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***The Gene: An Intimate History* published in Czech translation**

In February 2019, an extraordinary book was launched in Brno during an extraordinary event. Although there are more than plenty publications, let us underscore that this is an exceptional author. Siddhartha Mukherjee (1970), an oncologist, scientist and writer, needs no introduction whatsoever. Born and raised in Delhi, he studied medicine at the top universities in the United States and the United Kingdom (Stanford, Oxford, Harvard). He currently lectures at Columbia University and also works in their medical centre. The main field amongst his many interests is Haematology-Oncology. In 2011, his first book, *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*, won him the Pulitzer Prize and the Guardian Prize. The Czech translation was published by Munipress, the Masaryk University Press, in 2015.

It was therefore obvious that Munipress would be interested in Siddhartha Mukherjee's latest work. And a second book by this world-famous writer has indeed been recently published in the Czech language (Figure 1). The publication is dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Masaryk University.

The launch ceremony of Siddhartha Mukherjee's *Gen. O dědičnosti v našich osudech [The Gene: An Intimate History]*, the first edition of the Czech translation, took place on February 26, 2019 at 4 pm in the historical refectory of the Mendel Museum on Mendel Square, Brno (CZ). The book written by the American physician, scientist and writer describes the story of the gene and the history of genetics from Aristotle through Mendel to contemporary scientists mapping the human genome. Dedicated to the heredity and biological information unit, it is the first to bring a comprehensive description of the birth and development of genetics, a scientific discipline based among others on the discoveries that Gregor Johann Mendel made in this specific Augustinian Abbey in Brno (now the Mendel Museum), yet it is deeply concerned with the present, too. It provides the readers with broad insights into the genetic and medical phenomena that emerged during the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, as well as the ethical and philosophical aspects of the field.

The book was translated by Jan Šmarda, Director of the Institute of Experimental Biology, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University (Figure 2). "It is a very readable book. The author has once again demonstrated his ability to combine expertise with a sense for the



FIGURE 1: Photo Radek Gomola, © Munipress.



FIGURE 2: Photo Radek Gomola, © Munipress.

language and a story," he said. The work on the translation took almost two years, and linguist Kateřina Danielová contributed to the copy editing. Let us add that the two of them showed a lot of bravura in translating its language finesse into Czech.

Jan Šmarda had previously contributed as a translator to the Czech edition of the book on the history of cancer *Vládce všech nemocí* [*The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*] by the same author. While the book on cancer was focused on a more specific field and thanks to its theme appealed to a broad readership, *The Gene* covers the extensive field of molecular biology and will more probably



FIGURE 3: Photo Radek Gomola, © MuniPress.

attract those interested in science and medicine. "I trust that this work can help blur the boundaries between physicians and scientists by showing how scientific knowledge can help in finding treatment for genetically conditioned diseases," said the translator. Professor Václav Pačes (Figure 3), a biochemist, wrote the preface to the Czech edition.

MuniPress publishes *The Gene* in its edition "For the First Time in Czech". It brings significant works of international specialist literature on topics closely related to the fields of study at Masaryk University. The publication of *The Gene* also commemorates the legacy of Gregor Johann Mendel, preserved by the University through the Mendel Museum.

MuniPress, the Masaryk University Press, is one of the most important publishing houses for specialist literature in the Czech Republic. Every year it publishes more than 400 titles of professional and non-fiction books, and 54 scientific journals. It focuses on specialist literature, both scientific and popular.

The public launch ceremony of Siddhartha Mukherjee's *Gen. O dědičnosti v našich osudech* was introduced by Professor Petr Dvořák, Vice-rector of Masaryk University; Professor Václav Pačes, expert reviewer of the book, spoke about the human genome, while Professor Jan Šmarda, translator, and Kateřina Danielová, copy editor, read extracts from the book.

All the places in the refectory auditorium were taken during the ceremony. There were professionals, colleagues and students, and also a lot of people from amongst the general public. A major part in the publication was played by Alena Mizerová, Director of MuniPress, the Masaryk University Press. *Anthropologie* editorial staff would like to thank her for the invitation to the event and for the possibility to use MuniPress promotional materials.

"The book of Siddhartha Mukherjee explains the history leading to post-genomics, but also further directions that the field of genetics can take. For example, would it be good to strengthen the genes for altruism and to suppress the selfish ones? But doesn't humankind need selfishness, and even aggressiveness of individuals for the survival of the species?" says Václav Pačes in the preface to the Czech edition of *The Gene*.

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