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Translation Studies (From Theories of Literary Translation to a Paradigm of Modernity)

In a sense, modern translation theory originated in Central and Eastern Europe. And, contrary to the so-called ‘death of (modern literary) theory’, it is still alive and well. This counterpoint to Galin Tihanov’s reflections on the birth and present condition of modern literary theory (Tihanov 2004a, 2004b) does not seek to resuscitate polemics on the intellectual history of Modernism. Rather, it is intended to emphasise the overlapping and intertwined character of questions regarding the respective transitions of literary theory and translation studies towards the paradigm of modernity. Moreover, it is also intended to highlight the decisive stimulus provided by critical currents that originated in Eastern and Central European countries in the decades between the World Wars to later developments in Western literary and translation studies. Both the chronotope of modern translation theory and the dynamics of the process of its conception parallel those of modern literary theory. However, contrary to modern literary theory, which according to Tihanov’s post-mortem has been so thoroughly transformed and deeply absorbed (or perhaps dissipated) into new cultural discourses that it has lost its self-sufficiency and disciplinary distinctiveness, modern translation theory can be seen to have progressively succeeded in acquiring the status of a guiding science (*Leitwissenschaft*) for the humanities (Salevsky and Müller 2011, xv).

This chapter briefly examines the role of Eastern and Central European formalist and structuralist scholarly cultures in the transformations that led to the conceptual leap whereby translation came to be considered not simply as a form of intercultural communication, but as a quasi-organizational principle (a structural matrix) within the discourse of cultural studies.

1 The translational turn in cultural studies: A postulate or an on-going movement?

Indeed, the translational turn so boldly announced in cultural studies has established translation as a model for conducting inter- and transdisciplinary cultural research, and as the main analytical category for investigating the cross-cultural diffusion and historical transformation of art forms and art theories (see

Bachmann-Medick 2009, 2010, 238–283; 2016). Cultural historians now describe translation not only as one of the basic instruments of cultural self-reflection and self-criticism, but, indeed, as an over-arching methodological concept for the study of culture (Wendland 2012, 59–62). The question of the extent to which, in the process, modern cultural translation studies has managed to preserve “translation proper” as its point of reference would, of course, require a separate and much longer discussion that would go beyond the scope of this chapter (Dizdar 2009, 90). A second, no less important problem is the actual status of the translational turn within the contemporary humanities.

In her influential book *Cultural Turns: Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften* (2010; English translation: *Cultural Turns: New Orientations in the Study of Culture*, 2016), Doris Bachmann-Medick expresses a significant reservation regarding the impact of translation research on Western cultural studies discourses: “Such developments are showing with particular clarity how translational attitudes toward research are gaining a foothold in the social sciences and the study of culture – and how, through a honing of their systematic theoretical framework, they are making a breakthrough to become part of a true turn” (Bachmann-Medick 2016, 176). What was referred to nearly two decades ago as a mere postulate (Bassnett 1998), a preliminary intention (West 2000, 162), and an urgent task yet to be accomplished (Venuti 1998, 9) has now become a fact, primarily in the field of new comparative literature outlined in Emily Apter’s study *The Translation Zone* (Apter 2006). Indicating the growing demand for translations in the marketing of national literatures and in the global political arena, Apter proposed the term “global translation” as “another name for comparative literature” (Apter 2006, xi).

The pivotal turn towards translation is perhaps most clearly seen in contemporary comparative Modernism studies. As recent historiographic and methodological developments show, Modernism studies has undergone all the stages necessary for diagnosing a translational turn in a given discipline: (1) the expansion of the thematic field of research to encompass the issues of interlingual translation, (2) the increasing metaphorisation of the notion of translation in studies concerning intercultural encounters and various modalities of cultural contact, and finally, (3) the methodological refinement in the course of which the category of translation acquired a greater epistemological value and wider transdisciplinary application (Bachmann-Medick 2009, 4). In line with Bachmann-Medick, the translational turn in a given research field can be understood as a decisive shift in the field’s theoretical attention “in which the main points of focus are condensed into methodologically significant approaches of inquiry” (Bachmann-Medick 2008). Within Modernism studies, the new conceptual and terminological lexis derived from translation studies not only serve to identify and describe new objects of

inquiry, but also operate as analytical categories and methodological procedures which have the power to challenge our previous understandings of the subjects studied (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz 2016, 19–33).

Apart from comparative literature and Modernism studies, the increasing role of translation research has been an important part of the academic discussion in historiography, ethnology, cultural anthropology, and religious studies, particularly those focusing on a non-European history of Christianity (see e. g. Bachmann-Medick 2010, 260–272; 2006; Clifford 1994). Within these fields of scholarly inquiry, not only culture but also cultural studies itself are seen as “an ongoing translation endeavour due to the production of relationships and possibilities of connections between different social realms, groups, fields of agency, institutions, symbolic self-assertions, claims to power, etc.” (Bachmann-Medick 2008).

How is it that what was once a particular and limited problem for philology and linguistics came to be placed in another discursive order and became a major theoretical paradigm in modern cultural studies – even, according to some prescriptivists, for cultural theory tout court?

2 The birth of modern translation theory

There is certainly nothing new in stating that the beginnings of modern translation theory, like those of modern literary theory, can be traced back to the activities of the Russian formalists (see e. g. Gentzler 2001, 83; Tihanov 2004b, 61). The historical impact of Russian formalism, which developed into the structuralist functionalism of the Prague Linguistic Circle, on Western translation studies has already been acknowledged as having introduced both novel concepts and systematic methods to translation analysis. It is now generally agreed that, as Susan Bassnett writes in her landmark overview of Western translation theories, “[t]he most important advances in translation studies in the twentieth century derive from the groundwork done by groups in Russia in the 1920s and subsequently by the Prague Linguistic Circle and its disciples” (Bassnett 2002 [1980], 16). The passage of Russian formalist ideas into Western translation scholarship in the second half of the twentieth century took two major routes, which may be pictured as gradually combining to establish the modern paradigm of translation theory.

The first route by which Russian formalist thought penetrated Western translation studies was via the Czech and Slovak schools of translation studies. Zuzana Jettmarová has recently described this as “the lesser-known tradition” underpinning the evolution of “the current Western mainstream” (Jettmarová 2008, 15; 2017, 99; Snell-Hornby 2006, 20–23). As Edwin Gentzler points out, however, the

Czech and Slovak schools, whose ranks included such critics as Jiří Levý, Anton Popovič, and František Miko, evolved from Russian formalism both by adapting its seminal proposals to the sphere of translation theory and, more importantly, by consciously distancing themselves from some of its early tenets, such as the concept of literature as “an autonomous reality governed by its own regularity and more or less independent of contiguous spheres of culture” (Steiner 1984, 245; Gentzler 2001, 83). The contribution of the Czech and Slovak schools was so crucial to translation studies precisely because, as Gentzler observes, they “showed how Formalist structural laws are located in history and interact with at least two literary traditions simultaneously, that of the source culture and that of the receiving culture” (Gentzler 2001, 83). It is no exaggeration to say that the theoretical explorations and analytical practices of the Czech and Slovak schools led to the reformulation of literary translation as part of literary history and cultural discourse, and consequently paved the way for the deep paradigmatic change in translation studies that would later come to be known as the “cultural turn” in the 1980s (Snell-Hornby 2006, 47).

The second, far more widely recognized route by which Eastern European literary and cultural theories were transmitted to Western translation scholarship was via polysystem theory. This theoretical framework emanated principally from the works of two Israeli scholars, Itamar Even-Zohar and Gideon Toury, and their collaborators at the Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics in Tel Aviv (e.g. Zohar Shavit, Shelly Yahalom) from the late 1960s onwards. The polysystem theoreticians elaborated not only on the ideas of the Russian formalists and the Prague structuralist school, but also those of the Tartu semioticians, particularly Iurii Lotman (Even-Zohar 1990, 1–7; Dimić and Garstin 1988). The polysystem theoretical framework, together with its Eastern and Central European scholarly heritage, was itself reassessed and further extended into target-oriented and functionalist descriptive translation studies inaugurated by Gideon Toury (1982). This approach has been recognised as providing a wider cultural context than previously “fragmented philological studies” (Pym 1998, 14), and for giving modern translation studies fresh impetus.

Most importantly, in particular from the perspective of translation theory’s efforts to increase its integrity and self-consciousness as an autonomous discipline of critical investigation, descriptive translation studies awakened interest not only in the historical status of translations, but also in the historicity of translation concepts, which were established as legitimate objects of study in their own right. In his article on the “geopolitics of translation theory”, Daniel Simeoni emphasises the Russian impulses behind descriptive translation studies, specifying that its dynamic functionalist framework was, in fact, “an extension of the Russian tradition of European linguistics (Jakobson and Tynianov articulated

their notion of culture as a ‘system of systems’ as early as 1928) and from the poetic modernism of Shklovsky” (Simeoni 2008, 330). Edwin Gentzler goes so far as to make an explicit connection between Russian formalism’s distinct self-criticism and self-conscious attention to historical issues, on one hand, and the historical and methodological self-awareness of descriptive translation studies, on the other. Gentzler writes that this incorporation of history into their models has “helped translation studies scholars apply theory inwardly as well as externally, enabling them to address problems as raised by their own and other fields of investigation” (Gentzler 2001, 82).

3 From the peripheries to the centre

Both the potential for methodological adaptability and conceptual flexibility have enabled translation studies to shift successively from the periphery of linguistic and literary studies to the very centre of modern humanities research. Its unique position in current cultural discourse can be attributed not only to its ability to engage in meaningful dialogue with a range of disciplines, and to its ‘osmotic capacity’ to absorb and adapt new tendencies in cultural research, but also to its superb collection of analytical terms and concepts, which provide the tools for a thorough exploration of contemporary multicultural and transdisciplinary issues (Bolecki 2009, 6–7). Surveying this repertoire of analytical instruments is perhaps the best way to acknowledge how much modern translation theory owes to Eastern and Central European formalist and structuralist schools of linguistic and literary thought. The major theoretical assumptions of these schools have been neatly absorbed and incorporated as dilemmas to be resolved within modern translation studies. Iurii Tynianov’s and Roman Jakobson’s theses on the study of literature and language (Tynianov and Jakobson 1978 [1928]) provided a firm foundation for polysystem scholars, who foregrounded the notion of literature as a differentiated, dynamic, and hierarchically structured conglomerate of systems characterized by internal oppositions and abrupt shifts between ‘primary’ (innovative) and ‘secondary’ (conservative), ‘canonized’ and ‘non-canonized’, ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ models, styles and genres. Translation thus came to be viewed in terms of its close correlation with both the surrounding literary polysystem and with larger cultural systems, as an entity embedded in the ideological and socio-economic structures of society (Even-Zohar 1990, 1–7; Dimić and Garstin 1988).

Historians of translation studies have consistently identified the most significant contribution Russian formalism made to modern (i. e. cultural) translation theory to be that it taught translation scholars to think in terms of dynamic corre-

lations between literature and non-literary series while switching between literature-immanent methods and cultural criticism. “The lineage of Formalism from Leningrad to Tel Aviv”, writes Else Vieira, “stresses that the function of each work is its correlation with other works, with the whole of literature, and, in turn, with other cultural series” (Vieira 2000, 319). Of particular relevance here is Tynianov and Jakobson’s concept of a synchronic literary system which draws works of art from foreign-language literatures into its systemic functioning and thus inevitably triggers changes in the characteristics of the transferred original according to the target literary system (Tynianov and Jakobson 1972 [1928], 389–391; Salevsky and Müller 2011, 49). It is often observed that, within a given literary culture, translations may either constitute a separate subsystem with distinctive characteristics, or function as an integral part of the adapting indigenous systems. They may either grow into the system’s centre, or remain at its peripheries. Finally, they may be used either as “primary” polemical instruments to undermine the dominant poetics or they may support and reinforce the prevailing conventions in the target literature (see e. g. Hermans 2014 [1985], 11).

The formalist-structural concept of a dynamic system set in motion by internal oppositions has repeatedly been applied as a means for expanding and structuring historical reflections on the functioning of translated literature within a target literary culture. For example, in her 1982 article on the evolution of Polish twentieth-century narrative prose, Barbara Sienkiewicz clearly associated the deautomatizing function of Hemingway translations with the emergence of a “new style of writing” in the target literary culture:

In a given literary situation it [the deautomatizing function of a translation] may be taken up by original writers in the culture which has assimilated the translation and developed into a new stylistic convention in the translator’s native literature. This means a shift in the system of norms and rules for original writing. (Sienkiewicz 1982, 295)

Similarly, distinct echoes of Tynianov’s concept of literary evolution can be heard in André Lefevere’s concept of polarity in the evolution of translated literature. The Russian formalists argued that the moment an artistic genre or a trend becomes automatized, it provokes a counter-reaction which is the driving force behind literary evolution. Lefevere, one of the founders and principal members of the Manipulation School of translation studies, writes similarly that “systems develop according to the principle of polarity, which holds that every system eventually evolves its own countersystem [...], and according to the principle of periodicity, which holds that all systems are liable to change” (Lefevere 1992, 38).

Their common roots in Russian formalism contributed to significant convergences between polysystem theory and Polish structuralist translation studies, which likewise made use of the dichotomy between ‘innovative’ and ‘conserv-

ative' translations to explain the evolution of the target literary system. Edward Balcerzan (1967, 66; 1998, 96–97) argued that while conservative (redundant) translations strengthen the target literary system by incorporating the source text into the canon of aesthetic conventions and stylistic norms in the target culture, innovative translations subvert them and thus make novelty possible. As with their influence on Czech and Slovak structuralist schools of translation and on Western European descriptive, target-oriented, systemic translation studies, the role of the formalist ideas in the development of the Polish structuralist school of translation has been duly recognized by literary critics (Balcerzan 1968, 65; Legeżyńska 1999, 198; Barańczak 2004, 35–36; Rajewska 2007, 34; Kaczorowska 2011, 41–43; Bończa Bukowski and Heydel 2015, 44–45). However, while Western translation studies in the 1980s paid particular attention to the literary system's correlations with sociocultural systems (e.g. the manipulist notions of patronage and ideology as governing the production and reception of translations in a given target culture [Lefevere 1992]), Polish, Czech and Slovak literary translation scholars predominantly emphasised issues of historical and descriptive poetics.

Their increased concern with the materiality of artistic language (i.e. the focus on the linguistic medium itself) led Polish, Czech, and Slovak translation theorists to consider the 'constructedness' of both source and target texts, and triggered attempts to launch a 'poetics of artistic translation' as a separate discipline, with its own theoretical language and analytical rules, distinct from the poetics of original literary works. One of the most influential Polish translation scholars, Edward Balcerzan, articulated this theoretical position alongside the Slovak theorist Anton Popovič in 1971: "In order to acquire knowledge of the artistic translation, one needs to have special tools which should be a subject of interest of a separate discipline: the poetics of translation" (Balcerzan 1998, 18; Popovič 1971). The theoretical inquiries of Polish, Czech, and Slovak translation theorists into the methods and tools of translation analysis were accompanied by a profusion of analytical studies devoted to the 'distinctive' literary character of source and target texts. Historiographers of Polish translation studies have taken particular interest in the career of Stanisław Barańczak's notion of a "semantic dominant", defined as "the primacy of a given element within the structure of the work which constitutes a more or less perceptible key to the entirety of its senses" (Barańczak 2004, 37). Close to the central formalist concept of the "dominant" as "the focusing component of a work of art" which "rules, determines, and transforms the remaining components" (Jakobson 1971, 105), it has also been compared to Shklovskii's "device" (*priëm*), Tynianov's "constructive principle," and the "semantic gesture" of Jan Mukařovský (Dziadek 1995, 13).

4 The constructivist model of literary translation

It is perhaps significant that more than a few Eastern and Central European structuralist translation scholars were both writers and translators as well as theorists of poetic language and literature (both original and in translation) – as were a considerable number of Russian formalists. It was these writers and critics who launched and developed one of the most popular and influential “illusionist techniques” (Levý 2011, 19–20) in modernist literary translation, which may best be described as “Constructivist translation”, as I have proposed elsewhere (Brzostowska-Tereszkiewicz 2016, 113–128). The theoretical basis for the constructivist approach to translation was again informed by the writings of the Russian formalists, as well as by Eastern and Central European structuralist schools (both the Prague structuralists and the Tartu semioticians). In terms borrowed from the Russian formalists and the Prague structuralists, constructivist translation aimed to lay bare the devices (*obnazhenie priëma*) of the source text, recognizing and extracting the dominant (*dominant*) of its construction and putting the same constructive factor (*konstruktivnyi faktor*) into effect in the target-language text. Formal devices were also assigned semantic functions. Thus, the formal construction of the source text determined the procedures and requirements used for the translation. The key was to recreate the original’s dominant in the target poem, while the original’s ‘minor architectonic’ of subjugated elements could be (and most often was) subjected to various changes deemed necessary from the artistic point of view. The reconstruction of the original’s dominant in translation usually entailed significant reconfiguration, reordering and subjugation of the remaining target text’s architectonic elements. It was precisely by this structural gesture that the deautomatizing potential of translation was thought to manifest itself most clearly.

The constructivist modernist model of literary translation, distinctive for its formal rigor and specialism in theoretical poetics, had already received its most self-consistent articulations in the translation activities of the Russian formalists. Iurii Tynianov’s 1927 and 1934 translations of Heinrich Heine’s poetry are exemplary in this context. Having recognized the constructive features and characteristic stylistic devices of Heine’s satires and lyrical poems, Tynianov not only recreated the formal structure of the translated texts, but made it more visible to the target readers. As German Ritz observes, in Tynianov’s renderings of the German poet, “the dominant structure has been worked out even more strongly than in the original” (Ritz 1981, 404; Hodgson 2013). The same principal tenets of translational Constructivism were adhered to strictly in the 1919 Czech translation of Velimir Khlebnikov’s *Sestry-molnii* (*2-oi parus*, ‘*Strastnaia ploshchad*’) (*The Sisters-Lightnings* [*The 2nd Sail*, ‘*The Lord’s Passion Square*’]) by Roman Aljagrov

(Roman Jakobson) (Jakobson 2012, 238). It should also be noted that Jakobson's theorem of the untranslatability of poetry formulated in his classical article "On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" (Jakobson 1959, 238) strictly corresponds with the basic tenets of the Constructivist approach to translation. No less illustrative examples of the constructivist mode can be found in the translational work of those Polish structuralists who themselves were also linguistic poets, e. g. Balcerzan and Stanisław Barańczak. The Polish version of Aleksei Kruchenykh's radical phonetic and morphological experiment *Zaum'*: *Glukhonemoi* (*Transrational Language: The Deaf-Mute*) from *Zamaul' III* (1919) translated by Balcerzan as *Zaum. Gluchoniemy* (Dąbrowski et al. 1971, 381) is perhaps the most accomplished constructivist experiment in translation.

5 Drawing on the methodological vocabularies

The rediscovery of the work of the Russian formalists and the increasing focus on the problems of linguistics, stylistics, and poetics in literary studies in the second half of the twentieth century also led to a refinement of critical methodology in the field of translation scholarship. It might even be argued that Russian formalism, along with Czech structural poetics and linguistics, helped translation studies scholars to bridge the gap between the disciplines of linguistics and literary criticism. Borrowing such key concepts from Russian formalist theory as (de)automatization ((de)avtomatizatsia), defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) and literariness (*literaturnost'*) enabled translation studies scholars to not only qualify a text's relation to its (source/target) cultural tradition and to situate it within the evolution of literary forms, but also to focus on the "innovative", "strange," and "distinctly literary" features of the original/translation (Gentzler 2001, 82; Balcerzan 1998, 104–106). It has been suggested that Lawrence Venuti's concept of foreignization bears much resemblance to the Russian formalists' notion of *ostranenie*, rather than providing a label for novel poststructuralist devices, as the American translation theorist claims (Gentzler 2001, 42; Koskinen 2002, 52; 2012, 16). An interesting parallel also links Philip E. Lewis' concept of abusive fidelity to Shklovskii's focus on *defamiliarization*. As Joseph Fitzpatrick observes:

If for Shklovsky poetic use defamiliarizes language and plot defamiliarizes story, then Lewis' abusive translation seeks to repeat this defamiliarization in the translated text – while simultaneously turning the technique on the act of translation itself, a second defamiliarization that draws attention to the conventions by which we forget the foreignness (and, of course, the absence) of the original text. (Fitzpatrick 2007, 195)

Indeed, it is to the Russian formalists that modern literary and translation scholars owe not only the concept of literature (and literary translation) as an autonomous domain for theoretical investigation, but also the institutional (i.e. functionalist) definition of literature (and literary translation) (Nycz 2002, 44–45; Tihanov 2004a, 62). In the field of Western translation scholarship, a strong concern for literature as an institution, an “established and structured pattern of behaviour or of relationships that is accepted as a fundamental part of a culture” (Dimić 1993, 152), was already pivotal to polysystem theory. Viewing “translation as an institution” (Hermans 1997, 3) marked a methodological and theoretical watershed. Translation was no longer defined in terms of the supposedly immanent, stable, ahistorical, and transcultural nature of its ideal realization, but instead according to historically-situated and culturally-specific institutional criteria for gaining the status of a translation in the target culture (Toury 1980, 14, 37, 43–45; 1982, 27). Thus, in a paradigm shift, translation was redefined as a socially determined mode of language use, institutionalized in the boundaries of a given historical and cultural community, situationally contextualized and governed by culture-specific rules and conditions. Perhaps the most important corollary of redefining translation as a culturally distinct discursive practice is the translational turn that can be currently observed in cultural studies, which has established translation as a key analytical category for intercultural exchange.

6 Towards metatheoretical developments

In this context, it is notable that the impact of the Russian formalists on Western translation studies can also be detected on the level of metatheoretical reflection. According to Maria Tymoczko’s observation, modern metonymic approaches to translation highlight the significance of “the creation of connections, contiguities and contextures in and through translation” (Tymoczko 1999, 9) while receiving strong theoretical support from contemporary cultural theoretical discourses. Tymoczko’s concept of metametonymics rests on Roman Jakobson’s distinction between the ‘metaphoric’ and the ‘metonymic’, as the two antipodal yet mutually reinforcing modes of arrangement involved in any linguistic utterance. The American scholar reconstructs the history of Western translation theory in terms of an opposition between metaphorical and metonymic translation discourses, in which ‘metaphor’ is described as a domain of resemblance, selection, and substitution, and ‘metonymy’ as the domain of contiguity, combination, and contexture (Jakobson 1956, 112). As Tymoczko observes, translation has long been modelled primarily as a metaphoric process of selection and substitution based

on resemblance. As a consequence, translation has been constantly devalued, as a merely derivative, servile, inferior and mechanical activity of word replacement rather than as a metonymic process of creating contiguities and textures (Tymoczko 1999, 279–280). The chief advocate of translation as a mode of experimental creative writing, Clive Scott, proposes a radical solution: “The essential connection between translation and creative writing lies here: the literariness of the ST [source text] is not a given, is subject to history. Translation (particularly if ‘straight’) is likely to be instrumental in the erosion of the ST’s literariness, unless the translator sets out to incorporate the ST into the literature of translation and to re-imagine its literariness by his/her own agency as a reader/writer” (Scott 2006, 116–117). It was the cultural turn in translation studies – and, one could add, the subsequent translational turn in cultural studies – that enabled metonymic criticism and metonymic modes of translational creativity.

7 From the East to the West and back again

Remarkably, a number of Western translation theories which were originally derived from or based directly on Russian formalist ideas (e. g. polysystem theory, descriptive translation studies, the Manipulation School) are now being re-introduced to contemporary Eastern European translation discourse as vehicles for concepts and approaches associated with the cultural turn in the humanities. In a manner symptomatic of such re-absorption of Westernized Russian theory into Eastern European translation scholarship, Veronika Razumovskaia combines Tynianov’s 1924 notion of literature as a “dynamic speech construction” (Tynianov 2014, 36) with Lefevere and Bassnett’s idea of cultural “textual grids” (Lefevere and Bassnett 1998, 5; Razumovskaya 2011, 207). In a similar vein, key theoretical concepts in translation studies have been re-filtered through the Russian theoretical experience in Natalia Galeyeva’s reflections on translation in culture. Her statement delineating the methodological tenets of the Tver School of translation studies shows a significant renegotiation of methodological frameworks and allegiances, resulting from the asymmetry of Western and Eastern European scholarly cultures. Galeyeva cites her influences as including Susan Bassnett, James Holmes, and André Lefevere – commenting that these authors’ approach, usually thought of as target-oriented cultural translation research, is, “as a matter of fact, hermeneutic” (Galeyeva 2006, 25) and, as such, fully comparable to Georgii Shchedrovitskii’s methodological research, Georgii Bogin’s Tver School, and Victor Litvinov’s Piatigorsk School of translation studies.

Reiterating the main arguments in favour of Eastern European origins of modern translation theory, the Brazilian translation scholar Else Vieira recounts in the *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation* into English how the study of words as operational units moved on to methods that drew on cultural history and theories of cultural interaction through translation. These, she notes, “evolved from Even-Zohar’s polysystem theory (1979) and stemmed from Leningrad Formalism (Iakubinskii, Shklovskii, Ėikhenbaum, Zhirmunskii, Tynianov, Tomashevskii, etc.), Czech Structuralism, Russian semiotics of culture, mainly Lotman, and recent systems theory” (Vieira 2000, 319). Yet, such seemingly straightforward accounts (including, perhaps, that given in the present chapter) of the Eastern and Central European provenance of Western cultural translation ideas should not obscure the fact that, as Jettmarová observes, “some representations are taken from secondary sources and/or based on one article alone, [and] some traditions are missing” (Jettmarova 2017, 99). This incomplete appropriation of Central-Eastern European scholarly cultures in Western humanities may be explained not only in terms of geopolitical issues and linguistic inaccessibility, but also by the significant asymmetry in scholarly research styles. It is the well-known methodological and conceptual differences between Russian and American formalisms (e.g. Thompson 1971), Slavic structuralist thought and Western European structuralism (e.g. Bojtar 1985) as well as between Western European and Eastern European variants of hermeneutics (e.g. Emerson and Medzhibovskaya 2010) which can be considered particularly relevant for the discussion on Eastern and Central European (pervasive yet deficient) theoretical influence on Western translation studies. All these factors have contributed to unidimensional and simplistic stereotypes with regard to Czech and Slovak schools of translation as well as Russian formalism in Western scholarship (see e.g. Ulicka 2003, 7; Jettmarova 2017).

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