

Poetic Spaces of Memory (on Chosen Czech Poets of the Second Half of the 20th Century)

Abstract

The dissertation *Poetic Spaces of Memory (on Chosen Czech Poets of the Second Half of the 20th Century)* offers interpretations of six Czech poetic works of the second half of the 20th century, with focus on the perspective of cultural memory. Chosen poetic works represent synecdoches of poetic description of (general) historical events and experience that are connected with the time during the World War II (the Nazi regime) and with communist regime after 1948 and to some extent are connected with spatial dimension – be it poetic reflection of space which is modelled on a phenomenon from real, “topical” world, be it (completely) imaginary description of space. Methodology of this dissertation is based on the concept of cultural memory by Aleida Assmann, particularly as presented in her book *Cultural Memory and Western Civilization. Functions, Media, Archives*. Individual chapters of the dissertation deal with interpretations of following poetic works: “Návrat” by Vladimír Holan is a poetic story that develops the topos of coming back – coming back home, to a space that the lyrical narrator enters after twenty years in order to look for his mother’s grave in local graveyard; he fails. A verse book *Dům Strach* by Jan Zahradníček is a synecdoche of poetic reflection of his experiences from communist prisons and from communist forced labour camps in the 1950s. Book of poetry *Heinovské noci* by Karel Šiktanc reflects the war trauma of the Lidice massacre committed by Nazis. Book of poetry by Josef Hanzlík named *Lampa* provides lyrical subject’s memories of the Second World War, which are autobiographical and suggest children’s view of war events. Poetic space of memory is in Hanzlík’s work childhood – noticeably influenced by the war. *Odchod z Čech* by Ivan Diviš reflects his experience as an emigrant following Soviet invasion in 1968. Diviš wrote this work in exile and approached it in the first place as a chance to reflect intensely and in artistic way on developments in Czechoslovakia at the time of normalization. The collection *Blížíme se ohni* by Emil Juliš is a poetic reflection of area around the original town of Most that communist regime decided to demolish to make way for brown coal mining, a reflection of devastated landscape of Most region and also of appalling state of ecology, or more generally of ecology of culture.

Key Words

Czech poetry of the second half of the 20th century, Czech poets, Vladimír Holan, Jan Zahradníček, Karel Šiktanc, Josef Hanzlík, Ivan Diviš, Emil Juliš, cultural memory, Aleida Assmann, poetry and memory, intertextuality, Renate Lachmann, memory and space, poetic spaces of memory