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Literature in Exile Between ‘Authorship’ and ‘Translation’: The Central and Eastern European Experience

Typ wydarzenia: Konferencja
Miejscowość: Prague
Organizatorzy: Akademia Nauk Republiki Czeskiej, Uniwersytet w Ratyzbonie

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This conference aims to examine the complex relationship between ‘authorship’ and ‘translation’ in the work of the 20th-century Central and Eastern European writers in exile who were also translators. In the context of the reassessment of ‘literariness’ in the latter half of the 20th century, the conference is particularly focused on the overlapping relationship between both these concepts, which are seen as interrelated, historically variable categories of literary creativity of exiled writers in redefining themselves against the nationalist narratives. The workshop will thus contribute to the discussion on cultural translation and post-national literature in general.

The fact that many of the Central and Eastern European writers who later physically went into exile had already tried to undermine the uniformity and political instrumentalization of literature and culture in the totalitarizing regimes as intentional readers, critics and translators of foreign literature just raised awareness of broader issues of cultural translation. As the Pole Stanisław Barańczak quoted, ‘I am a translator and only sometimes a poet, much less than Romantics had in mind.’ Also for the Russian Joseph Brodsky, the Hungarian György Faludy, who eventually ended up in America, the Czech Jiří Gruša, who found himself in West Germany, and others, the literatures of their later exile already had an impact on their early work (intertextuality, translations and adaptations). Later, these relationships are manifested in many forms both in their exile works and translations as ‘thick’ translations (Kwame Anthony Appiah) related to their former and new homelands.

At the workshop, we would like to take a closer look at the mutual relationship between these and other authorial works and creative translations, considering not only their ‘third space’ (Homi K. Bhabha) as hybrid processes through which cultural identities and meanings are negotiated and reconstituted, but also the eventual overlapping of both literary roles (Roland Barthes and others). Following the ‘translator’s turn’ in the humanities (Douglas Robinson), and thus considering

‘translation’ (as well as ‘authorship’) as a contextually framed and dynamic category (Lawrence Venuti, Susan Bassnett, Schamma Schahadat), we wish to discuss the relationship of these roles to overcoming the totalitarizing narratives of national cultures, which in Central and Eastern Europe in the latter half of the 20th century significantly relied on literary culture (the author as a producer of national values and the translator as a negotiator of their boundaries, Evgeny Dobrenko; or more broadly Emily Apter and others). This raises a number of questions. Do innovative concepts of ‘literariness’ emerge in the work of exiled writers that make the significance of (cultural) translation more visible? Are these concepts based on the undermining of the uniformity and the political instrumentalization of national culture through translation from literatures and cultures that later became a new home for the former translators and exiled authors? In what way did these writers promote their idea of literariness to their audience?

We aim for a transnational perspective based on the methods of translation and literary studies, which will present new typologies for exile literature using the examples of Central and Eastern European writers, as well as their relevant contemporaries (translation of fiction as a form of internal exile, self-translation of authors between the East and West, original fiction related to the former homeland, but addressed to a new audience after the language shift, or without it in the case of German authors, etc.). In particular we focus on:

- the transcultural poetics of Central and Eastern European writers in the second half of the 20th century in relation to (cultural) translation;

- the importance of domestic translation culture for the practice of exiled authors;

- the relationship of exile writers to ‘literariness’, ‘autorship’, ‘translation’ and the associated controversies (e.g. about the originality of Danilo Kiš, the relationship of the works of Milan Kundera to national culture);

- the performativity of exil writers in relation to the model audience (e.g. essays on the condition of exile, paratexts).

Submission guidelines: Please send your abstract of max. 800 characters/300 words to dobias@ucl.cas.cz (Dalibor Dobiáš) and marek.nekula@ur.de (Marek Nekula) by 30 April 2025. We expect the final submissions to be 20 minutes long. The preferred language is English. You will be notified about the selection of submissions by 15 May 2025. The organizers offer accommodation to selected participants, and travel grants to participants without institutional background. The workshop is organized with the financial support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the AV21 Strategy Research Program ‘Identities in a World of Wars and Crises’ at the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Data zgłaszania prelegentów: 30.04.2025
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- cfp_literature_in_exile_between_autorship_and_translation.pdf

Linki:

- https://ucl.cas.cz/en/aktuality/cfp-literature-in-exile-between-authorship-and-translation-the-central-and-eastern-european-experience/

Słowa kluczowe: literatura, emigracja, tłumacze, autorstwo, Europa Środkowa i Wschodnia, literatury narodowe