

Abstract

The focus of this thesis is the circulation of African American leftist poetry in the early Cold War, especially between the United States of America and Czechoslovakia. The dissertation relies on transnational and world literature scholarship while pointing to its limitations, especially regarding the Cold War context. I follow the story of Abraham Chapman, a US communist living in Prague from in the 1950s, using the concept of the world republic of leftist letters. The first chapter explores the mechanisms of this space and Prague's role within it. It also looks at the cultural relationship between Czechoslovakia and the African American community, describing the background of Chapman's journey to Czechoslovakia. The second chapter focuses on the clash between Chapman and the Czechoslovak intermediaries of US culture such as Josef Škvorecký, Lubomír Dorůžka, and Jan Zábřana and the competing versions of African American poetry, especially in Abraham Chapman's anthology of Black diaspora poetry *Černošská poezie: světová antologie* [Black Poetry: A World Anthology] that he edited in 1958, while in Czechoslovakia. The third chapter examines women poets featured in *Black Poetry*, contrasting the Czechoslovak anthology with *Black Voices* that Chapman edited ten years later, when he was once again in the US. The two anthologies not only illustrate changing Cold War discourses and imaginaries of race and of African American literature, as well as the complexities of the civil rights movement, but also reveals the people, texts, and allegiances invisible in previous Cold War cultural histories.