

Abstract

The present PhD thesis examines the reception of Humanism and the Renaissance in Czech print culture between 1476 and 1547. Critically, it opposes the predominant interpretation line that – from National Revival to post-war marxist literary criticism – tried to preserve at all costs a magnificent picture of the 16th century as a "golden age". The study is based on Petr Voit's recent works on Czech book printing of the first half of the 16th century and follows the reception of Humanism and the Renaissance from a complex point of view (printers' profiles, typography, illustrations and ornaments, readers' reception). The analysis shows that during the period under review, the Czech society, which predominantly professed a reformed confession (utraquism, lutheranism, the Unity of Brethren...), lived in a self-centered religious messianism, and therefore rejected any cultural novelties, especially those coming from Italy as the hometown of the hated papacy. Book printing largely reflected the conservatism and moral rigorism of this mainly utraquist society that ignored the entertainment literature, considered unnecessary or even undesirable. In this rigid religious scheme, the Renaissance literary genres (Petrarchan poetry, novella, epic poem, etc.) and the humanist text-critical approach to ancient greek and latin texts didn't find their way into Czech print culture. Throughout the period under review, translations from ancient classics and from contemporary Renaissance literature are very sparse, and they probably did not find a greater reader's response. Original literary (fiction) production did not exist at all. Only chronicles, as a genre standing between sholarly and entertaining literature, was popular with the burgher reader. The typographic and aesthetic analysis of the printed books of the period shows similar results: printers were leaving the Gothic aesthetics very slowly. The adoption of humanist typography (based on Roman types) took place only in the 1540s, and only for Latin texts, which means that books printed in Czech language remained tied to Gothic typography until the end of the 18th century. Only in the times of the National Revival the Czech print culture returned to the European main cultural flow both from the typographic and literary point of view.