



The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk During the World War, Book(s) Three & Four

Jaroslav Hašek , Zdenek "Zenny" K. Sadlon (Translator)

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This is the last volume of the The Fateful Adventures Of The Good Soldier vejk During The World War containing Book Three and Book Four. Jaroslav Haek planned to write six books but passed away before completing Book Four. That is why the book is considered unfinished. Yet, it can be argued the author, under pressure from his deteriorating health, indeed completed his thoughts and "closed the books" on the book that made him famous quite well.

The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk During the World War, Book(s) Three & Four Details

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From Reader Review The Fateful Adventures of the Good Soldier Svejk During the World War, Book(s) Three & Four for online ebook

Corto says

So.

I've finally finished the tale of "The Good Soldier Svejk".

In reviews of the first two books, I discussed how important the new translation is into deepening the reader's experience with the book - and that can't be understated, but I won't belabor it here. I wouldn't have finished Hašek's story had it not been for the Sadlon translation. His translation was illuminating, where Parrot's was not. Additionally, updating it into modern English, made it a significantly smoother read to boot.

In the final analysis, this book is alternately funny and wrenching - if you take the time to think about the things these men are going through, and what they're subjected to. While the story never makes it into frontline combat, there's still plenty here to chew on about a nation thrust into a war they don't have much of a genuine emotional stake in.

It was a fascinating look at Central Europe - and exposes an earthy, humorous culture - because "Svejk" is as much a story of the Czech people as it is about the titular character. (And, it's an incredibly rich tapestry of stories in here about the Czech people. In fact, tonight as I was driving home, I noticed a car in front of me with a bumper sticker that read, "Team Irish Literature", to which I muttered "Baby. You ain't got nothing on the Czechs.")

At times this book felt unnecessarily drawn out, but you have to take it in stride, because (from what I understand), it was written episodically. I don't think the author meant for it to have a tightly drawn plot. It's just the story of a man on his way to war. A funny story, mind you. There were moments where I laughed out loud, chuckled, and it became a running joke with my Wife and I, that I would start to explain Svejk's exploits and she would groan and roll her eyes, with much the same exasperation that the long suffering Senior Lieutenant Lukáš greeted every long-winded anecdote delivered at the drop of a hat by the great Private Svejk...God, I wish I had Svejk's ability to talk myself out of a jam...

Only now at the end, can I see where the comparison's to Catch-22 come from. "Svejk" is indeed about the absurdity of war, to the Nth degree.

I've been with this character for a few years now. I started the Parrot translation roughly 3 years ago, and crapped out 60% of the way through. Slowly though, I found myself picking the book up on occasion, to the point which I said, "I should really finish this." I stumbled on the Sadlon translation through his website which catalogs all sorts of Svejk ephemera from the current manifestations of Svejk's cultural legacy (how many literary characters have bronze statues dotting their country, and surrounding neighbors?), to intensive academic essays. I tried a sample of the new translation and was so stunned even by the difference in the meaning of the dialogue of the opening scene, I embarked on the story again from page 1.

Well. Adieu Svejk. I'd toast your passing with a good Czech beer, except you can't get any here.

("Budvar/Czechvar" doesn't travel well from Central Europe out here to the Rust Belt...) It's been a great ride, and I'll miss the image of his beatific face in my mind's eye. This is truly an epic novel, and if you enjoy war satire, I heartily recommend it.

James Klagge says

I was an editorial consultant on this new English translation. Thus I read it--with a microscope, multiple times--before it was published. Not as smooth as, but more faithful and interesting than, the standard Parrott translation.

No doubt Jaroslav Hasek's favorite way to pass the time was to sit in a pub drinking beer and talking with friends. So it was with his character Josef Svejk. I had the unsurpassed pleasure in 2004 of sitting in the Czech Crown Inn of Lipnice, where Hasek wrote the closing books about Svejk, talking over mugs of beer with Hasek's great-grandson Martin, and later meeting his great-granddaughter Petra. Visit Lipnice if you get the chance, where the Hasek family now owns that inn.

Tereza Fuková says

Všechny 4 díly se moc dob?e ?etly, je škoda, že Hašek nestihl dílo dokon?it.

Je to takové milé, ale nedá se souhlasit s tím, že ?echové by byli národ Švejk?, to bychom museli být všichni retardovaní.

Nick Klagge says

OK, I've been putting off this review long enough. I worked my way through all four books (three volumes) of Sadlon's translation of this classic of Czech literature, and though it may make me a bad Czech, I felt pretty neutral about it. Much like Tristram Shandy, and to some extent Don Quixote, the book is more or less a piling-up of marginally related stories, "just one damn thing after another." The novel is unfinished--Hasek died while writing it--but because of this fundamental characteristic, I don't think it matters that much. I doubt Hasek had a satisfying conclusion in mind that died along with him.

The novel contains very little in the way of character development. Svejk doesn't really change over the course of the book, although his character is complex enough that I do think you continue "getting to know him" a fair amount at least into Book Two. But he remains something of a cipher. He's clearly an active and enthusiastic shirker, and uses his "certified idiocy" to the fullest advantage. He is an anarchist in spirit, like his creator, with little time for the absurdities of church and state, but is not political about it. He is a frequent spinner of yarns, but it was never clear to me whether he really took pleasure in it, did it compulsively, or used it as a diversionary tactic. I suppose it is a combination of all three. He's not a totally likable character; he has a definite vindictive streak and is impulsive. But at the end of the novel, I still didn't really feel I had a sense of Svejk as a person; what motivates him, what he would be doing if he wasn't drafted, etc. He came across to me as more of a symbol than an individual. It doesn't seem like this is particularly of interest to Hasek as a writer; none of the other characters in the book are rounded or develop over time either, and Svejk doesn't have any complex relationships. (His relationship with his commander Lukas does span the full novel, and is charming at times, but it doesn't come across to me as very deep.) I guess in summary, Svejk is basically a negative presence, kind of a Bartleby--you know what he is against but not really what he is for. This seems to me the biggest contrast with Quixote, who clearly has a positive (if deluded) vision of the world, and is much more relatable for that reason.

Perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that a national symbol for a people who have generally been ground under one or another heel is of this type. One thing I will say in the novel's favor is that I think it is very valuable to have a protagonist in a military story who is cowardly and, more or less, a deserter. I think this can often be the most honorable or moral way to respond to a military situation, but it is virtually never portrayed as such in literature or other pop culture. It is interesting to me that Finn, one of the leads of the new Star Wars film, is such a character. (Also of note, in Potsdam, Germany, there is a memorial to the Unknown Deserter, dedicated to "a man who refused to kill his fellow men.") This alone is a significant contribution, and is fitting that the character was created by the anarchist Hasek.

Addendum: Although I have never read it, Catch-22 probably deserves a mention in the discussion of this last issue.

MajinFox says

OPINIA Z 10 SIERPNIA 2012

1 listopada 2012 zacz?em czyta? pierwsze dwa tomy Szwejka, które sko?czy?em po bardzo d?ugim czasie 24 grudnia tego samego roku. Je?li chodzi o moje szczeg?owe zapami?tywanie dat, to jest to pewien fetysz, lubi? sobie wspomina?, co i kiedy danego dnia czyta?em. Cz?sto nawet dzie? ko?czenia tytu?u nie jest przypadkowy, a z premedytacj? wyd?u?ony, by by? bardziej "okr?g?y" lub "uroczy?ciejszy". Data rozpocz?cia i uko?czenia ksi??ki, to dwa wyj?tkowe dni w poprzednim roku. Z tego powodu postanowi?em na dzie? 31 lipca sko?czy? trzeci i czwarty tom Szwejka. Sp?ni?em si? o dziewi?? dni, z czego jestem bardzo niezadowolony. Ale o ksi??ce to ma by? rozprawka, a nie o moich zboczeniach.

Lekko zmusi?em si? do sko?czenia przygód Szwejka, ale podobnie, jak z "Atlasem zbrutowanym" nie dawa? mi spokoju dra? jeden. Przysiad?em i okaza?o si?, ?e trzeci i czwarty tom jest o wiele zabawniejszy ni? pierwsze dwa. Powód? Wydaje mi si?, ?e wszystko to za sprawk? rozdzielenia historii na wi?ksz? ilo?? osób. Wiele ciekawych postaci przewija si? przez histori?, o wiele bardziej kret?skich, ni? g?ówny bohater. O w?a?nie! Idiotyzm.

W trakcie czytania postanowi?em sobie przypomnie? pocz?tek historii wojaczki Szwejka i obejrza?em film z 1956 roku "Dobry wojak Szwejk" z Rudolfem Hrusinskym. Com zobaczy?! Ju? wiem sk?d Szwejk jest idiot?! Gdy nie mia?em okazji wcze?niej widzie? filmu, zastanawia?em si?, jakim cudem wszyscy uwa?aj? Józefa za totalnego kretyna? Zawsze wydawa? mi si? chytrusem, który nabiera na swój iloraz inteligencji generalicj?. Film sugerowa? dobrze, ?e Szwejk to idiota bez dwóch zda?. Ciesz?c si?, ?e obali?em mit, czyta?em dalej ksi??kowego Józefa i widzia?em w nim spryciarza. A? do momentu, kiedy nie za?o?y? rosyjskiego munduru... Co za idiota!

Historia ko?czy si? tragicznie. Ostatnie zdanie: "Na tym urywa si? r?kopis Jaros?awa Haszka", pokazuje, ?e ?artownisem jest si? tylko do pewnego momentu. I szczerze powiedziawszy szkoda, ?e tak daleko r?kopis si?ga, bo gdyby skrócono go o jeden rozdział, wydaje mi si?, ?e sko?czy? by si?, hmm.... pe?niej.