

Re-defining the Literary Fact: The Example of Bohumil Hrabal

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THIS CONTRIBUTION is meant as a follow-up reflection that synthesizes the principles of my intervention at the international congress *Local Convertible Values: International Narratives of National Literary History* (Cluj-Napoca, 10–12 May 2018) with the processing of the productive inputs I received during the conference. What has been in fact one undeniable quality of the congress is the multiplicity of themes, approaches, and ideas that were brought by the participants to a high level of debate and reciprocal enrichment. The premises of variety and productivity already lay in the propositions the organizers invited us to think upon; on the same basis I will try to develop a discourse by focusing on aspects of Bohumil Hrabal's work that arise questions about literary history which transcend both the individual and national case. The intertwining issues of history, interpretation, and nationality seen from the viewpoint of a research on textual variation are categories that participate in demonstrating the complexity scale of the internal and external relationships within 20th century European literature, its intrinsic multiplicity, its inherent mobility, and consequently the limitedness of inflexible categorizing when approaching this matter.

Bohumil Hrabal (1914–1997) is maybe the best known Czech prose writer of the 20th century, alongside Milan Kundera (b. 1929) and Jaroslav Hašek (1883–1923). Unlike his younger compatriot, he didn't have the same relationship with the totalitarian forces that led Kundera, who had been a fierce and renowned supporter of the Communist Party since 1948 and for many years after, to emigrate to France in 1975, after having being banned from publication since 1968 because of his endorsement of the Prague Spring, fired in 1970, and finally deprived of his citizenship in 1979. Kundera's biography is radically different from Hrabal's, yet he is one example of the many intellectuals (and generally of the many people) who, during the troubled decades of change that characterized 20th century Europe, had to drastically modify their lives by physically escaping, hiding, and in the worst cases living the exile of imprisonment, or perishing.

The phenomenon of mobility seen as either a physical or intellectual movement and producing the most diverse artistic and biological consequences has rightfully been a trending topic in the last decade, examining in depth questions that originated at the beginning of the last century. The discourses of *ostranenje*, dislocation and displacement are being analyzed on various levels and often on the background of a liter-

ary history that comprehends wider horizons than the national ones.¹ One interesting aspect of these phenomena lies in the forms they can take when a physical displacement is not included in the processes of dislocation. Hrabal too experimented all the historical (political, social, cultural) changes in his country from WWI to post-wall Czech Republic (1993), through the first Czechoslovakian Republic (1918), the Nazi occupation (1939), WWII and the following reconstruction, the communist coup d'état (1948), Stalinism and post-Stalinism, the Warsaw Pact army occupation (1968) and the ensuing normalization (1968–1989).

But the *movements* of the author in reaction to change are to look for in the implicit fluidity of his writing, whose motive has a historical character in the first place. Hrabal is actually an example of exceptionality: he started writing at the end of 1930s, he became a renowned writer at the beginning of 1960s, when he gained the possibility to first publish some of his texts. An exclusion from official publication came in 1970 because of the radical souring of censorship measures within the new cultural policies of a de facto occupied Czechoslovakia and the dissolution of the Svaz českých spisovatelů (Union of the Czech writers), of which he was a member. To regain this possibility in 1975 he did an interview for the journal *Tvorba* where he publicly stated a form of support of the regime. The text of the interview was clearly manipulated, yet Hrabal didn't comment on it and had to witness a number of harsh reactions home and abroad from dissident intellectuals, artists and students.² Nevertheless, after that he was readmitted in the official print, although the texts published from 1976 until the disruption of the normalizing system were variably affected by the compromises he accepted from the editors, especially during the second half of 1970s and in the 1980s.³ Apart from the sensation this circumstance created, Hrabal never took a univocal position on politics, and the subjects and themes of his works proved to be suitable for success among public and critics not only through the many cultural epochs that hastily succeeded one another during the short twentieth century, but also in the various media that proliferated especially in the 1970s for the sharing of a literature—by which I mean the term in general—that was no longer accepted in the official sphere. In fact, during the only period of absence from official print and also *after* it, Hrabal's works were circulated by exile editions and publishing houses (Index, Sixty-Eight Publishers) and in the samizdat circles (Petlice, Expedice, Popelnice, Krameriova Expedice, Pražská imagínace). In short, Hrabal's activity as a writer was continuous, and so were his efforts to see his works published, from the time he started writing as a high school student to the day of his death in 1997.

From the vantage point of a historical insight on the course of Hrabal's work in time, the difficulty in classifying and editing his texts becomes comprehensible, when even his entrance in the literary world is unclear:

[Was it] at the end of the 1930s, when his first poems were printed in journals in Nymburk? In the 1940s, when he prepared at his own expense the anthology Ztracená ulička (whose publication was dashed by the nationalization of the Hradek printing company in 1948)? At the beginning of the 1950s, when he distributed his finished typewritten original texts among friends? In 1956, when thanks to the efforts of Jiří Kolář the bibliophile edition

*of two short stories, **Hovory lidi**, came out? In 1959, when the production of his book **Ztracená ulička** was stopped in an already advanced stage? In 1963, when **Perlička na dně** was published?⁴*

The development of his production up to 1989 is defined by a substantial shift, a constant lag between the writing of a text and the disclosure of it. The process of variation inherent in this shift is both of a historical and poetic kind and is strictly linked to the changing of the context(s) in which the text was finished—and *then* published, which often happened after many years.⁵ This trait of Hrabal's works genetics was revealed and debated, often criticized, since the mid-1960s, when for example Jan Lopatka expressed his disapproval of the “transfer from the unenclosed speech flow, aggregate of sequences, associations, micronarrations [of the original versions], to a more traditional prose type, subject to punch-lines, to operating with trivial experiences, to negligible external signs of this literary period.”⁶ Lopatka saw in the process of variation a direct consequence of the willingness of the author to adapt his writing to the taste for “commonly acceptable” literature that was in its turn a reflection of a “specific cautious system of pressure upon the author, a system whose consequences—even if in milder, more subtle ways—are often still working today.”⁷ In fact, he ascertained that in the texts published during the 1960s but written in the previous decade, Hrabal eliminated “substantial parts of the text, whole groups of motives, sequences. Mainly those that present unique social documents of that period.”⁸

The entity, the forms, and the reasons of the fragmentary course of Hrabal's writing became clearer to the general public on the appearance of the writer's complete works, *Sebrané spisy Bohumila Hrabala* (1991–1997), which collected all the known texts from the 1960s afterwards and also made available their textual ancestors and variants from decades before⁹:

*The problem of the reconstruability of Hrabal's text was brought on our daily agenda in 1965 by [magazine] **Tvář**, that published a passage from the epos **Bambini di Praga**, archetype of the short story “**Kaškárna**,” that appeared that same year in the volume **Inzerát na dům, ve kterém už nechci bydlet**. Until then, it had been a matter for the author's friends, acquaintances, and editors of the publishing houses. Uncertainties about chronology, motive transfers, similarities and the so-called auctorial evolution lasted over twenty-five years. The series of . . . volumes embrace the whole of the author's works, organized on the basis of 1) chronology of origin, 2) genre, 3) auctorial intention. It displays the course of the creation, which is unique not only because of the jumbled chronology of its publication, moreover in numerous variations and textual variants, but also because of the impact of a normative pressure from editors, publishers and ultimately also readers on something so subtle as is auctorial certainty. [The Complete Works] value lies in their easily averting the skepticism towards the possibility of an organic edition of Bohumil Hrabal's works that has been dominating from the mid 1960s and increasing in time.¹⁰*

The *Sebrané spisy* collection has its limits,¹¹ yet it made it possible for researchers to effectively retrace some fundamental movements in Hrabal's creative processes especially between the 1950s and 1980s and connect them with the poetics that lay beneath

them. The wider possibility of juxtaposition of the variations along with the study of publishing houses archive materials thus confirmed Hrabal's radical tendency to re-write and substantially manipulate his texts according to the editorial requests in order to ease their publication, as a phenomenon that covers not only the years of normalization, but also the entire previous decade—as Lopatka had correctly noted even without knowing many of the original texts from the 1950s:

What Hrabal employed in order to introduce himself to the general public in 1963 were variants that he drew up not because of an interior urge, but literally as was requested by the specific situation of the literary production system in the 1960s. Naturally, the publication of books—if not at one's own expense—is always indicative of the results of an agreement between the writer and the publisher's editor (or the publisher directly). If the two don't come to an agreement, the author can turn to another company. Yet the specificity of the literary-operational situation in 1960s Czechoslovakia resided in the fact that it was already conceivable to offer publishers such distinctive text as were Hrabal's ones from the 1950s, but in case of a refusal it was yet still difficult to go with those manuscripts to another publisher. Under normal, non-totalitarian circumstances, Hrabal could have published his proses immediately after completing them, and, all the more so, in the form he wrote them. Not so in the 1960s: although it was the period of major liberty during the communist dominion of 1948–1989, its character was still defined by ideological censorship supervision and, among other things, also by the hasty, so-called unilateral polemic reaction to the “Stalinist” 1950s.¹²

Such observations have of course an impact on the field of interpretation; to stick to the example of Hrabal's writing in variants, once we clarify this relevant notion about the substantial equality of his behavior towards censorship during two decades (the 1960s and 1970s) that are often considered as opposite regarding the liberty of cultural production in Czechoslovakia, new points of view are opened about the role of variation in the author's poetics, his relationship with censorship, and his attitude towards self-censorship. The trait of *openness*, as connected with narratological elements of Hrabal's textual variants, has been noted by Michael Špirit as the signal of a specific text manipulation that is inherent to the author's attitude and yet had different outcomes between the 1960s and the 1970s:

In the example of an authentic text and of its very successful variant from the point of view of crafting expertise, [it is possible to] observe something that is observable in every known instance of this period [texts published in the 1960s]. The original, finished text [written in the 1950s] has the entire autonomy of the open work, of the work opening itself to a meaning always in progress, of the work that can be interpreted without being caged in mortifying satisfactory solutions. . . . I believe this to be the case of every text reworked before 1969, re-opened from the textual point of view and at the same time closed on the semantic one. On the contrary, texts written after 1970 from the same or similar thematic or stylistic core . . . have in their textual variants a stronger semantic potential than that of the popular proses published in the 1960s compared to their prior models.¹³

Annalisa Cosentino reports a further connection between the conception of *openness* that Špirit sees in Hrabal variants and that of meaning in progress developed by Umberto Eco right from the 1960s,¹⁴ and on this basis questions the role of the historical-political reasons of Hrabal's writing in variants:

*Špirit . . . approaches Hrabal's open work in the already traditional sense of open, "always in progress" meaning given by Eco: he highlights the possibility of interpreting such work in always new ways. . . . Hrabal's poetics of variation presents also a new and very original kind of open work: every one of his texts is in fact open not only to interpretation, but also to a perpetual further reworking, it is each time closed and at the same time on the creative level potentially always unfinished. This openness, beyond doubt related to the impossibility of publishing a text right after its completion, can be ascribed to the political circumstances only within a minor aspect: in Hrabal's instance it has in fact a constitutional character, it's a distinct reflection of his poetics.*¹⁵

A clear example of what Cosentino sees in the possibility of reworking Hrabal's texts is observable in the vicissitudes of one of the author's masterpieces, *Příliš hluchná samota* (Too loud a solitude) in Czechoslovakia and abroad.¹⁶ As it is known, the text was first printed as a samizdat in 1977, then many times reprinted in other reliable or *savage* volumes. From 1986 the samizdat house Pražská imaginace, founded and managed by Václav Kadlec, published a file containing all three *variations* of that text, which are stylistically different in a radical way (see note 3). The fact that the author didn't date the three texts separately, nor did he declare any prevalence of one over the others, apart from commenting on the process of their stylistic evolution as a spontaneous one (from the first in verse to the second in vernacular Czech to the third in literary Czech),¹⁷ made it utterly difficult to understand their genealogy.¹⁸

Moreover, the proliferation and circulation of samizdat copies without any editorial control made way for a process of *exporting* those texts outside the Czech area and for the consequent production of inaccurate and even *reworked* translations. The three, different, translations of *Příliš hluchná samota* into French (*Une trop bruyante solitude*, transl. Max Keller, 1983), English (yet published in the USA, *Too Loud a Solitude*, transl. Michael H. Heim, 1986) and Italian (*Una solitudine troppo rumorosa*, transl. Sergio Corduas, 1987) present different mixtures of excerpts especially from the second and the third *variations*. Both the French and English examples substitute the tragic ending of the second *variation* for the positive one from the third (the French one includes the discarded ending in the commentary), while the Italian translation shows minor differences in the body of the text and presents an alternative version of the third *variation* ending. In this case also, although the theories that try to retrace the original texts on which these translations were conducted are on a hypothetical level, it is both possible and necessary to investigate the modalities and consequences of their diffusion. In fact, both French and English translations feature in their first edition a commentary—by Susanna Roth as for the French, by M. H. Heim as for the English—offering an unambiguous key of interpretation that sees the text of *Příliš hluchná samota* as “a critique of life in present day Czechoslovakia,”¹⁹ the mutilated work of an underground author oppressed by communist totalitarianism. The Italian translation completely lacks this element while pro-

viding a commentary with the purpose of explaining at least the most important references to western as well as eastern philosophy, literature, religion—which the author massively condensed and juxtaposed in this text. The discrepancy between the text of the third *variation* and the text Corduas translated into Italian was revealed only when the translation of *Příliš blučná samota* was updated²⁰ on the basis of the text in *Sebrané spisy*, and Corduas, the author of the first Italian translation and editor of the second with Annalisa Cosentino, opted for maintaining both endings, appending the alternative one right after the end of the text.

Of course, the three translations from the 1980s found different terrains on a political, cultural and social level to take root in, and inevitably influenced the reception of Hrabal's works in the given area, yet there is no need here to further discuss the reasons that led Hrabal to becoming one of the *national* Czech authors and the most translated one in the world, since the 1960s.²¹ Intertextuality on a universal level is another fundamental character in the works of Bohumil Hrabal, another definite proof of the openness of his writing to any inspiration, from the common chit-chat in pubs and taverns and the tales of common people that made his characters so popular and brought the perception of his writing to a level of simplistic stereotypisation both home and abroad, to classic philosophy and mythology, ancient Asian thinking, through European and American modern and contemporary literature, art, philosophy.²²

ON THE basis of the example presented, following the evolution of the historical, textological and interpretative studies and reflections that have been trying to decipher the complex aspect of variation in the Czech author's work, and in addition to the rather autonomous course that thanks to this aspect some of his texts could take beyond the national borders, it is possible to draw some conclusions.

Firstly, it becomes evident that Hrabal constitutes an exceptional case as regards the process of writing in variants, a method that was certainly conditioned by the course of Czech history but was also a typical feature of his creation. Yet, what really is of capital importance, in my opinion, is that the research that has been clarifying many aspects of this subject since 1965 could not have taken place without an interdisciplinary approach. In Hrabal's case, this could only happen through time; the archive of his original typewritten texts, now hosted in great part at the Památník národního písemnictví (Museum of Czech Literature) in Prague, would have probably not existed without the efforts of Václav Kadlec, materialized in a nineteen volumes collection. In studying the literature written by Bohumil Hrabal, a competence in textology, history, literary history and criticism in Europe in 20th century proved to be necessary, while approaches privileging categorizing methodologies proved to be limited.²³ Boris Eichenbaum's words from 1925 come to my mind at this point as very actual: "We [the formalists] don't speak of or discuss methodology. We instead focus on some theoretical principles which are not mediated by any methodological nor aesthetic ready-made system, but come directly from researching the concrete material, examining its typical characters"²⁴ in order to "bring the concrete facts of poetry to a level of theoretical and historical awareness."²⁵ It is not my intention to support a comeback of the formalist method in its entirety, yet I believe that nowadays, given the tremendous

new possibilities of discovering and connecting data all over the world, the focus on 20th century literature products as “literary facts,” the search for material and the extraction of legitimate information from it could lead to a surprising understanding of the short century, during which phenomena of the artistic human expression found incredible ways to manifest themselves.



Notes

1. As regards my country of origin, I can refer to the recent contributions in *Romània Orientale*, 30, eds. Annalisa Cosentino and Angela Tarantino (Rome: Bagatto Libri, 2017), a monographic volume entirely dedicated to the forms of dislocation in the illiberal societies of 20th century. The *strange places* on which the volume's contributions pivot here are generated by a-normal—in the specific context of Central Europe then *normalised*—settings.
2. “Rozhovor s Bohumilem Hrabalem,” *Tvorba: Literatura–umění–kritika* (Prague) 1, 2 (1975): XIII. On the same page was printed Hrabal's short text “Rukověť pábitelského účně,” which was curiously taken out of the volume *Slavnosti sněženek* published in 1978. The interview in *Tvorba* was not signed, yet it is most probable that its authors were Karel Sýs and Jaromír Pelc, two poets who actively supported the regime during normalization. Among other declarations of disapproval, a very theatrical one was the public burning of some of Hrabal's books coordinated by the radical underground activist Ivan Martin Jirous. Hrabal put together the text of the interview and many written reactions to it in a volume titled *Sémantický smátek*, which circulated from 1986 in the samizdat edition *Pražská imaginace*.
3. For a detailed recollection of the publishing practices of Hrabal's works in the 1970s and 1980s as regards the intervention of editors on his original typewritten texts see Michal Bauer, “Lektorské zásahy do rukopisů Bohumila Hrabala vydávaných knižně v sedmdesátých a osmdesátých letech,” in *Život je jinde...? Česká literatura, kultura a společnost v sedmdesátých a osmdesátých letech dvacátého století* (Prague: Ústav pro českou literaturu AV ČR 2002), 117–128.
4. Michael Špirit, “Bohumil Hrabal v roce 2000,” *Kritická Příloha Revolver Revue* (Prague) 24 (2002): 44.
5. This subject is very broad and one could give almost every one of Hrabal's texts as an example. At the moment, I am focusing on three groups of textual variants that have been completed/published/manipulated and re-published in different forms, whose textological history ranges from 1950 to the Nineties: the poem “Krásná Poldi” was dated 1950 by the author, prepared for publication in 1970 but then discarded and printed only in 1990; its prose version bearing the same title had already been published in 1965. “Kain,” a short story dated 1949, was first published in 1990 too, while its longer textual variant *Ostře sledované vlaky* (Closely watched trains) appeared in 1965 and found immediate success. In 1968 a further manipulation titled “Legenda o Kainovi” was printed in the short stories and collage collection *Morytáty a legendy*. A different example as of timing and poetic manipulation is that of *Příliš blučná samota*, dated 1976 and first circulated as a samizdat publication in 1977, officially printed in 1989. The text circulated from 1986 in three *variations*, as the author named them, the *first* of which written in verse, the second in vernacular Czech, and the third in a literary refined language. A collage containing passages from this text was published in 1981 as *Kluby poezie*. About the process of variation as a textological and poetic problem and its features in Hrabal's works in the 1960s and 1970s, see Michael Špirit, “Úzavřený text—

- otevřené dílo,” in *Hrabaliana rediviva*, eds. Annalisa Cosentino, Milan Jankovič, and Josef Zumr (Prague: Filosofia, 2006).
6. Jan Lopatka, “Nebývalé problémy textologické,” in *Předpoklady tvorby*, ed. Michael Špirit (Prague: Triáda, 2010), 44. The essay analyses the two versions of Hrabal’s “Jarmilka,” the first written in 1952 and still a manuscript in 1969, and the second written and published in the volume of short texts *Pábitelé* (Prague: Mladá fronta, 1964). The translation from is always mine unless otherwise stated.
 7. *Ibid.*, 46. Lopatka is of course referring to the Stalinist period, yet his objection is directed to that same *system* in the 1960s.
 8. *Ibid.*, 44.
 9. *Sebrané spisy Bohumila Hrabala*, 19 vols., eds. Miroslav Červenka, Karel Dostál, Milan Jankovič, Václav Kadlec, Jan Lopatka, and Josef Zumr (Prague: Pražská imaginace, 1991–1997).
 10. Michael Špirit, “K edici Hrabalových Sebraných spisů,” *Česká literatura* (Prague) 41, 1 (1993): 108–109.
 11. Václav Kadlec, main editor and creator of the Complete Works project, started to conceive it in the mid–1980s and planned it as a 16 volumes (after increased to 19) complete collection that would answer the precise requirements of a critical edition. The project’s results didn’t totally match the plan especially as regards those requirements, yet it has indubitable value as a milestone in making the great part of Hrabal’s text available and accurately organized. For a commentary see, for example: Jirí Flaišman and Michal Kosák, “Nejisté ediční pole (I.),” *Kritická Příloha Revolver Revue* 21 (2001): 22–26; Špirit, “Bohumil Hrabal v roce 2000,” 29–48.
 12. Špirit, “Bohumil Hrabal v roce 2000,” 32–33. The first Hrabal book to be officially published was the volume of short prose *Perlička na dně* (Prague: Československý spisovatel, 1963).
 13. Špirit, “Uzavřený text—otevřené dílo,” 35.
 14. Umberto Eco, *Opera aperta* (Milan: Bompiani, 1962). It is useful to keep in mind that Eco’s work, crucial in many aspects for the expansion of the ways and possibilities of reflection upon the text and upon interpretation itself, took account among others of the aesthetics of Jan Mukařovský and of the Russian formalists (related to the concept of *device*) as “response-oriented,” thus recovering and recognizing a remarkable amount of connections between so-called Eastern and Western theories in a period that he himself, about twenty later, referred to as “the structuralist sixties.”
 15. Annalisa Cosentino, “Úvod,” in *Čtení o Bohumilu Hrabalovi*, ed. Annalisa Cosentino (Prague: Institut pro studium literatury, 2016), 12.
 16. Two recent contributions about the English and the Italian translations of *Příliš hluchná samota* are in *Slovo a Smysl* 29 (Prague: Karlova Univerzita, 2018): Adéla Ruferová, “Hrabalova *Příliš hluchná samota* v anglickém překladu,” 150–170; Gaia Seminara, “A few words on the Italian translation of *Příliš hluchná samota*,” 137–149.
 17. In the text “Zpráva o pitvě vlastní mrtvolý,” dated 1981, that accompanied the file of the three *variations*.
 18. The editor of *Sebrané spisy* traces detailed hypotheses in the commentary to the 9th volume of the collection, entirely dedicated to *Příliš hluchná samota*: Bohumil Hrabal, *Sebrané spisy*, vol. 9, *Hluchná samota*, ed. Milan Jankovič (Prague: Pražská imaginace, 1994).
 19. Bohumil Hrabal, *Too Loud a Solitude*, transl. Michael Henry Heim, in *Cross Currents: A Yearbook of Central Europe Culture* 5 (1986): 278–332 (p. 278).
 20. Bohumil Hrabal, *Opere scelte*, eds. Sergio Corduas and Annalisa Cosentino (Milan: I Meridiani Mondadori, 2003), 1167–1256.
 21. In the timespan 1965–1970 at least one of Hrabal’s books was published in translation (*Ostrře sledované vlaky*/Closely watched trains, 1965, was the most frequently translated) into English,

- Danish, Finnish, French, Dutch, Croatian, Italian, Hungarian, German, Polish, Swedish, Greek, Turkish. See Hrabal, *Sebrané spisy*, vol. 19, *Bibliografie, dodatky, rejstříky*, eds. Claudio Poeta and Václav Kadlec (Prague: Pražka imaginace, 1997), 276–301.
22. Jiří Pelán called a part of this perpetual intertextuality a “communication with literature” and named a few examples of Hrabal’s interlocutors: J. Hašek, L. Klíma, J. Deml, G. Ungaretti, P. Céline, A. Schopenhauer, F. Nietzsche, F. Kafka, A. Cechov, Babel’, S. Esenin, W. Faulkner, J. Kerouac, T. S. Eliot, Lao-tzu, Buddha. See Jiří Pelán, “Tentativo di ritratto,” in Hrabal, *Opere scelte*, XXXV–XCVI.
 23. For example, those focusing on the thesis of the reciprocal influence of biographical events on literature and vice versa as a technique of interpretation (Radko Pytlík, Tomáš Mazal and others).
 24. Boris Ejchenbaum, *Il giovane Tolstòj: La teoria del metodo formale*, transl. Maria Olsoufieva (Bari: De Donato, 1968), 139.
 25. *Ibid.*, 141.

Abstract

Re-defining the Literary Fact: The Example of Bohumil Hrabal

Bohumil Hrabal (1914–1997) is widely considered among the greatest innovators of 20th century literature. He belongs to the Czech literary canon and has been a celebrated writer all around the world since the 1970s. Given Hrabal’s long timespan of production—basically from the 1940s to his death—during decades of critical changes in Czechoslovakian history, politics, culture and society, both the reception and the scholarly approaches to his texts have several times featured misunderstandings and misinterpretations when dealing with the definition of many aspects of his writing. He did not choose exile, nor did he support the cultural policies of totalitarianism, he kept publishing his works despite being subjected to censorship, but also took part in the circulation of prohibited literature through samizdat editions. I will try to analyze some aspects of such a fluid and complex issue from what I think to be the strategic concepts of history, interpretation, and nationality in order to understand if it is possible to re-define the role and works of authors like Bohumil Hrabal in the study of twentieth century literature.

Keywords

Bohumil Hrabal, Czech literature, Central Europe, literary history, literary fact