

Abstract

The thesis documents and interprets the conflict between the literary discourses of the time on the one hand, and the specific approach of Karel Krejčí (1904-1979), comparatist, Slavist and Czech studies scholar, on the other hand. Based on the Krejčí's studies on literary history and comparative literature, as well as his participation in the methodological debates of his time, the thesis analyses the impact of this conflict on the author's literary theory method, and his work of a literary historian and comparatist in general. The analysis is based on the ambiguous reception of Krejčí's scientific work: while he is recognised as a great personality in the field of Slavic studies, he is considered an outsider in the general context of Czech literary science.

The thesis describes how the author, with his methodological approach, was in opposition to the prevailing trend. As a Slavic studies scholar he criticised the 'influence science' and positivist methods employed in the field. In the period between the two world wars he inclined towards the sociology of literature, although this discipline did not become popular. While he was interested in phenomenology and formalism, he defended his 'historical-sociological' approach against structuralism, which was gaining ground. In the 1950s Krejčí wrote a 'Marxist history of Polish literature'; however, he never entirely identified with Marxist science. He wrote studies on comparative literature at a time when comparative literature was still denounced as a 'cosmopolitan influence science'.

The thesis concludes from Krejčí's approaches that he preferred methodological plurality: strict observation of a single leading method was far from him. This, along with an emphasis on extensive literary material, placed him in the role of an outsider: opposed to an approach to literary science where the method played the role of a political tool, or the only 'right' key to 'true science', Krejčí deliberately decided not to follow the development in the field and remain on the margin. In his effort to be anti-ideological he was perceived as a scholar with an inconsistent methodological stance, and his works were considered to be outdated.