, at the beginning, the army of people was winning, because many of king's

soldiers deserted. Town after town, garrison after garrison, they gradually fell in the hands of rebels.

Then something happened. It looked like the numbers of king's soldiers stopped diminishing: for each thousand killed another thousand raised from somewhere - like if they were indestructible. But soon was the mystery solved: those were soldiers of his former enemy the king-neighbor. They were all dressed in the uniforms of Alan's king and fighting under his colors. They were better trained and much better equipped, with strong artillery and cavalry. They went from victory to victory. Eventually, they overrun the whole country. And people were shocked and could not believe it: the king used the enemy troops against his own people! What was the price he paid them?

They learned soon enough: enemy soldiers pillaged the country, cutting it to the bone: villages, towns, castles, nothing was spared. They were stealing, killing, raping and burning their way to the Capital, where the remaining rebels fought their last battle, while the king was safely in his exile. When the time came for his return, his revenge was swift and cruel. It was clear he wanted to punish everybody and no mercy was ever given. The guilty, suspects or innocents, they all were executed, but before that, they were all tortured to reveal the names of other guilty, suspects or innocents. The tortures were done in public and king himself was present and checked that nobody was spared. It looked like he hated them all, but his face didn't show it. His hate was deeper than that.

Even when his cellar-master, his former drinking buddy, was arrested, king didn't show any emotions. He didn't even care about the fact that his servant was only defending his wife against soldiers, who tied him and repeatedly raped her. On the contrary, to prolong his agony, he told executioner to hang him upside down, and it took a number of hours before the poor man died.

That night, the king took his whores to his hunting lodge, got drunk and cried on Alan's shoulder: "Nobody likes me, nobody. But I will make them love me, you'll see!" That was too much even for Alan and he soon left for the castle, to avoid more disgusting encounters. He sat there by his scribe's desk and cried - he could not understand what changed his king so much. All he could figure out was that the king turned mad, but Alan's loyalty to him was not broken.

Next morning, another victim was put to death at the top of castle tower. It was father Alonso. Not to miss the spectacle, the king ordered to bring the table up to have his lunch there so he could watch the old man die. His death came slowly and was accompanied with extreme pain: he was nailed to wooden cross.

Alan, who had to be present too, was desolated. He kneeled in front of his king and

asked him to spare the priest's life. "I never wanted anything from you," he said to his king, "just this." But the king refused to fulfill his wish and the old man died in agony, praying for king's soul. When it was over, the king raised his glass and toasted the dead man: "To your health, you old fool! I have never had any need for your stupid truth anyway!"

That was the last straw even for Alan. He decided to leave king's service, even if he knew that he hardly would be allowed to do that. Still, he risked it and asked king for his release.

"I cannot release you now," said the king, "I need you to finish my biography, but I will grant you another wish instead. What is it that will make you most happy?"

Alan didn't think twice: he told him about the girl in the village, the one he knew and was in love with her. "I would like to marry her and live in the country. She promised to give me a child, a brave, beautiful son."

"Granted," said the king, "you will have your house, wife and son. And then, in weekdays, you will be working for me, but on Sundays, you can go and see them. And when I die, you will be set free." And in a month, there was a wedding and when his first son was born, Alan was very happy indeed. "Well," he thought, the king is not so bad. He certainly had a heart in my case."

But things started to change in king's castle. The queen, deeply offended by king's public whoring, conspired with the enemy king, who helped her husband but nevertheless realized he couldn't control him for long. He let him arrested and released him only to her custody, knowing she had a special death for him in mind. The executioner poured boiling water in king's mouth and kept doing it until he died. The only visible trace of his mortal agony was the horrible expression on his face. "He must have seen a ghost in his sleep," said the queen and nobody questioned her words. Nobody felt sorry for him anyway . . .

Nobody but Alan, that is. It all happened on the weekend and he learned about king's death on Monday, when he returned to the castle. He was still sitting by his scribe's desk, full of memories of those good old days, of king's jokes and him singing ballads to his companions in that hunting lodge. Suddenly the door opened and his young wife entered.

He kissed her and she said : "I have heard the news so I came to see you." Then, to his surprise, she spit on floor and exclaimed: "Justice was done!"

"What do you mean, what justice?" he asked her in unbelief.

"Well, he just didn't die, he was killed, don't you see?"

"By whom?" asked Alan. "Who cares? By his wife, or somebody else. Everybody hated

him. Serves him right!" "But I still feel sorry for him," said Alan, because he really did. "For him?" she asked him. "He was only a coward - even in his first battle he run away when he facing the enemy - and people laughed at him! He betrayed everybody: his wife, his people, his country, his friends - even his best friend!"

"Who was his best friend?"

"You, you fool!" she shouted. "Before our the wedding, he came to me and forced his way with me. He visited me several times just to be sure I wold become pregnant with him. He also threatened me with death if I tell anybody. He didn't tell you - he wanted you to feel betrayed, too. But to be sure about that, he made me to promise him I will tell you everything after he is dead."

Alan was stunned. He could not believe what he was hearing. "But why? Why would he do that? He always loved me, he gave me this house and you and -" he stopped suddenly, realizing the third gift he got, too.

"No, he hated you. Not at first, but when you decided to leave him, he took it as a treason and wanted you to be punished. He realized he was deserted by everybody and so he wanted his biography to be full of hate - your hate. And yes, to be sure about it, he gave you your house, your wife and the royal bastard child."

Alan could not say a word - it was like he was blind until now. His world suddenly crumbled. He never witnessed the hate going beyond the death itself. He was sitting there and looking through the window - seeing all that familiar view. Down there, below the castle wall, run the slow, lazy river, framed by white poplars on on each bank. In the background, grey hills were raising, partly covered with green forest - dark green in the front, misty at the distance. And on the left, there was a road to the city, a solitary road disappearing in woods . . .

[Back to index](#)

BITS: MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONLY ONCE
(translated from Neviditelny Pes)

You may not believe it, but even here in Canada we have to measure twice and not only because of that old proverb, which stands in the title of this essay. As you may know, we have a *Metric* system, but our neighbours in the U.S.A., who are our major business partners, are still keeping the older, so called *Imperial* system of units. It is rather illogical, considering they were the very first colony which separated from British Empire :). But all jokes aside, the situation is not that simple. In Canada *we were decided* (this is not some grammatical error, just the fact that there was no referendum or plebiscite on it) that from certain time on we would enjoy the magnificent metric system. And they made it a law and that was that.

Well, coming originally from Europe, I could easily move in the metric world; never mind the fact that I became "imperialist" long time before this new "reformation". Sure, metric is the system which is simple and units are easily convertible - in the same system, that is, not between *imp* and *met* or vice versa. Conversions between *kilo*, *hekto* and *deka* are as simple as the moving of decimal point, right? And we also use metric the same way we used *imp*, only the unit sizes are different, *non*? Sure, but most of our documentation is travelling back and forth *between us and U.S.* and we cannot expect everybody there to keep on recalculating all the time - even if he knows how and it is only a *wee* better here.

And so we write everything in double units and our cars have two scales on their speedometers. Where are no dual units, you better be careful: some travel maps (say those issued by AAA or CAA - Canadian Automobile Association, otherwise very good) have distances in Canada in *kilometers* and in the U.S.A. in *miles*, true, mostly in different colours, but dimensions are not shown. So it may happen that you cross Canadian border to get to Helena (the Capital of Montana, in case you wonder) and you may get there two hours later than you planned.

Some things are not easy to change, say tools for instance. And so we still drill with a quarter inch drill, while the stores are full of metric drills. Our bureaucrats are also trying to cut anything non-metric and introduced some new, impractical units instead of simple, old ones. If you want to blow your tire, at the service station that is, you may wonder what those strange *kiloPascals* (kPa) mean. I asked the attendant, but he laughed: "You have to read it on the side of the tire, Sir, I wouldn't really know. All I know that one kiloPascal is something like if you sneeze in your tire."

And we go round and round and the circles have no end. Our cows are now delivering milk in litres instead of quarts, and our hens are delivering eggs of so and so millimeters dia, instead of an inch and so. We just have to hope their orifices changed to metric too, otherwise it could be quite painful :). Sometimes it is not so funny: once human lives were endangered when the airplane was filled in Montreal by x litres instead of x gallons and had to make emergency landing somewhere in Prairies.

And just last week, I have read that US spacecraft heading to Mars was destroyed because its computer could not convert Imperial units to Metric ones. It happened after it travelled travelling over 9.5 months (approx 290 days?) and 669 million kilometers (something like 400 million miles, I presume?) and it was just about to go into orbit around the Red Planet. They said it measured the acceleration Imperial units - by the way, what is the unit for...well, forget it.

The habits of people change even much slower, however. I remember one owner of gasoline station, who - as a revolt - was selling his fuel still in gallons. Fortunately he

was only sentenced to pay a fine, not hanged, drawn and quartered - as he would probably deserve when breaking the law :). How deep in our mind is actually the Imperial system embedded was explained to me by my friend Fred: "When they told me my mother-in-law was three thousand kilometers away, it didn't tell me too much, but when I got the letter that she was put *six feet* under, I knew exactly what it meant."

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*Here is another accompanying text for the exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for October exhibition.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **directly visit the Gallery and see individual pictures**, in medium or large scale and the Web address is below.*

THE ART OF FIGHTING

(The exhibition of Vladimír Kopecký)



No art comes easy to life - otherwise it wouldn't be the real art. The way the artists deal with their problems are however many and quite different. Some are just patiently waiting for their inspiration, others prefer to provoke it. Some finalize all their designs in their heads - like Mozart did, the other - like Beethoven - write many versions and eventually throw them away, except for one, the *right one*. Some are diligently working their way up as a careful builder does, block by block. Still others are fighting with ideas until they get it right.

I assume prof. Vladimír Kopecký is one of those fighters. That was the first idea which popped in my mind when I was watching his works. Here is the artist who struggles for accurate expression, for perfect formulation and realization of his ideas. Don't get me wrong, he is not stressing every single detail neither is he extremely punctilious, nothing like that. It is just that he wants to get his message through and he surely does. But to achieve that, he had to try hard - his message is not the easy one. That is because the language of art is not an easy one to learn: his piece of art does not come with any manual, there are no passages to memorize or quick steps to apply. We just have to *feel our way through*. Maybe that's why it touches us so deeply and suddenly, we feel like we are a part of it.

Of course the artist does not make it for us any easier either: there are no clichés, no indebtedness to foreign influences, no obvious or less obvious tricks. There is no question that's also the main reason why he is so famous around the world. His works appeared in many international exhibitions, for instance Expos 58, 67 and 92, and got many rewards. It is the artists like him who made Czech Republic a real superpower - at least in the art of glass.

His materials are not exactly stereotypical: yes, there is glass, metal, wood, but also railway tiles, even bricks. Neither are the techniques: painting, forming, arranging, assembling and what not - I even suspect his atelier has many tools of everyday life, probably more than many of us ever had. And why not? After all, there is some art in everything, all we have to find it and to "turn it the right side up". Eskimo sculptors claim that their creatures, be it people or animals, were already inside the stone and they just chiseled off the excess material. Or - if you prefer - they liberated them. And the result of such "liberation process" of prof. Kopecký is striking: it is a kind of beauty you can't see anywhere else. It is not always apparent at first view, but believe me, it is there. Yes, a stroke of genius, but also many hours of hard work before it became what it is.

The way professor Kopecký chose to "liberate" his peaces of art is not the easy one, it may be even disturbing for some people. Not everyone appreciates being reminded of the realities of our life. The life which as we all know, is not easy either: it has its ups and downs, moments of joy and sorrow. The moments of discoveries and moments of disappointments. One thing is for sure: our mankind reached this stage of development mostly because of its fighters: in science, in technology and in art.

It past, it was not easy to live and it is not much easier in this time. It is good to have around the artist like Vladimír Kopecký, who can remind us that the life is not only worth living, but also worth fighting. As one Czech poet said: "He, who stopped for a while, soon stays aside." There is no accident that prof. Kopecký's work looks like some celebration of vertical lines - in many of his works - they represent his urge to aim higher and better. Nothing less would be worth living.

The exhibition is on: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 11A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

Last week, southern Ontario was hit by a storm, which broke many trees that in turn torn down some high voltage lines. It was of course not as bad as last year's storm in Montreal, but we were almost 24 hours without power, mainly during the first night. One does not realize how much we are indebted to electricity - well, we should be thankful, but we are not. Our TV didn't work, my computer was dead, CD player didn't play, our stove didn't work either, no lights and worst of all, our electrical heating was dead, too.

As a good frontiersman I spent some time looking for the flashlight and then some for a propane lamp, the one we used to carry with us when we were camping (in those young years, you know) and when I have found it, the tank was of course empty. Our propane stove was all rusted-in and since I already nicely packed our propane barbecue for the coming winter, we had only cold breakfast that day.

All that time, I kept the fireplace going - luckily we have an insert, which gives it power and efficiency of a decent stove - thanks to my wife At'a, who had a foresight that it might be worthwhile. And I was allowed to sleep next to the fireplace, on the bearskin which belongs to our son Alex. We had no water either, since the reservoir for our subdivision is on the hill, but it's pressure would not be enough, so they use some electricity driven pumps, which - believe it or not - stopped, too. Luckily after the light went down, we immediately saved some drinking water. So the fireplace was the only thing working and it made the whole difference for us.

Next day, the radio (I do have some batteries, you know!) announced that the power will not be restored even by lunchtime, especially where the places can be reached only on foot. So I drove to town to buy me a new propane stove, some propane tanks, new water container and filled it with drinking water. I was returning home quite proud, expecting some praises from my wife. Instead, she didn't welcome me at all; there was a blame in her eyes. The explanation followed. They just turned power on and the water returned so

quickly, that it over-filled the bathroom sink at upper level - where I absentmindedly left the tap open. It also run down down into her knitting room, full of wools and goodies she hoarded there like a chipmunk for years. Fortunately, there was no major damage, mostly a wet carpet only. The moral of the story? I leave it up to you, who didn't suffer such a misfortune - yet.

Finally, we got our own Internet domain for **Hurontaria**, and faster, too. So if you use the Czech address for Hurontaria, please change it to: <http://hurontaria.baf.cz>
The old address will work for some time, but better do it NOW, i.e. click on it and save it in your book-marks. The other addresses are the same, except for **PRÍLOŽNÍK-1** (that *is* the Czech address only), where the new address is: <http://hurontaria.baf.cz/priloz/>
The other addresses are without change. Thank you.

Dr. Jason Ohler, Director, Educational Technology Program, University of Alaska Southeast, whom I interviewed last March in Hurontaria, has published his new book, ***Taming the Beast: Choice and Control in the Electronic Jungle***. Read about it [here](#) or feel free to visit his web site at:
<http://www2.jun.alaska.edu/edtech/jason/bookquotes.html> .

Another freeware: *Our Dutch friend Jans*, already well known to our readers, is again coming with a nice gift. This time it is a program **Capiche** which will cut and pick a part of your screen - don't worry, I am not talking about glass, only about the picture. The empty and transparent , adjustable frame appears, you adjust it and click on X and *voilà* (that's French for "Oh my goodness!") it is saved already. After you open another graphic program (say already mentioned *Irfanview* or any other graphic program, even Jans has there several of them, all free) you can then paste this cut-off copy in its window.

What - you want his address? Well, I almost forgot, here it is :
<http://home.wxs.nl/~verho037/freeware.htm> The program is free and Jans provides there a special password - which you better write down, since you will be asked for it after you unzip it (it will ask only once, so it is no big deal). It is his specialty: each version of his program has another password. I am not exaggerating if I say that Jans is the king of short programs - where Mike Rosoft needs 30 meg, Jans uses only one. True, his program does only 90 percent of what the other one does, but that can be forgiven: we all know that most of the stuff the large programs do is useless garbage anyway.

INDEX: A - ENGLISH PART

Other Dimensions:	THE VIRTUAL VIRTUOSITY
Life:	ODE TO PAIN

Short Story:	HOW ABOUT YOU, MISHA?
Bits:	THE CAT'S EYE
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Jiri Harcuba)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language - is separate and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"Smart you can be born, but wise you have to become."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Personal use of this material is permitted. However, permission to reprint/republish this material for any other purpose must be obtained from author. All names of persons are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan (jansan)*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: THE VIRTUAL VIRTUOSITY

Just imagine: they have put some helmet on your head, strange gloves on your hands and told you to sit on the stool at some piano. Then they tell you to play. And so you play - maybe like a virtuoso if you can - until somebody comes and takes your helmet off. And here comes the shock: there is no piano anywhere! It can't be, you insist, I was hearing it, seeing it and even even the keyboard touch was like a genuine one!

The physical world, at least the one we know, is growing and the distances are getting - thanks to cosmic flights - somehow closer. But it is expanding even in the opposite direction, in the microcosmos, as we are looking deeper and deeper in it. And even that does not seem to be enough: we are searching for new, other dimensions . . .

Howard Rheingold described in his book **The Virtual Reality** (1991) how he was - first time in his life - manipulating the gigantic virtual molecules. It was in the *University of North Carolina* and their equipment called *ARMS* had six degrees of freedom. The molecules felt like they were putting on a resistance to his efforts, similarly to the repulsive force between two magnets of the same polarity. The force of resistance was for the particular experiment boosted proportionally to human force and so the manipulating felt extremely real. And the purpose of that "toy"? Quite practical: it was used for cancer treatment research.

So what is that mysterious *virtual reality* (in short VR?). I remember the time when the word *virtual* was used only for the temperature of transistor PN junction, mainly because it could not be measured - it was only calculated. Today, the word "virtual" is used virtually (= practically or almost) everywhere. But the word "virtual" does not mean "apparent" nor "unreal" (as one would suspect), but rather "*effective if not exactly real*". In the connection with *virtual reality* it is only a qualifier to distinguish it between the true or shall we say "real" reality. So where is the difference?

When trying to explain it, I am reminded of the story about two painters who challenged each other into painting a real-look-alike portrait and the more real one would win. Now the point of the story was that one of them painted also the fly on his nose, the fly which was so real that the other fellow tried to catch it! Now the whole purpose of the VR is the same: to cheat our senses into believing they perceive something which is not there. I will not list here all applications of the VR - there is not a single day without the discovery of the new one. They range from the cure of vertigo (fear of heights) and training of cosmonauts to remote control of robots, amazing operation of artificial limbs and "peeking" into living human body.

Which of our senses is VR trying to fool? All of them, but mostly our vision (special goggles or glasses), hearing (speakers or earphones) and sense of touch (gloves with special sensors). To certain extent - so far - there was no particular interest in fooling our sense of smell or taste buds (I wonder why?). And as I knew you might have asked about it: as far as the sixth sense is concerned, it is a different department altogether. Unless of course you mean the capability to go beyond the range of our senses - we can actually listen to supersonic frequencies of dolphins, "see" radioactivity and other invisible rays, slow down the time and much more.

I know, you may tell me that all this was here already, at least to the certain extent. Yes, but not for all the senses and not so well coordinated. For instance, we could have watched the flow of our blood via intravenous camera, but all that time we were realizing that we were comfortably sitting on the chair and clutching in our hand the remote control, like the one for our TV set. Thanks to computer, we are now generating new

sensations for our senses, synchronize them and - voilà - we can suddenly feel we are inside the vain and float along with blood . . . It is understandable why the VR gained such success, especially in electronic games. Still, it is not a toy, it has many practical, quite serious uses.

It all started in the late sixtieth and soon we expected - after experiments with stereo-acoustic television - that the total (or synthetic, as *Aldous Huxley* called it in his *Brave New World*) reality will be on its way. Sure, then came 3D pictures, surround-sound and what-not. But it was not complete, it was missing the final *touch* - if you pardon the pun. Yes, with the advent of miniature pressure sensors controlled by computer the circle was almost closed, at least for many applications. The sense of touch is of course unlike the others, is it is not so easy to cheat: it has wider range of sensitivity (more decades - from milli- to several hundred of kiloPascals). Also, the higher number of sensor pads was needed, concentrated on small area and we still don't know how are those signals collectively processed in our brain.

Which brings up another interesting point: it needed something more in the background, something which we would like to call a "thinking" processor, which would combine and synchronize the signals to the pads. New computers, which were powerful and fast enough, those with extensive memory, brought the great improvement into the VR development. We already have systems which can not only perfectly "mystify" our senses but also improve our perception by giving us higher sensitivity.

It was Canadian science-fiction writer *William Gibson* who first coined the term *cyberspace* (in his *Neuromancer*), the space which had virtual structures perceived by people as "*sensual hallucinations*". And we all know the rest of that story: the VR is marching on and the cyberspace is filling up. Unfortunately, not all developments follow the words of *Yoshinobu Tonomura*, the research engineer of Japanese company NTT who said: "*Our vision of the twenty-first century is this: it will be visual, intelligent and personal.*"

There is however much more to come: we still do not have *direct electronic connection* to our brain. But we will, eventually. So I would like to end this article with a prediction - it may not take too long and I will be able to rewrite my story like this: "Imagine...etc., etc.,....and suddenly - in spite of the fact you never learned how to play - you start playing like a real virtuoso, or if you prefer, like a *virtual virtuoso* . . .

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: ODE TO PAIN

I am sitting and writing. Thousands of mysteries are meanwhile being solved all around

the world, but I am just sitting and thinking about my own pains. Not only that - I am already thinking what happens when all my pains will cease and I will be no more. Not that is the mystery I am trying to solve - at least not while I am in *this* world. If there would be any need for me to solve that at all, which I sincerely doubt. Maybe there is no real mystery in it, maybe "*Mort est simillis sommo*" and our death is really just like another sleep. . .

Then I will cross the treshold. I don't mind if there is no joy for me over there. Joy is just a sign that I am all right, that everything is - so to say - quite normal. Joy is really very simple thing: for smiling, they say, we need actually only one third of muscles we need for expressing the grimace of pain. Of course, pain has more degrees, stages or shades if you will . . .

I could name all kinds of pain I intimately know, talk about them for hours, maybe days and I believe you will never be bored. I could describe pains spasmodic, excruciating, choking, stabbing, pinching, strangling, tearing, cutting pains and pains that lead to concussion or coma. And there are also mental paints, creative pains and pains when you are betrayed or deserted and of course the pains of love. Pains of sacrifice and of ingratitude, pains of stupidity and stupidities from pain.

Oh yes, I know a pain pretended, denied, hypochondriatical or suppressed, the pain which leaves you and comes back again, only to hurt you ten times more. We all know the pains of offence or ridicule, the pains which we cause to each other or even to ourselves, the pains of foolishness and the pains of reason. Then there is a pain which subsides, but leaves deep scars, so deep we normally cannot see them. There is a pain which wakes up slowly, like a wife after a long night of love, but then grabs you with even stronger passion and does not let go. There is a pain "till death parts us" and I should not forget to mention the one which surpasses them all: the pain from pain . . .

The disappointment of parents, the desperation of children, the suffering of mistresses - and the wives as well - the pains of mine, yours, ours and theirs. Pains personal or social, pains of crowds, but also pains of solitude, pains contagious, permanent or temporary, some even incurable. And at the end, there comes the last pain of them all, the final one . . .

And so we are standing up to them, fighting them. Sometimes we win, but the next time we are defeated again or even yield to them. We can be victims or just protectors of those who are not able - or do not want - to fight any more. Thrown down to ground, we raise again, only to fall under even heavier blow. Yes, pains, we all have them; they bring us closer or draw us apart, they brake old friendships and help us to new ones.

"I gave you the pain," said the most powerful of Gods and He might not even realize what kind of gift it was. But He gave us plenty: a lot to some and even more to others; pains big, bigger and gigantic. And so we turn to Him in our hour of misery and say our prayers. We kneel and beg Him: "In this painful hour, have a mercy on us." Instead of thanking - like for everything we ever got - we curse our troubles. We should be grateful for our pains; they faithfully stay with us all our lifetime: we are born in pain and die with it.

Now you see where I got with my painful philosophy: instead for me, I feel sorry for the pain itself. Still, one thing is true: if we never had a tooth ache, we might never have that great feeling when it stops. And there you have it: for every joy we have to pay somehow, but the pain is - mostly, anyway - absolutely free of charge.

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: HOW ABOUT YOU, MISHA?
(Excerpt, The Contest of Alfred Radok, Prague)

ACT 1, SCENE 9.

*Rudi Mlynar is trying to solve the problem how - and where - can his company save extra money. He and his friend **Frank**, the computer whiz, are trying to convert Rudi's home computer into the kind of "super-intelligent" one. Frank wrote a program for it and since then, the computer can read, talk and even think - the only problem is it has an empty database.*

*To simplify the task, Frank writes another program, which enables computer to gather information the way little children do, by asking pertinent questions. What happens is that the computer also starts to behave like a child and even talks like one. Rudi and his wife Liba, being childless, become so attached to their computer that they start to think about it like it **is** their real child. In their confusion, they even call it (him?) **Misha**. Situation becomes more complicated when one of their neighbours, after overhearing their conversation with Misha, informs the **Society for Wholehearted Child Care** that Rudi is hiding his son in order to prevent him to go to school.*

*The lady from the Society who - as a good bureaucrat - handles matters only by phone, is convinced Misha is a **real** child. The court writ is issued to take Misha away. In desperation, Rudi contacts his acquaintance **Tom** who claims to be a very influential person and he promises to help him through his connections at the **Ministry of Lower and Lowest Education**. As you might have guessed already, this play is a comedy.*

RUDI: Frank, I have to tell you that Tom is really not so bad as you think he is.

FRANK: If you say so, but I still can't believe it. What did he do this time?

RUDI: Nothing wrong - on the contrary, he just helped me so they wouldn't take Misha away from us.

FRANK: Surprise, surprise. And how did he manage?

RUDI: Well, he talked to somebody and two gentlemen from the Ministry came here - it just slipped my mind what ministry it was - and they asked Misha several questions.

FRANK: Keep talking, it sounds interesting. What did they ask him about?

RUDI: He can tell it to you himself, he has better - *whatchamacallit* (he pretends to search his memory)- oh yes, he has better memory than I have. That's funny, isn't it? (he sees that Frank is not laughing at his joke and explains further) Ha-ha, do you get it? I cannot remember, ha-ha, that I have, ha-ha, bad memory!

FRANK: Oh yeah, you have a very bad memory. All Misha's computer chips will fit in your pocket and what's left would be still plenty for your brain.

RUDI: In my pocket, ha-ha, that's also funny (he suddenly stops laughing) Listen, what did you mean by that?

FRANK: Just what I said, nothing more. Continue, please.

RUDI: O.K., I just thought you might be laughing at me. Let's ask Misha then. How about you, Misha? What did they want, Misha?

MISHA: (the voice of five years' old boy) They kind of wanted to know -

RUDI: (interrupts) No "kind of", you must use only proper language!

MISHA: Well, I just repeat what the gentleman said: "I kind of want to know about your education." At first, I did not understand, so I asked him - I mean I kind of asked him - what kind of education he meant. He asked me if I can read and write and I told him -

FRANK: (prompts him) - kind of told him -

MISHA: Yeah, kind of, anyway, and he turned to the other gentleman and said -

FRANK: (prompts again) - kind of said -

RUDI: Listen, Frank, enough of those stupid jokes! And you too, Misha!

MISHA: ..and he said: "Dear doctor, it is amazing: it really talks!"

RUDI: Well, he must have been a smart one - we all already know you can talk!

MISHA: But the other one was making fun of him. When the first one suggested that it had to be some tape recorder inside me, the doctor said: "And quite sophisticated recorder at that! Imagine, it can even answer all your difficult, scientific questions!"

FRANK: What else did they ask you?

MISHA: The first one asked if I am looking forward to go to school and I replied: "No, do you know any reason why should I?"

FRANK: And?

MISHA: He was upset, but the second one said: "He is not only sophisticated, Sir, he is also intelligent!" And then they talked to Rudi and both left.

RUDI: (carries on) Yes, and today the second gentleman came, he said his name was doctor Straw -

MISHA: (interrupts) - doctor yes, but not a physician, you know, not yet anyway.

RUDI: (continues) ...well, he was the doctor of - I wrote it somewhere - well, doctor of philo-something and he said they decided that we can keep Misha with us and educate him. However, he would like to follow-up on our experiment and come again sometimes.

MISHA: (explains)... And I asked him: "What experiment?" and he laughed and said that I am too young to understand it.

RUDI: So Misha can stay with us. And guess what: then Tom called and said he arranged everything, we can keep Misha and "don't thank me for that".

FRANK: Of course not, it was all arranged by doctor Straw. You should thank *him*.

RUDI: I will. (proudly) So now I can teach Misha mathematics!

FRANK: (laughs) You?

RUDI: (offended) So what, there are some who are more stupid than I am and teach it as well.

FRANK: You want my comment?

RUDI: Not really - I know it already. And then later we'll send Misha to campus -

MISHA: (excited) Hurray, I am going to boot-camp!

RUDI: No, you are going to go and get some higher education.

MISHA: Aha, I have to get higher education so I can go to boot-camp.

FRANK: (explains) No Misha, Rudi meant the university campus. Do you know what the university is?

MISHA: Yes, that is the place where they torture students so much that they prefer to become revolutionaries. In one book I have read -

FRANK: (interrupts) No, that's the place where they are supposed to give you - well, I do not know what, they call it knowledge, I believe.

MISHA: And those who will give it to me, where did *they* get it? I hope it is not stolen, that knowledge!

RUDI: Don't be impertinent or I will erase the whole Encyclopedia Britannica I bought last week and down-loaded into your memory!

MISHA: No problem, I already remember it all! Go ahead, ask me something!

FRANK: (Laughs) Of course you remember it, because it is in your *memory*! But all right, tell me something about whales!

MISHA: First, there is a prince of Wales.

RUDI: Prince of whales? Where did you get that nonsense?

MISHA: In your encyclopedia. Now ask me about marital duties!

RUDI: (quickly to Frank) God forbid, don't ask him! We never talk about those things in front of Misha!

FRANK: (curiously) How about those marital duties, Misha?

MISHA: When the husband and wife are separated, the husband has a duty to pay her the alimony. Ha-ha.

FRANK: (laughs)

RUDI: Misha, stop making fun of us! Can't you be serious for a while - I mean, for a while?

FRANK: You should be glad, Rudi, that the boy has a sense of humour. That is a undeniable sign of intelligence.

RUDI: Now here you are wrong, Frank, I for instance have no sense of humour at all -

MISHA: (continues, impersonating Rudi's voice) ... yet they made me a manager. Ha-ha.

FRANK: (leaving) O.K., I leave you two to your jokes. I am going to watch a baseball game.

MISHA: (begging) Take me with you, please! Please?

FRANK: Just switch yourself to Channel Three, you can watch it there (leaves through the door).

RUDI: (strongly objects) No, no baseball today! I have to teach you mathematics! We have natural numbers today. How about you, Misha?

MISHA: That figures! Natural numbers! Naturally!
(The end of first act)

[Back to index](#)

BITS: THE CAT'S EYE

There was always something mysterious in cat's eyes - no wonder that old Egyptians considered cats sacred animals: one of their goddesses was cat-headed *Bast* and the town *Bastet* was devoted to worshipping her (and of cats, of course). Something inquiring, hypnotic, even magic can be seen in those eyes. The Middle Ages connected cats to witchcraft: those shining eyes in dark night were obviously too much for our superstitious forefathers and foremothers.

About a month ago, an article was published by *BBC Online* describing the paper in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, written by a group of researchers from University of California, Berkeley. Just another scientific paper, you may say, but this one is really different: the researchers connected electrodes to 177 cells in cat's *thalamus* region (those are directly leading to optical nerves), they monitored the responses and created the composite picture.

In other words, they were trying to figure out "what is it the cat really sees". Now 177 cells is a rather small number, but the resulting picture resembled reality surprisingly well. Of course, we don't know all the details, for instance what was that "linear decoding technique" used and how it was applied. But one thing is for sure: the further research will follow and a new era of biological interfaces of computers has already started.

Soon after the arrival of computers, two ways of picture imagining and display were used: the more obvious but cumbersome one, that is the *point by point*, or if you prefer, bit-by-bit representation, similar to the one used by newspapers, and the second, seemingly more complicated, using mathematical and other *formulas*. Example: let us say we want to generate the picture of a circle. We can do it either by employing thousand of dots (or kilobytes) or by using the simple equation $x^2 + y^2 = r^2$, where r is the constant, better known as a radius. While in the first case the ray goes point-by-point through the screen, zig-zagging back and forth, the other method allows it to run only in that particular circle. Not only has the second method the advantage of needing *substantially less memory* (say 50 bytes in our example), but it is also much *faster*. It can be further developed and is now used as so-called "vector format" in computerized CAD (Computer Assisted Drafting) drawings.

It was at that time I was puzzled with another question. To display a human face by the first method, something like one megabyte of information would be needed. Therefore for thousands of people we met in our life (and could easily recognize later) we should need many gigabytes of memory. But we also remember buildings, countrysides, animals . . . Is it not likely that the other method of scanning and remembering is here at work? Simple and efficient? The mentioned report confirmed my doubts: those 177 nerve cells did not monitor all single dots of the picture (and how could they?) - some were only

recognizing angles, the other just lines, maybe shapes and most probably - some might even work like motion detectors, which are kind of detectors of different picture scans. For instance, my dog can recognize motion in the distance where greater details are quite invisible. Similarly, my eyes are noticing any conspicuous motion before I even realize what it is I see.

What's more, with other senses we already established their differential character of work. We know that we do not perceive only the pure sound frequencies, but also - or rather - their differences. Example: I can hear 20 kHz at most, but I can easily recognize the high harmonics (that is much higher frequencies) which tell me that what I hear is for instance the violin, not the trumpet. Similar differential character has our sense of touch, which spreads over many decades of pressure. In vision, the perception and recognition is still a mystery for us, at least partly. It has a sensitivity as low as one photon - yes, we can really see the light of one photon! - but also relatively slow scanning speed. The movement of 30 pictures per second (typical for movie) can fool us into believing we really see the objects moving. It is hardly surprising that our seeing works differently than say the TV camera does.

I was also intrigued by the fact that our brain "calculates" some portions of the picture we cannot "see" and substitutes them for reality. Typical case is in the rather "invisible" parts due to the blind spot in our eye. That - I am told - is the reason why our eyes can be fooled by those famous optical tricks. And another mystery: for stereoscopic view we need two photographs, each being seen by different eye. So how comes that when I close my eye and look around, I can still see stereoscopically. And I am not even talking about the problems with cross connection: the left eye being connected to right half of the brain and vice versa, which fact is used by neurologists for various tests.

Even if those questions may not be explained in near future, one thing is for sure: the "electronic" connection of external world to our brain is becoming a reality. Up to know, we mostly tapped our *outputs*, but soon we will be able to *input* the signals from external sensors into our body as well. Wilson's "Neuromancer" will be no more science fiction, but a reality. True, what we would see would be only *virtual reality* (more about it is my article in this issue of Hurontaria, *The Virtual Virtuosity*) but would our brain be aware of it?

True, using goggles or cameras will be still for long time the cheapest way, but let's consider those, who cannot see at all, the visually impaired. Are we now truly closer to the moment we will be able to make those people see? I think we are, much closer now. I don't dare to forecast when it will happen: it may be actually much sooner than we can imagine. Of course , the "direct plug" to brain, serving as a cable connection to computer, is still only a speculation (there may be even more convenient methods, say

radio-waves) and it will require much more sophisticated interfaces.

But when we are able to enhance - or even replace - our senses, would it also help us to enhance our thinking process? Even the most primitive way of replacement - the brain transplant - is still far away. But we may try the better and much cheaper way, the one available to all of us: by educating ourself and the others. After all, our good old brain is and will be - at least for most of us - good enough for the next century, maybe even the millennium.

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*Here is another accompanying text for the exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for November exhibition.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **directly visit the Gallery and see individual pictures**, in medium or large scale and the Web address is below.*

FACE TO FACE

(The exhibition of Prof. Jiri Harcuba)



One member of famous *Canadian Group of Seven* once said that when it comes to painting trees, he preferred the old, weather-beaten ones. When asked why, he explained that they had their own "character" or "personality". I guess it is the same with people if we look at their faces. We are all born as cute little babies, loved and cherished - according to Mark Twain, there is only *one* most beautiful child in the whole world and *every* mother has it. Babies with faces blank like a fresh sheet of paper, because there is no history there - yet. As we grow older, life is molding our features and our soul as well. Like a skilled sculptor, it fills our visage with wrinkles and scars, the unerasable evidence of our passions and pains, the memory bank of our past.

But we can find much more in our faces, too. We all know that there are people who have interesting faces and others who appear - and mostly are - rather dull. We can only wonder what makes some faces more attractive than others, why some fill us with sympathies and others make us shudder. I am not talking about physical beauty or ugliness here, only about that "something" we all can perceive but can hardly understand. If you ask an artist, he would probably talk about different kind of perception or as it is

sometimes called, the "inner" beauty.

When we look at portraits of celebrities done by prof. Jiri Hrcuba, we can understand that difference without any need for explanation. I can see how - and especially why - he chose his objects: he simply couldn't not to. The temptation was probably too much: those were the faces which had to be captured and kept for posterity. It was also quite challenging, even for a very skilled portraitist such as himself. Their faces had a lot to say and so had he. And he did it, in many places and all around the world - in his exhibitons or as a pedagogue.

It probably took a lot of studies for each portrait - it is not easy to grasp the substance of a complicated person, not in short time, anyway. True, his objects were all famous artists, writers and others who contributed to our cultural heritage; their deeds were well known from their works and their faces from their photographs. But one cannot just use all this in the portrait - not directly, anyway. One can utilize some gentle hints in the background, but only as complements, since the real centre of attention was and always will be the face itself. To catch and preserve the personality of the person, one has to be able not only to read the face and thoroughly understand it - he also has to add much more, the artistic touch, the magic, if you will.

Talking about difficulties: the art of portraits has certain rules to follow - mainly, we should be able to recognize that person. Too much stress on individual features could turn it into caricature. Next to those general rules stand other requirements: the individual characteristics, the real insight into personality and how to convert the artist's point of view into his work. And there are also those "little details", which, according to Michelangelo, the perfection must consist of.

Then comes the final problem: the realization of portrait - the form, the content, the style. And choice of material: would it be the medal made of metal or a portrait in clay or maybe a face cut in glass? Glass is of course very difficult material - I know, I know, I said it here before - but it is also an excellent choice: no other material can give a portrait such superb three-dimensional appearance. Needless to say, Prof. Hrcuba is an excellent craftsman and quite skilled in all those techniques. Just imagine one of difficulties: the faces cut in glass are actually "negatives", space-wise if you know what I mean. But the results are stunning: they look like they are emerging from somewhere which gives them the touch of extreme reality, but also a mystery no less.

The one question of course is how far can artist go in his attempt to express *his* understanding of the person. The response can be seen in works of prof. Hrcuba: they have the beauty of their own, not only the one for our eyes, but also the "inner one", few steps deeper. Look at those faces and you are immediately struck with uncommon

harmony and grace. We can see the artist asked himself the very same question and he also found the answer. Then he turned it into a beautiful piece of art - telling it to us all, literally "face to face".

The exhibition is on: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)



HURONTARIA - 12A/99



Canadian Czech-out Monthly **Kanadsko-èeský mìsíèník.**

[Back to Title Page of Hurontaria \(Jdi na titulní stránku Hurontarie\)](#)

Commentary:

Again, the end of the century is here again. Well, not for all of us it is really "again", but for the mankind it is. In times when mankind could not count they considered every year as being the same. Not today - frequently we hear that "this year, we'll have a new president", "I will go on diet this year", "aliens from space will land" and "taxes will go up again this year". But all will be the same, except of those taxes, you cannot go wrong there. Actually, it is not true any more, taxes are going to go down here in Ontario. "What a nonsense!", scream the neighbouring provinces - how come Ontario knows how to economize and they cannot? Even federal government is increasing taxes - if the trend continues, our taxes will reach the level of 105% in year 2015. Yes, you are reading correctly, you get your paycheck, send it to Ottawa and add 5% surtax :-).

This way, I got right past the year 2000, the one I don't know anything about. Isn't it beautiful? No, I don't mean my ignorance, I mean only my confession of such ignorance. I also heard that a ticket for celebration in local entertainment hall (for New Year's Eve) would cost 400 dollars per person. Children and drivers would probably pay only half :-). You can save even more by simply not going there: after all, what is so big in celebrating three zeroes? But don't take me seriously: it is a big step into future, into uncertainty, to be correct. Maybe even to Mars in spite of another failure (did they finally enclose that five-dollar worth metric calculator ?). By the way, some feeble-minded hacker created for us a new Christmas e-mail style virus *Prilissa* - read about it here, in the article "Mail Chauvinism".

Finally, we got our own Internet domain for Hurontaria, and faster, too. So if you use the Czech address for Hurontaria, please change it to: <http://hurontaria.baf.cz> i.e. click on it and save it in your book-marks.

No freeware this time: ask your Santa Claus for it. Still, I have got a gift (free, how else?) for you - the book *HURONTARIA 1999 - OFF LINE*, the whole year

of Hurontaria, nicely zipped in one file - you can download it from Title Page, the last line of the table, called **ZIP99**. Of course, if you want the English Part only, click on corresponding column only. Those, who do not like unzipping (either not knowing how or from morality point of view) pls drop me an e-mail and I will send you self-unzipping version. If you keep it all in one directory, all you have to do is to open the file **indexa.htm** (that's the name of it Title page) and select the issue same way as you do *on-line*.

Dear Friends,

we hope that Hurontaria will be still your favourite webzine in the next millennium and that you will recommend us to your friends and those of you who don't like us - to their enemies. Your letters are dear to us: we gained many new friends who - like us - believe that Net should be used mainly for exchange of interesting ideas and to provide a good entertainment. So see you again in the year 2000 and in the meantime, here is a wish to you and your family from me and j@ns@n :



VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR 2000!



INDEX: A - ENGLISH PART

Other Dimensions:	MAIL CHAUVINISM
Life:	THE DOGOLOGY
Short Story:	THE BUSTED DAM
Bits:	THE ELECTRONIZATION
Inclinations:	ART-TICKLE (Petr Novotný)

Note: Click on left column. **This is Part A only.** Part B (or C) is in **Czech** language and it contains different articles. For Part B (or C), please go back to [Title Page](#).



Chuckey's Paradigms and Paradoxes:

"We are looking for intelligent life in space - apparently there is not enough of it here on Earth."

PLEASE SEND me a mail to my address below; your comments will be appreciated. If you want to receive announcements about new issues by mail, add the word **SUBSCRIBE ENG**. We would also appreciate if you let us know where did you learn about Hurontaria. *Novelty*: we can send you English issue by e-mail; you can then read it by browser and off-line. Add in your letter words **SEND HTML A**.

Copyright © 1999 Jan Hurych. Copying of this material is permitted for personal use only. However for reprinting, republishing or any other reproduction of this material, the permission from the author must be obtained first. All names of persons or institutions are fictitious except where stated otherwise.

Webmaster *Jan - j@ns@n*
hurychj@hurontel.on.ca

OTHER DIMENSIONS: MAIL CHAUVINISM

Nobody knows who really started it. Mail viruses, that is. Ordinary viruses, as much as they are dangerous, are only produced by people with some kind of inferiority complex. Now mail viruses are different - they are mostly pranks, jokes which went too far. Those who know, keep telling it to us over and over. I didn't believe them entirely - but let's start from the beginning . . .

—

About four years ago, I got mail from our secretary, trusting and innocent soul, that there is a new e-mail virus in existence, crawling and creeping on e.mail lines. They call him *Good Times* and he who opens the mail (not only the attachment - she wrote "the mail" that means even the body of mail was supposed to be infected :-), will:

1) get his hard disk erased, or 2) his disk get burnt, damaged or destroyed (whichever comes first), or 3) something else happens to him, while any such letter forwarded to his friends will do the same to them and their families.

My first reaction was a feeling that somebody is taking her (and me) for fool. From the "cc." list I realized she sent it to everybody in our company. So I returned it back to her (and cc.ed everybody too) with announcement that computer inoculation against that virus will be performed in cafeteria at 10 a.am, and everybody should bring with him /her two freshly formatted floppies to obtain the vaccination program.

I expected people to laugh, pat me on my shoulders and go on with their work. Just from

curiosity, I peeked in the cafeteria at the scheduled time. There I saw about ten employees with diskettes in their hands and one officer from Human resources department who tried to explain to them that he knows "nothing about nothing". Unfortunately, they knew from my address on mail header and when they spotted me, they all wanted explanation from me. I told them the vaccine didn't arrive yet and quickly disappeared.

Needless to say, it was not over. My boss called me to drop by and then told me that I should not make fun of people. I defended myself that somebody else was playing the joke - I just tried to convert it *ad absurdum*. The originator, I said, was actually your secretary or whoever sold it to her. He told me she did it in good faith and naivete. Then he said something stupid or maybe very smart: "Who knows, maybe it is true and you might have created a real harm."

Next week, I was approached by various people who told me either that the mail virus is nonsense or that the friend of their friend got one and listen, was he devastated! I left it at that, but soon enough another announcement, this time the virus ***Join the Crew*** reached me. That one was quoting U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, IMB, Microsoft and what not as a reference. So I picked my mouse by tail and browsed the Net for clues. Boy, was I surprised!

There were mostly black-or- white news (in many languages, of which I knew only three), and all kinds of explanations: from calling it a "sheer stupidity" to refined "UFO conspiracy". One thing was for sure: even if somebody got his disk erased immediately after he opened the mail, the reason that it was solely due to mail virus was almost nil. If we consider what it takes to erase the whole disk and all that right away after such letter was opened, the probability of such event was lower than the apparition of Bill Gates at your door .

So even from probability point of view all those warning letters looked more like hoaxes created by somebody who was having good time - or rather too many beers. You see, it is actually easier to start such chain letter reaction than to write a virus, any virus. Computer hoaxes are historically older than computer viruses and we may wonder what was first: a chicken or egg? All letters had few things in common, things hoaxes usually do have: the appeal to fear, horror scenario, detailed description of consequences so such threat would look natural. There is no accident that it reminded me of chain letters with some kind of pyramidal scheme. Yes, while there are periods they appear more often (probably coinciding with sun spots activity) they never completely cease to exist. They are however easily recognizable: they exaggerate *too much*.

Do you want a proof? "Join the Crew" appeared with address Ayeka@ix.netcom.com - no, don't bother, it is not a real address - and in its first version, it only "erased the disk". Later, it was erasing "all mail deliveries" and later yet, it automatically sent itself to all your friends. As we can see, it was rather intelligent virus with capacity for improvement, or so they wanted us to believe. Later again, it was supposed to tie itself to computer hardware and render it useless.

Good Times was olderr and even milder virus. That's why it still appears here or there, with the same or alternative name. It looks like it is immortal, at least the human stupidity seems to be. Since then there were of course others: *Penpal Greetings* exceeded the level of credibility and soon died, making Mr. Darwin happy and so did the others, like *Returned or Unable to Deliver*, *Buddylist.zip*, *Hairly Palms*, *Irina*, *Win a Holiday*, *E-Flu*", and the list still continues.

Yes, the whole truth and nothing but truth was they were no such viruses - or better yet - those *were not* viruses. All those warning letters were hoaxes, creating false alarms and spreading themselves even faster than real viruses. They multiplied via human fear and naivete. They cost world lot of futile, unnecessary actions, hours, dollars and worries. Otherwise, they were harmless, but there was large number of netizens they affected, larger than real viruses could. There was nothing to worry, but . . .

Then the real *mail-viruses* appeared - such as Word- viruses, making the wordprocessor Word another four letter word (pardon the pun). The idea was simple: since you can send Word documents type *.doc via mail *with macros* (which are small auxiliary programs, subroutines mostly), why not use them to infect your computer system? And they did and heavily so. Well, when you violate the basic rules of document security like Word program designers did, things happen. Even software can be either good or - well, not so good.

One day, our chief boss called me in his office and announced in his rather excited voice that I have a Word virus in my system. No "if", I was just found guilty since his computer announced: "You might have a virus in this document", the document being the one I sent him. Needless to say he was wrong - but I had be proved innocent first, that is after three hours when our technician uselessly tried to find something wrong with my computer. Actually, there was no viruses within ten mile distance from my computer. I used the official letter-form of our company, which contained some macros - if there was any virus, it would be only in that official form.

Needless to say, tehre wer macros, but no viruses. That time, the real culprit was Microsoft. After all complaints they got, they took the easy way out - the provided

screening program, which actually didn't check for virus at all, only for macros and then provided the warning. If it happened to find a macro, it announced the possibility of infection and gave you three choices.

1) discard the document without opening,
2) check the document by some other (and yes, expensive) anti-virus program and then
2a) if there was a virus, to discard it, or 2b) if there was no virus, to open it, read it and then discard it. After all, let's face it: many private letters (and often even business letters) are mainly expressions of sender's writing libido, with value of its content residing somewhere below absolute zero.

Here I have to apologize to the minority of writers, who really write valuable letters (but please, do not thank me by e-mail!). The Microsoft warning was no solution of that problem, at that time. Like in the punctured boat, they left the loophole open. Later, it might have, but I was too late for me. I have already followed their advice - well, not exactly: I discarded the word-processor Word instead. I never used it since - and if somebody insists to write me in Word, I use only Wordview to read it. Wordview is the MS Word program which is free, safe (it ignores macros in *.doc documents) and is rather short - the rare bird in MS family. Or even better, I use Wordpad, which does practically the same and is actually the part of Windows. As a format I am using is *.rtf, which can be read by almost all other wordprocessor. As the quotation goes, "At the beginning there was the Word" - but this is not a beginning any more. Life goes on. One of my friends wrote to me that it was easy for me to say, being a private person, but large companies cannot drop Word so easily. Maybe things will change in next millennium - thousand years is a long time, even for Microsoft..

Now you may not agree and insist that Word is actually very good program - I will not argue that, we all have what we deserve. Almost a year ago, another Word-style virus - *Melissa* - appeared, this time even succeeding to cripple the mail system of heavenly Microsoft itself. Serves them right, I said to myself, now they know what it is to be an MS customer. I was OK, being 100% protected against it, but I realized that Microsoft never learns anything from users. But that was still not enough: quite recently, *Bubble Boy* appeared, which used different security loophole in Microsoft product: this time it was *Outlook* and Outlook Express. More importantly, it got access to Visual Basic routines and that was very bad: that language is used extensively in Windows and Windows related programs. And I was told that Excel, using of Visual basic, is vulnerable too. Now that's really serious: Excel is a door to many database programs. . .

That brings me to my original suspicion: it wasn't really smart to brag that mail virus cannot be created - true, it needs also people to spread it, but that's the easy part. I had discussion on that theme with Bruce Burrell from Michigan University *Virus-busters* (I interviewed him last year for Hurontaria on data corruption and recovery). We agreed

that the best food for computer viruses is a human stupidity and programs, which allow the penetration, are the best natural fertilizers. We also agreed that there were ways how to sneak virus into your e-mail and further down to your computer system. So far the main culprits were self-running programs (*.exe) and Word documents (*.doc) with macros.

Well, MS did plenty to screen for infected documents, but he didn't do the main thing: to prevention the creation of viruses of Word-style. True, they would have to give up the use of macros, but it was a silly idea to start with: you don't give the users control of your program! And true, you have to first open those files to set the virus on its wild trip in your system. But do I have to be always alert because of somebody else's impropriety? I have a work to do, many tasks, but correcting Word mistakes is not one of them. Bruce and me, we both also envisaged the danger of mail programs, which allow self-opening of your mail. Silly again: you might lose your only grip of the problem - that's what happened during the Great Microsoft Internal Mail Disaster, I presume. And now the Bubble Boy penetrates the same way the MS Outlook!

Needless to say, there will be other attempts of infecting the mail systems, if only it has such power to spread around the NET. What can we do? Plenty. **First**, do not open the files which may be infected. Suppress your curiosity and run it thought anti-virus checker first. And if it is infected, warn the sender - it may be too late for him, but not for other, if you prevent his sending the virus further. Sooner we stop spreading he virus the better. I go **one step further**: I never open the *.exe files my best friends are sending me in their attachments - this way I still keep my friends as well as my system. I never accept **the files longer then 500k** - there are the rprogram which can reject it. And I simply inform the sender to have a courtesy to save my time and memory space. Now there is still a possibility, that more sophisticated programs with automatic mail openers will be pushed onto users - I will never use them. Also, the more loopholes and opening will appear in programs that does not respect software safety and security rules. And the list of file types which might become infected will probably grow. But we all know the story about Trojan horse - it would never work if Trojans themselves wouldn't drag it inside their city wall. Let's not be ignorant virus-helpers and spread it around. Let's sow the virus-creators that the joke is on them.

ADDENDUM: As I was updating this article this week, another info came to me via CNET news. New mail virus **Prilissa** is a combination of Melissa (spreads by e-mail) and another program, called PRI (using loophole). Similarly as the Bubble-Boy (BB), it uses the **Outlook** as an input gate into your kingdom, but contrary to BB, you *have to* click on it. It is supposed to hit on Christmas Day. And it can surely reformat your hard disk (i.e. destroy all your data). It will come to you in form of an e-mail attachment and

the body of an email will read *"This document is very important and you've GOT to read this!!"* So don't! The document itself can be whatever file the last victim was using, raising the risk that confidential documents could accidentally be released to a huge number of people. Although the virus can only replicate itself through Microsoft Outlook, the pay-load can infect any PC running Windows 95 or 98." Some e-mail recipients like me *who do not have Outlook* can get it but *cannot spread it*.

Some of the warnings look rather familiar, even axaggerating. How much of it is true? It really does not matter, we have to be at guard anyway, right? And that's what frustrates me most - after all my precautions!

[Back to index](#)

LIFE: THE DOGOLOGY

Some time ago, I was travelling in my car and overheard in my radio some strange talk: they were discussing something they called animal psychology. They talked about animal sensitivity to situation, mental state of their owners, their fears and joys. And they quotds one famous person who said he was surprised that our mankind wants to talk to aliens and couldn't even handle communication with animals. To be honest, I didn't pay to much attention to the talk until they mentioned the new discipline called "animal psychology".

At first, I thought it was some kind of gimmick, new way how to get money out of our pocket. I do have bad experience with that and heard unbelievable stories, for instance this one, told to me by my neighbour. In a weak moment, his friend, a vet in Miami, explained to him how it is done. "Let's say" he said, "that people come to me with their sick dog, their eyes full of tears and red-colored from being awake the whole night. O.K., I say to myself, they like their darling very much, and so I charge them a hundred bucks more than usual rate. And they never complain."

Now this *is* a true story, but I am convinced that most of vets are decent, honest and animal loving experts and the one in the story was a shameful exception. But I myself am very careful when offered "services to animals" which look more profitable to somebody else than to animals. At the same time, I know that the animal behaviour is very similar to ours - they only listen more to their instincts and experiences. So the whole idea of animal psychology was given some thoughts in my subconscious mind (doctor Freud's department that is) and I started to watch our dog Tara with some curiosity as well as wth suspicion. Bearing in mind that scientific psychology can be split in Homogogy - that is the psychology of people - and Animology, I worked out one chapter about one of its subdivisions, that is the Dogology and here it is.

At the beginning, let me state that my knowledge of human psychology ends somewhere at high-school level and that even only in regard to psychology of men. I never ventured to study the psychology of women - it is too complicated and dangerous. Many attempts of my wife didn't bring any light to the darkness surrounding that subject in my head. Anyway, there is a difference: contrary to dogs, we people communicate our thoughts and feelings through our words and pictures, sometimes even by song. And our nose shows the investigator when we lie - or at least it did, in the case of Pinnochio. Tara's nose doesn't do that: it is either wet or dry, which is apparent indication that she is sick. So much for help from human psychology.

I turned to scientific magazines where I learned admittedly very little. It could be actually expressed in one sentence: even animals have brains. How rich is, on the contrary, the science of human brain: we have many disciplines that study our brain, probably even more than there are methods how to brainwash it. Most what we know about animal brain is more or less of culinary nature, that is we have many recipes how to prepare their brains with mushrooms and so.

The reason scientist didn't pay too much attention to animal brains is most probably due to the fact that it looks like it is not used too much - most of them think with their stomachs. At least Tara does - sometimes it looks like all her efforts are devoted to her digestive track, namely its inlet and outlet. Some people do too, but can you imagine the doctor's dilemma when he wonders: "Is it a brain tumor or just a stomach ulcer? Or maybe hemorrhoids . . .?"

Actually, I have to make one correction: our Tara does not thinking *with* her stomach. but *for* her stomach. It is her everlasting inspiration, as is sex for some people. Selfishness is the proper word, I suppose. Of course, she has some character too, I would not put it behind her - if she is not hungry, that is. Unfortunately, she is hungry most of the time and as for the rest - she likes to be scratched, too.

Once she stole some sausages from my barbecue - all I could see was her running away and one leg of the sausage pair was still dangling from her mouth. Well, nothing wrong with that, even most decent people were once stealing - it's just the immorality of it. No, I don't mean her stealing, I mean mine admiration: I considered it rather cute, her being so smart. Contrary to some people, she never pretended she didn't know she did something wrong; she was hiding in the corner, expecting the punishment (could it be she read some books of Dostoyevskij?). I guess she was even disappointed when no punishment came and to play it safe, she was behaving perfectly, at least for the rest of evening,

In political respect, she is a mixture of socialist and capitalist philosophy. What is in her possession is strictly private, untouchable and defended by her teeth. All the rest is a collective property - that is it belongs to all of us and should be divided collectively - mostly among those who are faster.

(conclusion in next issue)

[Back to index](#)

SHORT STORY: THE BUSTED DAM

I have met old Hinkenteufel long time ago, back in my old country - Bohemia, that is. Come to think of it, I am still not sure if I really met him - but all things considered who else he could have been?

It was on one of those winter days, sunny and promising, if you know what I mean. You might - if you like cross-country skiing, sliding on the mountain trail and enjoying every minute of it. I decided it was the perfect day to grab my skis and take-off to somewhere, anywhere. Simply far enough from our cottage in the Jizerske Mountains, to enjoy the crispy snow and quiet countryside. And the absence of people, that especially. I used to take those trips then and I still sometimes do even now . . .

As I said, the day was just perfect: it was cold but sunny. Only few inches of fresh snow covered the the old one and the surface was shiny, reflecting the sun rays from the snow crystals. I felt great and confident, so I chose as my target the place called *Jizerka*, the little ghost town on the mountainous plateau, at about ten miles distance. It was rather deserted place, the home of lumber-jacks and their families, conveniently located at the edge of large forest which reached all the way to Poland - twenty miles of woods and nothing but trees, bushes and marshes, the unlimited source of peat-moss, which was harvested there all through the mild seasons.

The trail I took was covered with fresh snow, but I knew it by heart and there was no fear I could get lost; besides, I did have the compass and map in my knapsack. While the map was rather useless since it didn't show my trail at all, the compass was a must.

The Jizerka village was named after the little creek Jizerka, the branch of larger Jizera River. In the Middle Ages, it used to be a place rich with precious and semi-precious stones, some of them so rare that it brought prospectors all the way from Italy. Even Emperor Rudolph II sent there his experts. As the time went by, the resources were depleted, the place lost its glory and today, only few houses and elementary school is all which is left there.

On my way there, I had to cross the valley of the *Old Dam* on the river White Desná - that was an official name, but we all called it the *Busted One* and for pretty good reasons. At the beginning of this century, two dams were built there, but rumours had it that the old one was built rather hastily and with cheaper material. On 18th of September 1916 the dam broke and 260 thousand cubic meters of water flooded the valley below, carrying away the livestock and people, even the whole houses. Sixty two people perished and the engineer who inspecting the dam and gave it a clean bill of health, committed suicide - it was such disaster that the news about it circled the world. Even today, one can see the boulders which were thrown out of the river bed, some of them as large as a small truck.

The "new" dam, not far from there, called *Darré*, was situated lower, and on the other branch of the river, called Black Desná. It used to be a place of camping and summer recreation; today, it is mainly a drinking water reservoir and no camping is allowed there. When we were kids, we used to go there and climbed the underground tunnel connecting the new dam with the old one. Its ceiling collapsed in many places and the ruins became accessible, surfacing here and there. The vault style ceiling was covered with bats and the semi- darkness of the tunnel was quite tempting to us, offering the great adventure. It was rather spooky place and as you probably guessed - we all loved it.

I didn't bother to stop and look around, but carried on, up across the hills. Actually I didn't stop until I reached the Jizerka place - after all I used to be an persistent skier, having learned the sport when I was about six year old. First, I ventured to take trips with my father and later with schoolmates. As I grew up, my friends turned to other activities, mainly girl-dating and beer-drinking, so there was no point to ask them to accompany me on my trips. Still later, while I lived permanently in Prague City, I got carried away with my professional and personal life, but every winter, I took a train to the mountains and went skiing.

I spent most of the time with downhill skiing, preferably in the forest, well, until it happened. At the age of twenty four, I had a ski accident. Rather stupid one, because I hit the tree at full speed and crushed my left knee-cup, into six pieces, that is. Luckily for me, I was transported in Prague hospital, when I was operated on by the surgeon of Czechoslovak hockey team, who was well familiar with those injuries. He removed the broken pieces and tied the ligaments together. It took me half a year to learn how to walk, but their prediction I will not ski any more was wrong. True, downhill was s out of questions - for a year, anyway - so I returned back to cross-country skiing. And the trip to Jizerka was one of the first I took.

I opened the package with two sandwiches I have been carrying as my provision and had a quick, improvised lunch. The tea in my thermos was comfortably hot and it was the first time I noticed that my legs were tired. Well, I probably wasn't in such good shape as I thought. O.K., I told myself, it may take longer to get back, but go I have to. Soon I started the descent back.

I skied down the hill since the slope was rather small. All went well until I was getting close to Busted One. Suddenly, from nowhere, the cloud appeared, covering sun with hazy layer which wasn't promising anything good. I knew it meant only one thing: the snow, a lot of snow. I didn't need to wait for long: first snow was falling rather sparsely, few gentle flakes, settling gently on my cap and shoulders. Then their density increased and the visibility worsened. And when I was leaving the Busted One, it was quite bad - but the worse was yet to come: the snowstorm. It didn't alarm me yet: I was in many storms before, several times even alone, but always quite close to my home. There was no time to think what might happen; I just kept going, increasing my tempo, but at the same time approaching the eye of the storm.

The sky darkened substantially, like if somebody pulled down the black curtain. Then the unbelievable thing happened, something I never seen before nor since: the lightning and thunder. Never before I have seen such display - it was like firecrackers and sometimes like flash of fiery sword, with ripping sound and the thunder of the impact. I still carried on, but soon I had to stop: I could not see left or right, and my morning tracks completely disappeared under the new snow.

There was a forest on my left, so went there to take a cover, to protect myself against the wind. Later I witnessed winter blizzards in Canadian Prairies and one deadly one in Montreal, where the dead bodies were discovered as late as at springtime. But let me tell you, that storm at Busted One was somehow worse, somehow more scary. No wonder the place was considered to be cursed.

I could not help laughing, but for long. I recalled the death of two ski-racers named Hanc and Vrbata, in 1913 when they were caught in similar storm. The rescuers almost gave up and when they found their bodies, it was too late. . .

Well, I got lost before, several times, but it was in summer. I was picking mushrooms in far north, in unfamiliar places and by circling around, I just lost my orientation. In the place, where the forest is as dense as Canadian bush, things like those can easily happen.

Once I even had to climb one triangulation tower, built there and used many years before, when the surveyors were mapping this part of the mountain. Unfortunately, the

wood was rotten and the ladder rung in the fifth floor broke under my foot. I almost felt down and that would be a fall all the way, since the floors were only virtual, just few planks to get to another ladder. Somehow I got back down to ground where I tried for some time to stop my knees from shaking.

When they finally did, I decided to go up and reach the top, otherwise I would never see where I was. How did I manage I don't know, but I still keep the rusty nail I pried from that tower as a lucky souvenir. And needless to say, since that time I always carry the compass with me. As I was climbing down again I noticed two solitary crosses at the edge of the rock and being overcome with the mood of the place, I picked some wild flowers and put the bouquet at the foot of those crosses. It was only later I learned that two workers fell there to their death when the tower was being built.

It was also in that storm that the thought about two unfortunate workers crossed my mind. Another cursed place, I thought. It was still snowing, but the storm was slowly moving away. The sky lightened slightly, but not for long: I had lost about an hour because of the storm and the evening was approaching. I had to make my mind what to do next - I looked around, but there was nothing to help my orientation: the flat, plain meadow, few frozen stones and here and there a solitary tree with rowan berries, also frozen. I must have drifted far away from trail - I surely didn't remember ever being in that place. But which way I drifted? And which way I should go? The compass didn't help me too much - as the trail was rather a shortcut, any direction might have taken me even further from my trail. I could not go back either - I didn't know which way "back" was.

Still, I knew I had to keep moving - I could not spend the night outside, I was simply not equipped for it. Yes, I once spent the night on snow, in sleeping bag, but it was in a tent and there were several of us in there. And of course, we didn't sleep too much anyway - we were all excited with our experiment. True, I have read somewhere that you cannot freeze in your sleep unless you are extremely tired - the cold will wake you up - but I was in not willing to try such experiment alone.

Pretty soon panic started to creep in my thinking. What if I am lost after all? What if I will not find anything or anybody in time, that is before I am exhausted? What then? I forced myself to think positively, but there was not too much to cheer about. Mistake was mine and only mine; that much I knew for sure. The panic turned into hopelessness, but I still kept moving, stubborn in my desperation. I do not remember for how long I had been walking when another thought crossed my mind: it was all lost, there is no point, give it up!

I do not know if you ever were in the situation like that - when you cannot make decision

whether to move or stay and all in stake is actually your life. Needless to say, I hate such choices when one has no information what to do and cannot use any logic. All what is left is to rely on your instincts. I knew I had to move downhill where water flows, where the people live and some roads are. But even my instinct could lead me wrong way. I could have been actually on the opposite side of the mountain and be heading towards uninhabited parts. Have you ever skied down the mountain and drifted few degrees from you direction? On top, it is only few meters, but down there, you may end up a mile away from your destination!

That was apparently the reason that I nurtured the idea I might be able to stay and survive the night - if there was not too cold and if I was not extremely tired. As it happens, my legs were suddenly informing me they are ready to give-up too. Due to my increasing panic, my speed was increasing and for past half an hour I was actually running.

So I stopped; I had to, for another reason as well. I could barely see, so dark it became. Now what? If I keep going, I might tire myself too much to survive the night. If I didn't know where I was at dusk, I how could I figure it out at darkness? Then something caught my eye: at distance, in the clearance between two rows of tree, the outlines of a solitary house appeared. When I reached it, I saw it was one of those mountain huts, looking rather deserted, with a roof ready to collapse. No light was seen in the window, no sign of life anywhere. I knocked on the door, several times, but with no answer. After a while, I tried again and then decided to leave, so hopeless it looked. Then I overheard some pounding noises. The door opened with rather loud squeak and an old man appeared, with a lantern in his hand..

He asked me what I want and I had to repeat it several times as he was apparently bad in hearing. His Czech was not too good either: he had strong accent and even some words he used were in German. He didn't invite me in and I hesitated to ask him - it all looked rather unfriendly, almost spooky.

Fortunately, he could tell me the way to get to nearby road which leads to the town, Desná it was called. That was all he could do for me, he added - but it was a plenty. He walked me through the open field and pointed to the direction I had to go. He used his left hand, since his right hand looked like being paralyzed or crippled. I suddenly understood that mysterious pounding - he was limping, too.

In another half an hour, I reached the mountain road. There I was lucky to hitchhike a solitary truck, which was heading down to Desná town and from there, I took a train home. Later, I tried to trace my trail on map, but without success. All I knew was that I must have been drifting in wrong direction and without the old man help, I would have

probably never got from there alive.

Next summer, I have made a trip again and tried to find the old-timer, to thank him for his good advice. I spent hours walking around, trying to remember the places I was that night, searched all around the Busted One, with no luck. Finally, I mentioned the whole story to my friend Gerhard who knew the place well. When I told him about old man and his crippled arm, he asked me: "Was he also limping, by any chance?" After my acknowledgement, he told me it must have been the old Hinkenteufel, he used to live nearby. "He udes to,?" I asked. "But of course," laughed Gerhard, "he is dead now, for seven years ! They say he can be seen around there, sometimes."

I tried to explain to him that it is *my* story and it really happened to me. Gerhard suggested that I probably over-slept in snow and dreamt about it. There was no way for me to convince him otherwise. At the end, he said: "Check it for yourself, his grave is in Desna's cemetery.." And so I did. Gerhard was right, of course, even the date of death agreed. I left some flowers there, said my thanks and quietly left. Later, I tried to find some other explanation of what have happened, but could not come up with any. Empty grave? Naaah! Maybe a twin brother? Sure, and crippled exactly the same way he was? I had to throw away many weird ideas, only to be left with the most weird one of them all.

Six years alter, I visited the Busted Dam again and by accident, I have stumbled on that house. The roof already collapsed, but otherwise it was as mysterious as before. The door was wide opened, so I stepped inside and looked around. Rotten curtains, broken windows, some vandalized furniture - that was all what was left. No sign that anybody ever lived there after old Hinkenteufel's death. Since nobody was there, I made a fool of myself and called his name. Several time, but no answer - what did I expect?

I returned home via Desná, where I visited that small cemetery. As I was placing a bouquet of flowers on his grave, I noticed flowers which were already there. They were the ones I placed there six years before and to my surprise, they were still green - like on the day I put them there . . .

[Back to index](#)

BITS: THE ELECTRONIZATION

For what it may be worth, we are all being continuously electronized. Now you may be asking me what the "electronization" is, but I have to leave the definition of this term to scholars - you see, I just invented it :). Let's just say it is a process when electrons that were apparently intended to serve us, made us their slaves instead. Science fiction? You only wish!

Electricity and its use was coming in stages: first substituting for our muscle power, then providing light and so on. While telegraph and telephone extended the distance of our hearing, television did the same for our vision or should I rather say for our "visibility". Radio-waves were first carrying Morse code, the spoken word, later even controlled the rockets to space and orbiting satellites. Are we happy now or were we more happy then?

What a simpleminded question! Happiness is the feeling resulting from many factors, many of which we tend to forget. especially when we are happy :-). Our imagination was always carrying us further than any electron could. We invented computers, fist to do our calculation, then to do all teh resy and lately even as a substitute for our basic thinking. In spite of the fact that our imagination coul take us... etc, see above. Oh yes, we had some progress in the field of artificial thinking, but our natural one is always ahead of it. One reason for it may be the fact that our thinking is still developing irregardless if we want it or not. Forwards or backwards, I mean the development, yes Sir.

Our thinking clearly extended in many directions, but also shrunk laterally. It seems to be quite natural consequence, since more we are specializing - i.e. looking for details and in depth - the less time we have for general information. And vice versa. That's where the negative trends came to work: we try to handle more information than ever before and think less than ever before (or it looks like, anyway). Well, we do not have to think that much in many areas any more: spreadsheets are doing our calculations, electronic spellers check our spelling, browsers and search engines are picking the facts we are searching for - stock market trends, verses from bible, recent news and astrological forecasts. All we need to do is quote - without prejudice and without verification. Instead of looking for ideas, we are looking for facts only. The facts that somebody already discovered and published - the facts which are already there - nothing new, really. True, if we want to study something we have to start somewhere and more we learn the better. But Web is not the same as printed matter, where author was guaranteeing his word (and facts) with his personal prestige and integrity (in Middle Ages even with his soul). What we see on WEB are not always real facts, but opinions, sometimes even intending to change the facts. For each question we can find on WEB maybe hundred answers, some of them even contradicting each other.

And then, we do reports. Good reports, excellent reports, nothing but reports. Reports containing very few of original ideas, mind you. But who wants them, who needs them? Is your boss interested in something new, something which was never there, was never proven or never found to be financially profitable? Maybe, but would he be willing to push that new idea on *his* manager's desk?

No, because he knows what we all know: originality is *the violation* of rules. True, of old, sometimes even antique rules, but rules nevertheless. And that is risky. What if it does not succeed? And even if it does succeed, why should the whole glory go to his employee? After all, he would risk his warm place, comfortable job, his connection with president's's uncle, etc. True, if he is smart he may scoop all benefits and praises - but is it worthwhile the risk? He already has a warm, comfortable job!

Same goes through the heads of his employees. So instead of trying to improve our world, we are happily yapping into our mobile phones, watching TV to steadily lower our taste and use WEB the way it was never intended for - for business. Well, nothing wrong with little business - but shouldn't I be asked before they push that advertising garbage on my screen? And things will get even worse when everything will be wireless: the network services will do almost anything for us - from banking to telling us what we all should or rather *must* like. Otherwise we may become non-conformists, you know . . . It all started with Adam and Eve and look what happened to them. No, the subject was not an apple of supermarket quality - it was their research in things they were not supposed to know - the fruits from the forbidden tree, the tree of knowledge. And they not only gathered information (i.e. apples), they digested it (ate it, to be accurate) and even made some improvements later (they invented first clothing). Yes, they were original - nobody before did it - that's why theirs is still called the *original* sin.

Today, we have mass-media which present us various information garbage under the pretext of our "right to know". But we have a right *to know better* than that. We have a "right to think", don't you think so? Or are we happy with all that prefabricated opinion pumped in our heads us via our eyes and ears, conveniently by-passing the thinking part of our brain? Some of us are happy - maybe even most of us, I do not know. Look at the so called "political correctness" - we all know you can be either correct or oe political, but hardly both at the same time. Yes, originality is still treated as a sin. And our punishment is the forced conformation to existing status. Don't rock the boat, say our parents, friends, our society. Nonsense! The boat is seriously rocking already, jumping up and down with waves without moving forward. What it needs is to balance it, stabilize it, and sail again.

Let' not forget one more thing: for their thirst for knowledge, Adam and Eve were thrown from comfortable peace of paradise into this world of sorrow. Not only that - the sentence was rather strange: they were ordered to multiply. The reason is not so obvious, but I believe that it was because we just cannot live on the Earth alone, because we do not have the comfort of paradise here. We have to help each other to be able to live. So as you see, our mankind is here only thanks to original sin, the sin of originality. And

Page 17 of 19

without originality, we may one day cease to exist. Mentally, that is.

[Back to index](#)

INCLINATIONS: ART-TICKLE

*Here is another accompanying text for the exhibition in Web gallery **Czech Art Gallery ArtForum** in Prague. Every month, one of the best Czech artists (painters, sculptors and illustrators) is presented there **on WEB** together with pictures of his/her art. So here you have it, for December exhibition.*

*Of course, to get the whole idea you should **directly visit the Gallery and see individual pictures**, in medium or large scale and the Web address is below.*

THE ART OF LIVING GLASS

(The exhibition of Petr Novotný)

 As a boy, I often visited our cottage in *Jizerské Mountains* in Northern Bohemia, the place with rich glass-making tradition. True, it was mostly utility glass, but it was made there everywhere with at least one glass hut in every village making molded, pressed or "blown" glass objects. Our neighbour worked in *Josefodol's hut*, pulling glass rods out of glass balls, the rods which were then used for manufacturing of buttons. Even our cottage was former glass-cutting shop, grinding and polishing glass chandeliers that "enlightened" the halls all over Europe. The grinding disks were turned by a water driven paddle-wheel, as large as those of water mills.

But the real miracles were created in *Polubný*, where my friend Werner was employed as a glass blower. I admired his skills, not only the way he handled the red-hot glass but also the glasses of beer, which disappeared in his thirsty throat without having any negative effect on his work. On the contrary: apparently all workers there were drinking and no wonder - it was so hot there that it was like a preview of the place we sinners may expect to go when we leave this world. But in spite of that, those guys were creating something quite contrary, quite *heavenly*: vases, bowls, glasses and bottles, goblets, candlesticks and what not, periodically blowing into hollow rods (called *whistles*) with the bubble of melted glass at the end. Once a while they applied to it some wooden form for shaping the glass bubble. They were demonstrating something I would never forget: *the art of living glass*. Yes, their "whistles" were performing rather complicated dances in the air, to keep the bubble "alive", once a while blowing in it, then spinning it again, so it would develop symmetrically and wouldn't "overflow" or get deformed. And the crimson colored glass was suddenly so obedient, so peaceful - it looked meek like a ball of wax, tempting you to touch it and feel it. Of course, those were my impressions from a

distance only - when I came closer, I fully realized the "red-hot" reality.

How difficult work it was I understood only later when I tried it myself in small scale, at home. Only then I got the real feel of what is going on in melted glass. It became so soft that I succeeded to spoil most of what I did - it just wanted a gentle hand and the experience to control it - neither of which I really possessed.

Moreover, glass is not forgiving - wrong move, too much or too little force and that's it - another opportunity is wasted. There is something indescribable in creating the art from the matter continuously moving, something like a hot fudge, always ready to freeze when there is not enough of heat. It is probably due to this feature that objects made of blown glass look like they are still moving. AS if we do not see only one frame of the movie, but one frame at the time instead, thus creating the illusion of movement. Somehow we believe that the object *is* actually moving, so dynamic it seems, so full of energy. It is because what we see is a real composite of so many past moves, forms and operations applied during processing.

With all respect to those artisans I mentioned before, there is only few real Masters among masters, few Artists among artists. One of them is undoubtedly *Petr Novotný*. Of course I am not alone with this opinion, he is known, recognized and appreciated all around the world. He is one of few who really know how to make the glass move the way they want it. Of course the glass is revolting - it wants something else: to flow down, to satisfy the laws of gravity and eventually peacefully freeze. In order to conquer this resistance, our master has to use all kinds of tricks, the secrets of trade they call them. He has to be like a lion tamer who knows his beast, like a sculptor who knows his material, like a gentle lover who knows his partner. All that has to be done in continuous movement - yes, there can be no idle moment, no wasted move and if that would not be enough, it has to be performed in one precise order.

And the results are stunning: the beauty, which is out of this world - the astonishing, heavenly beautiful pieces created in the vicinity of the red-hot hellhole of melted glass. The gentle, fragile objects of Peter Novotný are all created in sweat and exertion. It is the real *art of living glass*, the beauty of the move and *on the move*.

The exhibition is on: <http://www.gallery.cz/gallery/en/Vystava/index.html>

[Back to index](#)
[Back to Title Page](#)
