

Translating Readings On Foreign Literary Theory in 1980s Czechoslovakia¹

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Abstract. Situated at the intersection of literary theory and translation theory, the paper deals with the history of foreign literary theory in 1980s Czechoslovakia. Focusing on both the published works and the archival legacy of Czech literary scholar Vladimír Macura (1945–99), it studies the peculiar intertwining of reading, commentary, and translation involved in the reception of foreign language theory from Russian Formalism to North American deconstruction, the translation of which had been hindered for ideological or political reasons, as well as its mediation through Macura’s publication of paraphrasing excerpts in his 1988 “Guidebook to International Literary Theory”.

Keywords: history of theory, translation theory, translation of theory, Czechoslovakia

Theory in translation

When it comes to the history of literary theory, since the 1980s, *space and spatial mobility* have been the dominant heuristics. This goes back, of course, to Edward Said’s autobiographically tinged 1983 essay “Traveling Theory”,² but also to definitions of “theory” that were coined at roughly the same time, and suggests that we understand theoretical thinking as a product of physical or intellectual displacement. One of these definitions is provided by German philosopher Hans Blumenberg, who collects several hundred versions of the ancient legend of Thales of Miletus, a Greek astronomer living in seventh century B.C. in Asia Minor. Studying these texts, Blumenberg reconstructs what he calls a “protohistory of Theory”. The legend’s narrative goes as follows: In the middle of the night, Thales leaves the house to watch the starry skies. Completely immersed in his observations, he stumbles and falls into a cistern. Unable to climb out of it by himself he calls for help. After a while, a Thracian

1 The research for this paper was supported by the Institute for Czech Literature of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic (Zdeněk Pešat stipend, September 2019).

2 Said, “Traveling Theory,” 226–47. Cf. also Said, “Traveling Theory Reconsidered,” 436–52.

maid comes by and jokingly calls him a “theoretician”, thus a person who “while he might passionately want to know all things in the universe, the things in front of his very nose and feet were unseen by him.”³ Blumenberg, on one hand, reads this as a story about the birth of theory from the ridicule of its contestants. On the other hand, though, he treats it as a narrative of displacement or, in his words “a shift in the direction of attention.”⁴ A more anthropological version of this is offered by James Clifford, who traces the word “theory” back to an ancient Greek practice: the polis sends out a man who travels to the neighboring city where he is supposed to witness a religious ceremony. Upon his return, he reports to his fellow citizens and relates what he has observed to their own religious life. Thus, as Clifford writes, “[t]heory is a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance.”⁵ This has led to authors such as Galin Tihanov narrating the history of literary theory as a series of westward displacements: born in early twentieth century Eastern and Central Europe (Russia, Bohemia, Poland, and Hungary) and highly shaped by exiled scholars such as Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, Ingarden, or Lukács, it first migrated to Western Europe and especially to France after World War II, and then to the US in the late 1960s.⁶ As some see it, this makes everything that has since reached Eastern and Central Europe in terms of literary theory, essentially a “reimport.”⁷

When we take a closer look at the narratives about the origins of theory mentioned above, however, it becomes obvious that space and spatial mobility are not their only constitutive elements. The ancient herald’s task isn’t limited to traveling to the neighboring polis and witnessing its religious life, but also includes retrospective reporting on what he has observed; thus, it clearly includes an element of verbalization. And when the Thracian maid hears Thales’ cry for help and spots him at the bottom of the cistern, she doesn’t ridicule him as a “theoretician” right away, but only “upon learning the circumstances of the accident from none other than the unfortunate man himself.”⁸ Here, too, the theoretical is connected to an element of the semantic. “Theory”, as I argue, is not only to be thought of as a matter of physical displacement or epistemological distance but also—and perhaps even primarily—as a practice of speech.

3 Blumenberg, *Laughter*, 6.

4 Blumenberg, *Laughter*, 21.

5 Clifford, “Notes on Travel,” 1.

6 Cf. Tihanov, *Birth and Death*.

7 This is one of the central premises of a handbook project which is currently under way at the Universities of Warsaw and Tübingen. See e.g. Schahadat, Mrugalski, and Wutsdorff, “Modern Literary Theory,” 231–38. For an even more acute focus on the spatial dimensions of literary theory cf. also Ulicka, “Przestrzenie Teorii,” 7–26.

8 Blumenberg, *Laughter*, 22.

In light of this, I suggest we rethink the history of literary theory in terms of applying what I would like to call a *translation paradigm*. This does not mean neglecting or belittling instances of physical or textual mobility, quite the contrary, but it suggests no longer treating them as the main heuristic and starting to think of the history of literary theory primarily as a history of processes of linguistic mediation. Methodologically, this entails that rather than focusing on traveling and migrating scholars, we start to study microprocesses such as reading, translating, and, eventually, writing theory.

Keeping this in mind, this paper focusses on the first of these practices, namely on *reading*. It thereby relies on a notion of reading—and translation—that is inspired by a quote from J. Hillis Miller:

A work is, in a sense, “translated”, that is, displaced, transported, carried across, even when it is read in its original language by someone who belongs to another country and another culture or to another discipline. In my own case, what I made, when I first read it, of Georges Poulet’s work and, later on, of Jacques Derrida’s work was no doubt something that would have seemed more than a little strange to them, even though I could read them in French. Though I read them in their original language, I nevertheless “translated” Poulet and Derrida into my own idiom. In doing so I made them useful for my own work in teaching and writing about English literature within my own particular American university context.⁹

The translation of theory, Miller suggests, begins long before a professional translator is hired and a second language text is created, let alone published: it starts with reading theory that has been conceived in different historical, cultural, or linguistic contexts than the ones in which the reading takes place. And it is especially acute when the theoretical text in question happens to be in a language other than the one (or ones) the reader is most familiar with.

The material my analysis draws on is the work of Vladimír Macura (1945–99), a Czech literary scholar who is best known for his advocacy for the works of Yuri Lotman¹⁰ and his semiotic studies on the culture of the nineteenth century Czech National Revival¹¹ and socialist Czechoslovakia.¹² In addition, he was a prolific translator of Estonian literature and, in the last decade of his life, also became known as a

9 Miller, “Border Crossing,” 207.

10 Cf. Winner, “Czech and Tartu-Moscow semiotics,” 158–80; Wutsdorff, “Jurij Lotmans Kultursemiotik,” 289–306. On Lotman’s role for Macura’s historical as well as theoretical notions of translation see Förster “Übertragungscharakter und Semiosphäre.”

11 Macura, *Znamení zrodu*; Macura, *Český sen*. Together with a series of unpublished materials, both books have been posthumously republished in Macura, *Vybrané spisy Vladimíra Macury I*.

12 Macura, *Šťastný věk*.

novelist; parts of his voluminous historical tetralogy *Ten, který bude* (The One Who Will Be) were awarded the prestigious State Prize for literature in 1988.¹³ In 2010, a collection of his essays on nineteenth century topics as well as on Czech culture of the 1990s was published in English translation.¹⁴

In addition to Macura's published works, this paper also draws on his archival legacy in both analogue and digital form. The former is in the possession of the literary archive at the Museum for Czech Literature in Prague (LA PNP), the latter is preserved in the form of a hard-disc copy of Macura's personal computer.¹⁵ The archival material is very difficult to date. This is partly due the fact that Macura's archives still await cataloging, but partly also to the fact that Macura, when shifting from writing by hand and typing to working on a computer in the early 1990s, copied large parts of his already existing personal archive, while disposing of the paper originals.¹⁶ Thus, it is not always possible to tell whether certain archival documents originate from before or after 1989. However, as recent studies on similar material from Eastern Germany suggest, political crossroads rarely match those of intellectual history. While, politically speaking, 1989 marks a key historical moment, in terms of History of Theory, the effects of earlier conditions often continue for at least some time, whether because of sudden economic and institutional insecurities or because the development of academic and intellectual networks usually requires several years of intense contact.¹⁷ Hence, within certain limits, it seems legitimate to make analytical use of the electronic archive even with regard to the 1980s.

Translating readings

Contrary to what might be expected, during what authorities euphemistically called the “normalization” period after the suppression of the Prague Spring and Czechoslovakia's invasion by Warsaw Pact troops, scholarly discourse in the 1970s

13 Macura, *Ten který bude*. Republished in Macura, *Vybrané spisy Vladimíra Macury* 5.

14 Macura, *Mystifications of a Nation*.

15 I am indebted to dr. Naděžda Macurová of the Literary Archive at the Museum of Czech Literature for her kind permission to study her husband's archival legacy. I also wish to express my gratitude to Pavel Janoušek of the Institute for Czech Literature of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, for granting me access to Macura's electronic archive (EA).

16 Cf. Janoušek, *Ten, který byl*, 37. In the early 1990s, Macura used T602, a text editor developed by Czech computing enthusiasts in the late 1980s which, unlike its Western counterparts, was compatible with the use of Slavic languages including their many diacritics. When it came to naming folders and files, T602 did not allow more than eight characters. Around 1996 he eventually switched to a Microsoft Word editor. Due to this, earlier files from Macura's electronic archive can only be reproduced as screenshots.

17 Cf. Boden, *So viel Wende*.

and 1980s was, in fact, surprisingly heterogeneous. However, areas of discourse varied greatly not only with regard to content but also to their respective degree of formal officiality. This especially applied to literary studies, including literary theory. During the liberalization period of the 1960s, the field had seen a short but prolific renaissance of domestic structuralist traditions, but also a sudden increase of foreign theory being translated, published, and discussed. An example of this is, within only two years, the publication of several works by Roland Barthes in Czech—among them the studies *Le Degré zéro de l'écriture* and *Éléments de la sémiologie*¹⁸ as well as several of his essays.¹⁹ This resulted in a short yet intense dialogue between Czech and French structuralism.²⁰ After 1968, however, university departments and literary criticism reverted to teaching concept of the literary established in the late 1940s and early 1950s under the label of “socialist realism”, while, at the same time, perpetuating frames of national literature that had emerged in the nineteenth century.²¹ At the same time, samizdat publications and unofficial seminars held in private apartments tried to continue the (neo)structuralist achievements of the 1960s; as Macura himself would later write, this dissident aura contributed to a certain “petrification” of domestic structuralism²² which did not exactly facilitate the acceptance of both foreign and non- or even post-structuralist theory.

Macura's case is interesting, since he worked at the Institute for Czech and World Literature (later called the Institute for Czech and Slovak, and, after 1993, simply Institute for Czech Literature) at the national Academy of Science from 1969 on; from 1993 until his death he served as its director. Similarly to other socialist countries, such as the GDR,²³ and, to a certain extent, the Soviet Union,²⁴ within the Academy of Science literary scholars enjoyed a double advantage: being outside the pedagogical realm of university-based philology, on one hand, their work was much less conspicuously monitored—they weren't in a position to do political harm to future generations, so to speak—; while, on the other hand, they were materially better equipped than, e.g., the editors of samizdat periodicals. Thus, as we will see in the course of this paper, even if the Academy was far from giving literary scholars theoretical and methodological carte blanche, it left at least some possibilities to test grounds for unconventional or even potentially provocative theoretical discourse.

18 Barthes, *Nulový stupeň rukopisu*.

19 For a comprehensive overview and bibliography of Barthes' works in Czech translation see Förster, “Aus der Philologie ein Fest machen,” 217–20.

20 E.g. Kačer, “Mukařovského ‘sémantické gesto,’” 593–97; Levý, *Západní literární věda a estetika*; Grygar, *Pařížské rozhovory o strukturalismu*.

21 Cf. Šámal, “Literární kritika za času ‘normalizace,’” 149–84; and Andreas, *Vybírat a posuzovat*.

22 Macura, “Lotmanova ‘jiná’ dekonstrukce,” 10–11.

23 Cf. Boden, *Soviet Wende*; and Boden, *Modernisierung ohne Moderne*.

24 Cf. Waldstein, *Soviet Empire of Signs*, 22–23, 77–83.

When it comes to individual works of literary theory published in the West, it is almost impossible to trace how they materially found their way into 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia. Some research has been done on Cold War book mailing programs such as the one implemented by the CIA in the early 1950s, but it focuses mostly on literary, pedagogical, and theological material;²⁵ and even within studies particularly focused on unofficial and semiofficial scholarly activities, there is very little detail, for example, about individual authors or titles.²⁶ In the case of Vladimír Macura, there is considerable evidence that he deliberately sought out the very few occasions when he could make contact with scholars from both Western and other socialist countries. As early as 1972 and despite having very little experience in the field, he started to teach Czech as a foreign language at an annual academic summer school for Slavic languages. In his yet unpublished memoirs *Dopijem a půjdem* (Let's finish drinking and leave)²⁷, he mentions the considerable number of German, American, Scandinavian, Russian, Estonian—and in one case even Japanese—colleagues he befriended within the “nepřičetně liberáln[í]” [“crazily liberal”] atmosphere of these summer weeks. As he writes, many of them would later privately mail him foreign books or journals. As I assert, the fact that accounts like these do not offer any detailed information such as individual titles or authors' names, argues in favor of a redirection of our attention from traditional paradigms of intellectual history and the history of theory such as the physical mobility of individual scholars to more textually bound factors such as reading and translation.

Despite being, without doubt, the most basic activity of scholarly work in general and of transfers of theory in particular, reading is also one of the hardest to track, especially when it comes to historical and political circumstances like those depicted above. What makes Macura and his archival legacy such an interesting and valuable case is the fact that he was, throughout his scholarly career, not only an avid reader but also a habitual and very prolific note-taker. As his second wife, Naděžda Macurová—herself a scholar and translator, although of romance literatures—says, this practice was a constant accompaniment of almost every other activity Macura engaged in:

25 Cf. Reisch, *Hot Books*. One example quoted by Reisch are works by the Czech emigrant scholar René Wellek. Cf. Reisch, *Hot Books*, 383.

26 Cf. e.g. Day, *Velvet Philosophers*.

27 Initiated in 1990, *Dopijem a půjdem* was planned as the collective mémoires of a close circle of friends, including, besides Macura, writer Petr Kovařík, literary critics Vladimír Novotný and Jan Lukeš, historian Petr Čornej, Polish studies scholar Jana Hloušková, and Macura's later biographer Pavel Janoušek. The part written by Macura is by far the most voluminous and coherent. Cf. Janoušek, *Ten, který byl*, 34–35. Macura's part is found in his electronic archive, file PERSONAL_PAMETI.

For Vladimír, writing was enviably easy. He was able to fully concentrate and nothing could disturb him, not even household noises such as a television or a washing machine. I was in awe of how easily he mastered everyday life with all its sorrows and duties which, for me, often presented an unsurmountable obstacle to creative work and held me back from engaging in my own scholarly activities. I remember, how, for example, he cooked, entertained our young son, and ran the washing machine, while, all at the same time and fully at ease, working on his typewriter (and later his computer) or made excerpts from this or that source. [...] I also recall how, in a packed public transportation vehicle, acquaintances of ours ran into him, as he was undisturbedly annotating a text [...], while, with the other hand, clinging to a handle and carrying a stuffed bag over his shoulder.²⁸

Macura's archives contain countless reading notes on literary texts, historical sources, critical and historiographical studies, but also—and most interestingly—on works of Theory. They come in many different forms and shapes: as handwritten notes on the reverse of manuscript sheets, institutional correspondence, electricity bills, or children's drawings (Figure 1) as well as in electronic files (Figures 2–4). While many of the handwritten notes consist of simple scribbled quotes or rudimentary bibliographical information, their typewritten and especially electronic counterparts often contain extensive excerpts or summaries of a text's content, quotes or personal commentaries, as well as detailed bibliographical data and references for further reading. This meticulous systematicity also extends to their organization and storage: while some of the handwritten and most of the typewritten notes are either kept in notebooks or card files, the electronic notes are stored in folders organized either by key terms or by authors' names.²⁹

Thematically, Macura's theoretical readings form three distinct groups: 1) Semiotics and semiology, 2) Structuralism and poststructuralism, and 3) cultural and political studies; most of the titles in this last group relate to Macura's individual book projects on the Czech National Revival and Stalinist culture.

28 “Vladimír psal naviděňhodně snadno. Dokázal se plně soustředit a nerušilo ho nic, ruch v domácnosti, zapnutá televize, pračka. Zašla jsem nad tím, jak snadno umí ten každodenní provoz se všemi starostmi a povinnostmi, které pro mě často byly nepřekonatelnou překážkou pro nějakou tvůrčí práci, spojit s vlastní odbornou aktivitou. Pamatuji si, jak třeba vařil, staral se o zábavu našeho tehdy malého syna, měl puštěnou pračku a přitom v naprosté pohodě ‚datlil‘ do stroje (později do počítače) nebo si dělal výpisky či tak něco. [...] Tak si pamatuji, že ho známi potkávali v přečpaných dopravních prostředcích, jak visel za jednu ruku na držadle, přes rameno narvanou brašnu, a nerušeně [...] si poznámkoval čtený text.” Správcová and Jareš, “Nerušeně,” 1.

29 E.g. the files KARTOTEK, KONSPEKT and BIBLIOGR_JINA

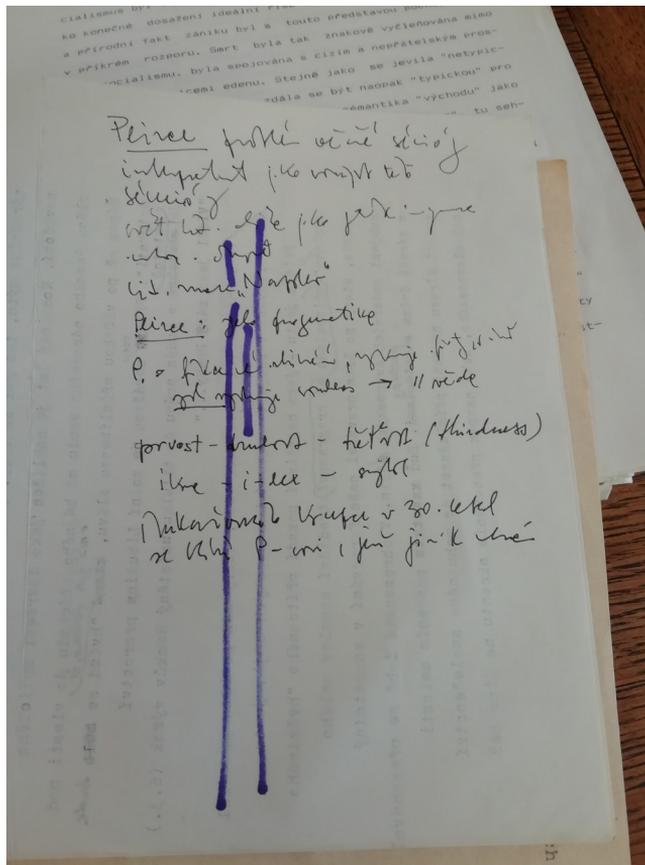


Figure 1 Vladimír Macurá: handwritten note on Ch. S. Peirce's theory of the sign. Fond VM, LA PNP.

While Macurá's literary and historical readings mostly refer to Czech and, occasionally, to Slovak sources—which is unsurprising, given the bohemistic nature of his work—, this does not apply to his theoretical readings, quite the contrary. The relevant folders contain entries for texts in no less than eleven languages: Czech, English, and German being the most frequent, followed by Russian, Polish and Slovak, and, to a lesser extent, by French, Italian, Serbian/Croatian, Bulgarian, and Estonian, with the latter being an exception insofar as, while playing only a minor role in the theory folders, it figures very prominently among his literary notes.

Quite often, Macurá's reading languages do not match the texts' linguistic origins: While Anglophone semiotics and most works by Lotman and other members of the Tartu-Moscow school are generally read in their original language (English, Russian and Estonian), French structuralism and post-structuralism are mostly

Derrida, Jacques: Texty k dekonstrukci. Práce z let 1967 – 72, Archa, Bratislava 1993.

Miroslav Petříček, jr.: 1960 Sartre: Kritika dialektického rozumu, pokus zakotvit existencialismus v marxismu, vrátit marxismu antropologii – nikoli odvozenou z poheglvské filozofie, ale přiměřená 20. stol. Existence! – třeba vyhradit v dialektice místo pojmu situace, projekt, individualita, volba, svoboda ke smrti. Dialektický pohyb odhalování skutečnosti třeba uchopit jako proces živé totalizace, jenž to, co vzniká ze singularity zahrnuje reflexi do sebe: vždy v každé fázi tvoří skutečnost. Paradigmatu zásadní totožnosti individuálního života s dějinami se nevzdá ani v pozdní filozofii. Reakce na toto velké S. dílo celkem vlašná – existencialismus již neakutální. Bestsellerem se stal Foucault: Dějiny šílenství – jež se stalo rozchodem s představou racionality: vědění jako ovládnutí, represe, exkomunikace 9. Pojem hranice kultury (gesto, jímž kultura odmítá to, co vnímá jako stojící vně) 10. Růst nedůvěry k fenomenologické teorii subjektu a pojmu angažovanosti umělce (pro Sartra literatura vždy čímsi jiným, x pro Tel Quel umělecká tvorba překračuje hranice, je stálým útokem na jazyk, je tedy politická způsobem, jak sděluje (écriture) 11. Text určován nejen rovinami významu, modulován somaticky, projevují se v něm nevědomé obsahy. Lingvistický obrat ve filozofii. Tradiční instrumentální představa jazyka – vede k jeho zneviditelnění

Figure 2 Vladimír Macura: reading note on Miroslav Petříček's anthology of texts by J. Derrida, *Texty k dekonstrukci*. EA VM, file ODBORNAA.602.

accessed via English and German and, interestingly, Polish translations, while the latter's North American counterpart is, again, mostly read in English. Czech translations are rare exceptions (Figure 2). While this is certainly due to Macura's exceptionally high foreign language proficiency, it also sheds light on the limited availability of international literary Theory in Czech: most of the theoretical works he reads in either their original version or translated into third languages wouldn't be available in Czech until the 1990s, many even well into the 2000s;³⁰ some do not exist in Czech translation to this day.³¹

Research on scholarly note-taking, both historically and with regard to the present, mostly considers annotating and excerpting techniques as aids to writing,³² if not as preparatory steps of writing itself.³³ In any case, it is by no means a simple reproductive practice but can be understood as a surprisingly pragmatic example of what Julia Kristeva has called “reading-writing” (“écriture-lecture”); thus, a practice defined, on one hand, as “a reading which has become production”

30 E.g. Barthes, *Mythologies*; Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale*.

31 E.g. Lotman, *Struktura chudožestvennogo teksta*, rus. 1970, ger. 1972, fr. 1973, engl. 1977, pl. 1984, slov. 1990; Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, fr. 1967, ger. 1974, engl. 1976, slov. 1998, rus. 2000.

32 Cf. e.g. Blair, *Too Much to Know*, 80–85.

33 Cf. Krajewski, *Paper Machines*.

(“le lire devenu production”)³⁴, and, on the other, as a “signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure”.³⁵ In other words, as a tightly entangled continuum of both reading and writing.

This, without doubt, also applies to Macura’s notes on theory, but given the multilingual nature of his readings, there is yet another dimension to be considered.³⁶ For what is perhaps the most striking features of his notes and excerpts is the fact that they are almost exclusively monolingual. Besides the bibliographical data which consistently list the specific edition of the text Macura reads—whether original or translated—the notes themselves summarize, paraphrase, and even quote entirely in Czech, thus not only reading-writing but also translating individual terms, titles and headlines, or whole passages of the text in question. Hence, the body of theory in question is presented as if it was either written in Czech or a published Czech translation (Figure 3).³⁷ Even more so, in cases in which the text in question is itself already a translation the rendering of direct quotes is mostly avoided, but since these notes nevertheless literally reproduce elements such as individual terms, titles, or chapter headings, this inevitably results in translations of translations; as shown by direct comparison, this is not without influence on the wording of the notes (Figure 4).³⁸ The latter practice seemed to have caused Macura at least some unease: while referring to the very material retained in this

34 Kristeva, “Pour une sémiologie,” 120.

35 Kristeva, “Word, Dialogue, and Novel,” 36.

36 With regard to this, seems important to note that, despite an increasing number of studies on the history of reading notes and practices of note-taking itself, research on notes taken during foreign language reading is virtually non-existent.

37 Cf. e.g. Figure 2, Macura quotes: “Lze nahlížet na sémiotický univerzum jako na úhrn jednotlivých textů a vzájemně uzavřených jazyků [...] Ale plodnější je opačný přístup: veškeré sémiotické prostranství lze považovat za za [sic] jediný mechanismus (ne-li organismus).” In Lotman’s essay “О семиосфере”, we read: “Можно рассматривать семиотический универсум как совокупность отдельных текстов и замкнутых по отношению друг к другу языков. [...] Однако более плодотворным представляется противоположный подход: все семиотическое пространство может рассматриваться как единый механизм (если не организм).” Lotman, “O Semiosfere,” 7.

38 Cf. e.g. Figure 4: “The World of Wrestling”, “The Romans in Film”, “The Writer on Holiday”, “Soap-powders and Detergents”, “Wine and Milk”, “The Iconography of the Abbé Pierre”. Macura translates the headlines as follows: “Svět zápasu”, “Římané ve filmu”, “Spisovatel na prázdninách”, “Saponáty a detergenty”, “Vino a mléko”, “Ikonografie Abbého Pierre”. Cf. for reference Barthes’ headlines in French: “Le monde où l’on catch”, “Les Romains au cinéma”, “L’écrivain en vacances”, “Saponides et détergents”, “Vin et lait”, “L’iconographie de l’abbé Pierre”. Barthes, *Cŕuvres complètes* 1, 673–819 passim. In the first Czech edition, the respective headlines are: “Svět wrestlingu”, “Římané na plátně”, “Spisovatel na prázdninách”, “Práci prášky a detergenty”, “Vino a mléko”; so far, the chapter “L’iconographie de l’abbé Pierre” has not been translated into Czech. Cf. Barthes, *Mytologie*.

Juriij M. Lotman, *O semiosfere*, in: *Struktura dialoga kak princip raboty semiotičeskogo mehanizma*, Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli toimetised 641, Trudy po znakovym sistemam XVII, Tartu, 1984, s. 5 – 23.

Současná sémiotika reviduje základní pojmy: u základů oboru tradice 1) Pierce-Morris" odvíjí se od znaku jako prvoelementu, 2) Saussure: antinomie jazyka a řeči. Oba postoje v jádru stejně atomistické: vycházejí od nejjednoduššího (znak, promluva), ale spjato s nebezpečím, že to co je diktováno analytickou potřebou se začne vnímat jako kvalita jazyka 6. Nyní čas na jiný pohled: jednotlivé prvky, celé systémy neexistují izolovaně, ale jen v určitém sémiotickém kontinuu 6. Analogicky k pojmu V.I.Vernadského "biosféra" – "Lze nahlížet na sémiotický univerzum jako na úhrn jednotlivých textů a vzájemně uzavřených jazyků... Ale plodnější je opačný přístup: veškeré sémiotické prostranství lze považovat za za jediný mechanismus (ne-li organismus)." Pak se ukazuje "sémiosféra" jako prioritní 7. Složením bifteků nevznikne tele, ale porcováním telete lze dospět k biftekům, podobě ani složením jednotlivých sémiotických aktů nelze složit sémiosféru, sémiosféra však vytváří bázi pro fungování jednotlivých sémiotických aktů 7. Příznaky: 1) ohraničenost, pojem hranice 8. Sémiotickou hranicí jsou bilingvní překladatelé, filtry tlumočící vše, co je za hranicí dané sémiosféry, hranice je tedy "bilingvní mechanismus" 9, skrze ni se adaptuje nesémiotický i jinosemiotický prostor 9. "V případech, kdy kulturní prostor nese teritoriální charakter, nabývá hranice prostorového smyslu v obvyklém významu" 10. Hranice je také oblastí "zrychlených sémiotických procesů" 11. Kultura formuje i svůj typ vnější "dezorganizace" (antičnost buduje své barbarství 11)

2) sémiotická nerovnoměrnost: jaderné struktury – periferie, nehomogenost, což vytváří rezervy dynamického vývoje. Vědomí bez dialogu není možné, dialog předchází jazyk. Jazyk bez sémiosféry neexistuje, podsystémy sémiosféry vzájemně souvisí 16.

Palindromy 20.

Figure 3 Vladimír Macura: reading note on Yuri M. Lotman's essay "O semiosfere". EA VM, file ODBORNII.602.

reading note, in the bibliographical sections of later publications, Macura tended to at least name the respective original versions of the text.³⁹ However, here, reading and note-taking are inextricably intertwined with interlingual translation, or, as one could say, referring to Kristeva's definition of "reading-writing": here, the signifying structure of reading has to be considered in relation to another structure—namely translating. Therefore, I suggest calling this practice *translating reading*.

39 An example of this is Macura's use of Roland Barthes's *Mythologies* in many of his short semiological essays dedicated to Czech culture of the early 1990s, including the breakup period of the former Czechoslovak federation. In many ways, the Czech translations of Barthes's quotes imply that Macura's source was either the English or the German translation of Barthes's book. However, the bibliography lists only the French edition from 1957. Macura, *Masarykovy boty*, 9, 85–87, 93, 96.

■ Barthes, Roland: *Mythologies*. New York, Hill & Wang, 1984.

Svět zápasu zápas, autentický amatérský zápas provozovaný v aréně, není sport, je to podívaná, obraz Utrpení. X od Boxu, nejde o výsledek, jde o obraz vášně. Funkcí zápasníka není zvítězit, ale projít určitou sérií očekávaných pohybů. Bombastičnost: bez studu za bolest, výkřiky.

Římané ve filmu vlasy, zpocené tváře v Mankiewiczově Juliu Caesarovi x nepotící se Caesar.

Spisovatel na prázdninách tj. jako ostatní pracující, ale x od nich neustává v práci.

Saponáty a detergenty Rozdílná sémiotika kapalných prostředků na bázi chlóru (zabíjení špíny), saponáty se opírají o moment oddělování, vyčleňování špíny, zla. Etnografické korelace. Reklamy psychologické x psychiatrické. Pěna jako znak duchovnosti.

Ikografie Abbého Pierra - viz pojem "iconography" 47

Víno a mléko sémiotika vína ve Francii (nespojeno s opilostí, opilost jen nepřímý důsledek), Mýtus vína závazný pro Francouze. Myticky sice víno x voda, ale de facto dnes opozice s mlékem má prioritu.

Figure 4 Vladimír Macura: reading note on the US edition of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*. EA VM, file ODBORNAA.602

Translating reading and the absence of translations

When it comes to its function, the taking of reading notes is widely regarded as a strategy to manage an overabundance of knowledge. Ancient writers, for instance Cicero, suggested the practice as a way to master the increasing number of works to be read or consulted and after the invention of printing, and once again, with the onset of the world wide web, excerpting has been recommended as a way to cope with the fact that there was, yet again, simply “too much to know.”⁴⁰

Macura's reading notes, however, strongly suggest that in contexts such as 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia, scholarly note-taking and excerpting might have assumed the exact opposite function—namely to deal with a scarcity or—at least—severely limited access to theoretical information. This becomes clear when we look beyond note-taking as an individual, private activity and consider it a shared, or even collective practice.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Macura came forward with an idea he had been toying with for some time: to publish a large compendium of notes and excerpts of foreign works of theory that were, at that time, difficult to access in Czechoslovakia. The preliminary list he put together included about seventy foreign works of theory, ranging from Russian Formalism and New Criticism via French, Italian, and Soviet semiotics, to French post-structuralism and the onset of North American deconstruction. In addition to authors like Walter Benjamin, Algirdas Greimas, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco and Hans-Robert Jauss, he also included “politicky

40 Blair, *Too Much to Know*.

dost ožehavá” (“politically rather delicate”)⁴¹ names such as Mikhail Bakhtin or émigré scholars Roman Jakobson and René Wellek. Maybe due to his own rather ambivalent experience with indirect translations he decided to not tackle this project alone, choosing instead to gather a group of colleagues from different philological as well as philosophical backgrounds—including his first wife, Alena Macurová, his later biographer Pavel Janoušek, and the French and comparative literature specialist Daniela Hodrová—who would be linguistically better equipped to read and excerpt the selected works in their original versions.

Unsurprisingly, the project soon ran into problems. Despite being basically supportive, the Institute for Czech and World Literature nominally transferred leadership to Milan Zeman who was, at that point, head of the institute’s theory department and, of course, a party member. In addition, it was demanded that some of the envisioned entries—among them, one on Jacques Derrida’s *De la grammatologie*⁴²—be replaced by politically more acceptable authors from other socialist countries.⁴³ When the resulting *Průvodce po světové literární teorii* (Guidebook to World Literary Theory) was eventually published in 1988, officially, Macura was solely responsible for its technical redaction. However, the fact that, when the book’s revised second edition was published in 2012, he was posthumously listed as its main editor, alongside Alice Jedličková, indicated that he had, in fact, always remained the project’s *spiritus rector*.⁴⁴

41 Janoušek, *Ten, který byl*, 286.

42 All of the book’s entries include internal references to each other, marked by typographic arrow signs. In the book’s typescripts these signs are manually, thus retrospectively inserted. This also applies to the manuscript for the entry on Umberto Eco’s book *Opera aperta* (1962). Here, arrow signs are inserted, among others, within passages relating Eco’s book to Derrida’s *Grammatology*. The published version of the *Průvodce*, however, does not include an entry for this work. Cf. LA PNP, fond Vladimíra Macury, rukopisy.

43 E.g. Naumann, *Gesellschaft–Literatur–Lesen*.

44 The opening sections of the second edition include a paragraph on “[h]istorie a současnost *Průvodce*” (“past and present of the *Guidebook*”). Therein, editor Alice Jedličková writes: “Původní vydání s titulem *Průvodce po světové literární teorii* vyšlo v roce 1988 v dnes již zaniklém nakladatelství Panorama. Jako vedoucí autorského kolektivu byl uveden tehdejší vedoucí oddělení teorie literatury v Ústavu pro českou a světovou literaturu ČSAV Milan Zeman, jako redaktor pak Vladimír Macura, který ovšem byl nejen editorem, ale také iniviatorem celého projektu.” [“The original *Guidebook to International Literary Theory* was published in 1988 by the now defunct publishing house Panorama. Milan Zeman, the head of the theory department of the Institute for Czech and World Literature at the Czechoslovak Academy of Science, was named as its main editor. Vladimír Macura was named as a technical editor, although he was, in fact, not only the main editor but also the person who had initiated the project to begin with.”] Jedličková, “*Průvodce průvodcem*,” 36–37.

Having noted that, his influence is also strongly suggested by the structural arrangement of the *Průvodce* itself. Besides a rather bland introduction by Zeman, registers, and a couple of editorial remarks written by Macura himself, the volume contains eighty individual entries, each of which bears a strong resemblance to many of the more detailed reading notes Macura created for his personal archive. A good example is the entry on Roland Barthes' *Mythologies*. Authored by František Vrhel, a scholar of romance languages and anthropological linguistics, the entry first gives a short chronological overview of the individual semiological studies constituting the first, analytical part of Barthes' book, and then proceeds to a more detailed synopsis of its second, theoretical part. Here, again, the course of the text's argumentation is closely reconstructed and abundantly provided with page number references. Finally, the closing section of the entry consists of bibliographical information on the original text as well as on available translations—listed are German, English, and Polish editions.⁴⁵

Even more consistently than Macura's personal notes, these entries count as translating readings: they summarize, paraphrase, and quote the French, English, German, and occasionally Russian original texts exclusively in Czech. This becomes even more evident when the study of the final published version of the *Průvodce* is supported by its various earlier manuscript stages. Each entry has been revised and commented on by at least three, sometimes as many as to five, different people, most of whom do not stop at correcting typos or stylistic errors but specifically concentrate on the new Czech terminology coined and introduced by the translating readings, e.g. by standardizing the spelling or by assimilating them to the Czech declension system. This, too, bears witness to Macura's conceptual influence: Years later, in an essay called "Sen o sémiotice" ("The Dream of Semiotics"), he would declare the creation of new terminology as one of the most important, and, especially, quintessentially productive functions of any translation of Theory.⁴⁶

Besides the large amount of detail, it is exactly this translational productivity which strongly suggests that, in 1970s and 1980s Czechoslovakia, the making of reading notes and excerpts did not consist in simply managing an overabundance of theoretical knowledge. Instead, it meant enabling the use of foreign theory *in the absence of official translations* and often also of the actual textual carrier itself. In addition, it constituted, one might say, a deliberate answer to the politically conditioned limitation of Theory.

45 Zeman, *Průvodce po světové*, 52–56.

46 Cf. Macura, *Český sen*, 183–87.

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