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Between Euphoria and Disillusionment: Czech Literature of the 1990s in Context and Transformation

The aim of the project is to present Czech literature of the so-called long 1990s (1989–2004) in a broader social, political, and cultural context. The project is based on the assumption that the literary production of this period was significantly shaped by the social transformation after 1989, shifts in values, and changes in cultural frameworks, discursive, institutional, and symbolic structures that determined the possibilities of literary expression. At the same time, literary production helped shape the cultural climate of the period and contributed to the articulation and critical reflection of the value and symbolic changes in post-socialist society.

The research will combine quantitative, corpus-based methods with qualitative literary-historical and discursive analysis, thus enabling the thematic, semantic, and ideological dimensions of the literary production of the period to be captured. Through the analysis of key themes, motifs, and patterns of meaning, the project will show how the literature of the 1990s was connected to contemporary public life and will map the dynamics of phenomena that permeated both literary and non-literary space.

The project will focus not only on the changes in the literary situation immediately after 1989, but also on the development and transformation of the initial dynamics over the course of fifteen years, which culminated in the institutional integration of the Czech Republic into the European Union in 2004. The research will thus go beyond the reductive conception of the 1990s as a short transitional period and present them as a cultural and ideological process that continues to influence the literary and cultural situation to this day, which corresponds to the current social demand for research into various aspects of the transformation period, including the cultural and artistic spheres.

The research will also include a transnational comparative perspective, within which Czech literature of the 1990s will be placed in the broader context of post-socialist Europe. A comparison of selected literatures of Central and Eastern Europe will make it possible to identify their specific features and common characteristics and will significantly expand the possibilities for research into literature in periods of systemic change. The project will thus enable a deeper understanding of the role of literature in the process of post-communist transformation in a broader regional context, expand the methodological possibilities of literary-historical research, and contribute to the international discussion on the cultural dimensions of post-socialist Europe.

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