Supervisor's Report on the Dissertation*:*

"Contextualized Study of History of Czech Literature in Chinese Translation: 1921-2020"

submitted in 2022 at the Institute of Translation Studies, Faculty of Arts, Charles University

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I. Initial remarks

The theme of the dissertation was defined in 2017; the structure of the work was conceived as combination of a historical study and a case study consisting in textual analysis. When I took over as supervisor in 2018, the candidate already had a quite clear idea about the methodology and an outline of the chapters. Overall, his approach was very independent and my role as supervisor was limited to minor suggestions regarding the content and methodology and occasional advice on the Czech literary context and linguistic advice for the textual analysis.

II. Content of the dissertation

The dissertation consists of eight chapters and three appendices (chronologically ordered lists of works translated from Czech into Chinese in the three historical periods subject to study). In the introduction (Chapter 1), the author formulates the objective of the work, which is *"to present a descriptive, contextualized, target-oriented translation history research into the introduction of Czech literature in China from a socio-cultural perspective,"* and defines the scope of his research. Chapter 2 presents and explains in a very thorough manner the key theoretical concepts relevant for the research study (namely ideology, the role of paratexts, indirect translation and retranslation, censorship). The choice of the topics and theoreticians discussed is pertinent and justified, though I believe that the chapter contains some very specific details and notions that are not later mentioned in the empirical parts and conclusions of the dissertation and therefore might be considered somewhat superfluous.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to methodology and materials. Here, the author outlines the research questions – *"What? Who? How? And Why?"* – and the hypothesis that she study is supposed to confirm: *"there are patterns or tendencies in the translation of Czech literature into Chinese, which has possible contextual explanations."*

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 open the empirical and core part of the dissertation. Adhering strictly to the method and research questions defined in Chapter 3, the author provides a detailed and indeed well-presented overview of literary works originally written in Czech published in mainland China in the periods 1921-1949, 1950-1977 and 1978-2020, respectively. Each of these chapters is based on quantitative data retrieved from the respective bibliographical databases, which are then subject to an analysis, which allows us to follow the trends, influences and phenomena (such as indirect translation, the role of ideology) present in each period in relation to the historical context. Given the form in which Czech literary works were introduced in the first period, Chapter 4 is built mostly around data on translations published in literary journals, which very well documents the situation of a country that is starting to

open to the world (another important characteristic is the use indirect translation via various languages including Esperanto). Chapter 5 illustrates the growing influence of ideology on translated literature as reflected in the selection of works for translation and other circumstances of their publishing, until the start of the Cultural Revolution, when publication of Czech literature in mainland China ceased at all. On pages 131-134 in Chapter 5, the author offers a useful categorisation of the Czech works published in China in the period 1950-1977 based on three criteria. Chapter 6 addresses the period after 1978, which is more diverse in terms of the titles published, genres and publication practices, in line with the process of gradual liberalization of the cultural environment and literary market.

Chapter 7 offers a textual analysis of selected parts of five different versions (the original and four translations) of Jaroslav Hašek's *The Good Soldier Švejk* with the aim to establish tendencies regarding translation strategies and methods and their development over time. Focusing on the translation of offensive language, tabooed subjects and cultural elements, the comparison indeed reveals a development from adaptation to more faithful methods that aim at preserving the local colour of the text. It would be interesting to see if this tendency could also be identified on other textual levels and possibly also in other retranslations of the book.

III. Formal aspects

The dissertation is very well structured and the data, their analysis and interpretation are presented in a clear and organised manner. I appreciate that many of the variables that characterize each of the periods discussed in Chapters 4 to 6 are summarised in tables and figures, allowing the reader to follow the comparisons (the numbers in Table 5.5 are perhaps inverted?). Also very appreciated is the presentation of the segments subject to textual analysis in Chapter 7. The bibliography at the end of the work is presented adequately, though I think it should include *Czech and Slovak Literature in English* by J. Kovtun.

IV. Evaluation, comments, questions for discussion

The author has undoubtedly accomplished his goal and presented a systematic overview of the history of translation of Czech literature in China. He has succeeded to identify and describe the main the characteristics and trends observed in each of the three historical periods without overgeneralising. The work is an important and valuable addition to other recently published works on the history of translations from Czech in other literary systems (namely Portugal – Špirk 2011, frequently quoted in the book as an important source of inspiration, and Spain – Mračková Vavroušová 2016/2022). It might be interesting to compare the ways in which Czech literature was introduced in each of these countries, as I think there are certain similarities despite the different historical developments.

The overall quality of the dissertation is excellent. One aspect in which the text could perhaps be improved is certain lack of interconnection between the individual parts (specifically between Chapter 2 and the empirical part).

As for **questions for the author** (or suggestions for further research), I think it might be useful to elaborate on the role of translators as agents, i.e. as active promoters introducing foreign literary works in their culture. Such examples are mentioned several times throughout the text, most explicitly in the chapters analysing the second and third period (e.g. in relation to the introduction of Kundera). However, can any influence of translators on the selection of texts be observed also in the first period? How is this related to the availability of literary

works in the mediating languages? Are there any specific authors whose introduction was due to the specific interest of a translator?

The second question concerns the term "popularity" as used on pages 134 and 135 – how is popularity measured in the cases in question (specifically in the case of socialist-realist works), how does the popularity of the works mentioned in this chapter compare to that of some of the translations discussed in Chapter 6?

V. Conclusion

I recommend the dissertation for defence and provisionally classify it as *passed.*

6 September 2022   PhDr. Vanda Obdržálková, Ph.D.