

*Which Czech writers Ota Filip introduced to German-speaking audience: quantitative and archival research of cultural mediation phenomenon*

At the beginning of my increased interest in the work of the Czech-German writer Ota Filip (1930-2018) was the fact that his individual novels mean the unique reaction to writer's experiences as a witness of dramatic historical events in Czechoslovakia of second half of 20th century, a citizen of a socialist state that threw him on the periphery of cultural life as a novice writer, and as an emigrant, feeling acutely his difference both in the society he came from and in the one who accepted him. Despite this state of affairs Filip's literary output and activities has not been properly methodological and comprehensive elaborated (at least not in the Czech-speaking context, even if such attempts have already been made, eg. Kubica). I have already challenged the selected literary material in the dissertation thesis entitled *Ninth autobiography – dimensions of autobiographical space in literary work of Ota Filip*.

The second factor leading to the continuation of the study of Ota Filip's literary work and activities was the cooperation within the framework of the Junior research grant of translations of Czech literature into world languages "Global Trajectories of Czech Literature since 1945" (grant no. GJ20-O2773Y) supported by The Czech Science Foundation and conducted by Mgr. Ondřej Vimr, Ph.D. The project requires to use above all resources of the Czech Literary Bibliography Research Infrastructure (ORJ identifier: 90136) and the project team consist of five members (Ondřej Vimr, Anna Gnot, Julia Miesenböck, Olga Słowik, Cezary Rosiński). The main research questions cover the observations of the particular patterns (genres, readers, authors, gender, target languages, etc.) of spread of the Czech Literature since 1945 and how they have been changed from the perspective of time? The research questions posed in this way offer the opportunity to observe Czech literature as a system operating within the concept of world literature and also its individual trajectories of spread and propagation in the context of the changing historical, political and cultural situation. Not without significance in this context is the issue of the data set necessary to study the general picture of the functioning of translations of Czech literature into individual world languages, but also necessary to study specific areas of research of individual team members.

Within the above-mentioned project, I would like to research Ota Filip's activities as an exile agent of popularisation of Czech literature in German-speaking countries under

the working title: *Which Czech writers Ota Filip introduced to German-speaking audience – quantitative and archival research of cultural mediation phenomenon*. This will allow, I believe, to put the persona of Ota Filip in a wider perspective of literary and cultural transfer during the Cold War, after the year 1968 and especially later (in the light of the writer's biography) after the year 1973, when Filip emigrated from Czechoslovakia to the Federal Republic of Germany. The figure of the writer as a literary critic, Fischer Verlag publishing house agent or commentator of Eastern Bloc countries literary production for main German journals and magazines (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Der Spiegel, Die Welt, etc.) makes possible to explore and understand an agent who seamlessly participates in the life of two different cultural circles – across a language divide – Czech (exile) and German.

So far, my research on the activities and literary output of Ota Filip included an observation of his Czech language literary work in the context of its autobiographical character. The material which was used to analyse this layer of Ota Filip's works includes writer's Czech-language written novels, his journalistic texts (elaborated to a lesser extent as an additional space of autobiographical context) and archival materials acquired during research conducted at the State Security Archive in Prague, Prague City Archive and Literary Archive of Moravian Museum in Brno. The collection of several thousand archival documents and their in-depth research brought unexpected results in the context of understanding the origin of the author's individual works, insight into the beginnings of his literary life in Czechoslovakia, and reference to the most striking episodes in Filip's biography (that are also reflected in his literary work). An important element of the analysis of literary, journalistic and archival materials was the observation of the tension between the need to constantly return to the autobiographical references already recognizable in the writer's work and the increasingly difficult task of giving them a creative character. The area of observation was limited to the writer's Czech language literary output, its reception and the process of gradual shaping and consolidation of autobiographical references within its borders. The application of the reception criterion allows to stabilize the body of texts in which the complexes of autobiographical meanings and characteristic strategies of their use by the writer were studied.

The eventual opportunity to conduct research in Munich archives considering the writer's output as a cultural mediator between Czech and German literature (since the 1970s of the 20th century) brings the possibility to expand the field of observation of the writer's wide range of activities. Especially, a unique writer's fund deposited in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek that includes, among others, a significant amount of Filip's journalistic literary reviews and other private texts (correspondence, author's other manuscripts, photographs) could allow tracking the trajectory of the writer's activities in the field of Czech-German cultural transfer. Conducting archival research in this fund would enrich the already taken approaches and methods of analysis of materials gathered in Czech archives for purposes of writing my dissertation thesis. I would be able to fulfill the gap in

my previous research and inspire further exploration of wider cultural aspects of Ota Filip's activities as a mediator of the common understanding of both Czech and German cultures and also to make an attempt of contribution in the field of conducting innovative research of the landscape of Czech-German relations.

The proposed project *Which Czech writers Ota Filip introduced to German-speaking audience – quantitative and archival research of cultural mediation phenomenon* will further explore concepts and ideas of literary history that surfaced in my dissertation thesis. The aim of the project is to conduct archival and quantitative research of activities of Ota Filip in the field of literary, translation and cultural transfer after his emigration to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1974. To verify the author's unique position in this context, I decided to focus on his journalistic activities and publishing activities in the Czech and German press published in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1974–1990. This is why, on the horizon of so far conducted research, the writer's personal archive in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (sign. Ana 594) is one of the crucial and the most relevant sources of information about Ota Filip's position in German-speaking publishing market. This archive is the largest collection of Filip's German and Czech literary and journalistic texts, manuscripts and personal documents including the beginnings of his path as a writer and commentator of literary life in the FRG. This choice is dictated by the fact that the process of establishing Filip's position as a cultural mediator runs almost parallel to the creation of archival materials concerning his life, the development of the author's work, and the wider context of the Czech exile life at that time.

While my Ph.D. thesis research focused on the analysis of the autobiographical character of Filip's individual works from an interdisciplinary perspective (with a special focus on their cultural, historical, and psychological aspects, etc.), in the proposed research I am going to explore his activities as a mediator of Czech literature and culture in Germany after his emigration. I have already collected data for a quantitative analysis, namely metadata about the author's journalistic and literary critique texts from the mentioned period (by using bibliographical databases like Czech Literary Bibliography, the FAZ archive, WorldCat.org, etc.). This research revealed around 500 unique records that will be used to analyse the network of connections between Filip as a cultural mediator and particular Czech writers who were introduced to German literary and cultural institutions for the propagation of their literary output. The verification of conducted quantitative research showed that the selected journalistic material requires an in-depth analysis in terms of archival studies. Partially, the material required for purposes of this kind of research was obtained in the Czech State Security Archive, especially the part about the initiation period of Filip's exile in Germany when he was still observed by the agents of Czechoslovak State Security. Nevertheless, Czech archives do not include materials regarding writer's ongoing activities in the later period; these are available in the literary archive of the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich (with the awareness of the fact that the potential access to the archive will require permission of the writer's inheritors).

The proposed research allows to reveal the instances whereby Filip's mediation activities were successful and dynamise the transfer of values between both literature and cultures and where it fails due to complicated political, historical, cultural, or other circumstances. This pathway of research allows us to ask questions about how the writer's attitudes and methods of work with Czech exile and official literature changed in the time passed since his departure from Czechoslovakia, how his personal contacts enriched a number of authors whom he directly and indirectly introduced to the agents of West German publishing market (publishing houses, literary critics, readers) and how these activities slowly shifted from journalistic interventions to participation in the institutional field (for instance, the membership in Bayerische Akademie der Schönen Künste). It will provide a wider picture of Filip's trajectories in the process of unofficial cultural mediation that is especially significant in the light of the fact that he did not decide to establish a Czech exile publishing house in a foreign language cultural environment (unlike Robert Vlach, Daniel Stroj or Josef Škvorecký) but he very quickly became an agent of the existing and developed publishing system in West Germany (also included his cooperation with the Radio Free Europe). In fact, Ota Filip started to build his position in the German publishing market long before his departure from Czechoslovakia in the year 1974, by creating a wide network of contacts with German-speaking authors who shared his experience of being self-exiled (and later factually exiled) in their own cultures and literature (with Salesian writer Horst Bienek in the first place).

With the new potential findings from the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek and the methodological approach (process of cultural mediation) I would like to conduct in-depth analysis of Ota Filip's exile activities. My previous research of the writer's output in the context of archival observations assure me that there are still blind places in the picture of Ota Filip's literary and cultural activities, which can not be revealed without continuation of processing archival materials. Eventually, the opportunity of conducting this kind of research of the writer's manuscripts from the period after the year 1974 in the mentioned archive will be undoubtedly a significant contribution to the study of Filip's work in the literary field and could bring new relevant findings (also taking into consideration the contribution of German-speaking researchers – Kliems, Cornejo, Hanus, Kubica – into the analysis and interpretation of Ota Filip's exile and German-language literary work). Furthermore, it will substantially add to my ongoing effort to fill one of the last gaps in the preparation of a monograph about the literary work of Ota Filip from the perspective of parallel literary and archival research into Czech literature during the totalitarian regime, which I deeply hope will also contribute to the effort of a better understanding of closer and wider Czech-German cultural relations.