

Anton Popovič: between comparative literature and semiotics

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The scholarly activities of Anton Popovič (1933–1984) were remarkably varied. It would be an immensely complicated task to summarize them in one study. The few introductory remarks presented here should therefore be taken as an attempt at a portrait. This portrait should help us understand how unique a scholar Anton Popovič was, given the complicated era he was destined to live through. His sharp mind and organizational skills helped him to arrive ahead of his time, both locally and internationally. It can be argued that these circumstances have still not been fully accounted for. Apart from giving a survey of his professional history, Popovič's line of thought will be mapped out as a path leading from structuralism to semiotics. This line of thought is in no way linear, however, since (mainly Czech and Slovak) structuralism forms the undercurrent of all his research. Given that in Slovak scholarly and academic circles Popovič is mainly thought of as a translation scholar, his not always fully realized initiatives in translation studies have to be scrutinized. Many such initiatives have borne fruit only since the end of the 20th century. The most crucial point here, however, is translation history, as it is researched in Slovakia and abroad. As it is, translation history methodology has been widely discussed in Western Europe. Still, Popovič's activities today seem like first steps toward this area. All in all, however, Popovič is not only a translation studies scholar but also an expert in comparative literature and, deep down, a structuralist.

INTRODUCTION: AN ATTEMPT AT A PORTRAIT

Anton Popovič's academic career spanned nearly thirty years until his sudden death in 1984. He started out as a PhD student at the Slavic Institute of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences in Brno. Here he got his CSc (PhD) under the tutorage of Frank Wolman and became a comparative literature scholar. He continued his work in Bratislava at the Institute of World Literature and Languages of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS), where he worked under Mikuláš Bakoš, a renowned Slovak structuralist literary scholar. He then worked at the Institute of Literary Studies SAS and from the early 1970s was a full-time researcher at the Centre of Literary Communication and Experimental Methodologies at the Pedagogical faculty in Nitra.¹

In order to concretely contextualize Popovič's scientific activities in terms of time and space, one has to understand that the entire virtual and real scientific commu-

nity he was a member of incorporated the heritage of Russian formalism (he was drawn mainly to Yuri N. Tynyanov and his understanding of function), structuralism, mainly the Prague Linguistic Circle (Jan Mukařovský – literary studies, Roman Jakobson – linguistics, Piotr N. Bogatyrev – ethnography), and the Slovak Association for Scientific Synthesis (Igor Hrušovský, Mikuláš Bakoš, etc.). Apart from that, Popovič shared an interest in the semiotic aspects of literary communication. What proved to be essential in Popovič's professional career was meeting and collaborating with František Miko. They conducted research together and together they canonized concepts of literary and aesthetic communication and metacommunication. It was under their tutorage that the research group that came to be known as the Nitra School was established. The methodology used at Nitra was seen as

[p]art of a text-centric Structuralist, or Semiological, tradition in aesthetics which was in the mid-war years carried most prominently by Russian Formalism and Czechoslovak Structuralism and which culminated in the concepts of semantic, or information, esthetics, New Criticism, and the varied post-war French takes on Structuralism and Semiology, etc. (Plesník 2005, 338, translated by I. T.).²

Popovič and the entire team from Nitra often collaborated with Czech scholars Ivo Osolobě, Sáva Šabouk, and Zdeněk Mathauser. Popovič also heavily relied on and collaborated with such authorities of the field as Jiří Levý, the famous Czech literary scholar, literary historian, and translation theorist. Popovič referred to him as his teacher ever since his PhD thesis research in Brno.

Interestingly enough, this list of notable scholars are the very same methodological influences referred to by Itamar Even-Zohar as the formalist and structuralist sources of his polysystem theory. Additionally, he also reported inspiration from Dionýz Ďurišin and Mikuláš Bakoš (Even-Zohar, 1979, 1990). It was only natural that Slovak structuralism stood as an independent entity within Czechoslovak – or Czech – structuralism. The Slovak structuralist tradition, as Popovič³ saw it, was different because of its emphasis on the interdisciplinary treatment of a vast spectrum of artistic endeavours. As N. Krausová has it, “Slovak Structuralism did from its very beginnings stand out because of its extensiveness: it affected linguistics, literary theory, poetics, versology, anthropology, ethnography, philosophy, methodology, and art history” (1992, 2).⁴

It could be said that the shadow of premature death loomed over Popovič's personal and professional life and forced him to think and work swiftly, to swipe over the broadest field of research interests available, to react to every exciting idea, to get ahead. He could be impulsive and as a scholar he was inquisitive, quick to think but also very matter-of-fact and academic. Such a personality was not universally liked by all of his colleagues, so Popovič was viewed also as a controversial figure, mainly by the still conservative majority of scholars and professional literary translators. Moreover, he was naturally apt to provoke, both in social and political terms. However, in the fidgety geopolitical circumstances of Central Europe, Popovič was also lucky: the bulk of his activities took place in the 1960s. The years 1956–1969 were years of relative freedom, even though dialectical materialism and Marxism-Leninism still remained the dominant and official ideology and philosophy of the day

in the humanities and social sciences, and inclinations towards the East and partial international isolation were still fairly commonplace. It was at this time, however, that structuralism could – according to Peter Zajac – “step out of the shadows” after its suppression in the 1950s. Its “revitalization [in the 1960s] was brought about by young literary critics who sought to emancipate literary scholarship from ideology” (Matejov – Zajac 2005, 12). Fortunately, Popovič was not a politics man, and his pragmatism allowed him to get up the academic ladder rather quickly. He was inaugurated as a professor at the age of 45 – and, thus, he very probably was the youngest professor in Slovakia or even in the whole of Czechoslovakia. He managed to build up a personal social and political sphere of influence that allowed him to realize projects in Western Europe and overseas in the 1970s. Interestingly enough, normalization in Czechoslovakia had already been under way at that time. Against all odds, Popovič managed to demonstrate his scientific and organizational prowess internationally. At the ICLA he was a member of the executive committee 1974–1979 and led its Translation Research Committee. He was active in the international translators’ guild FIT. Apart from that, Popovič went on short and longer lecture trips, and he also did research abroad at universities in Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, the UK, the USA, the USSR and Yugoslavia. When it came to translation studies, mostly his stays in Canada (1973, 1976) and the Netherlands (1969) as well as his meeting José Lambert and James S. Holmes, proved to be very fruitful for Popovič. The impulses he received led him to systematically organize translation research and translators’ organizations in Slovakia.⁵ At home Popovič was chief editor of the journal *Slavica Slovaca*, whose focus he steered towards translation studies in the 1970s.

Popovič’s scholarly growth was hampered by the generally conservative character of contemporary Czechoslovak literary studies, paralysed by the stagnant political climate of the era, and no doubt also by the growing international isolation of the country. He sought to overcome these obstacles by systematic and intensive reliance on Polish humanities and social sciences, which at the time channelled contemporary Western European semiotics to the East. Popovič gave great credit to the work of Janusz Sławiński, Edward Balcerzan and many others. On the other hand, he was also able to see what was progressive in contemporary Soviet literary studies and semiotics. Here he took inspiration from Mikhail Bakhtin, the Tartu-Moscow Semiotic School led by Yuri Lotman, and Soviet translation studies. Interestingly enough, when in Nitra, he was able to establish collaborative ties with researchers from Moscow and Tartu. Yet, Popovič was not a mere reader and importer of foreign theory, but he was also interested in export and an equal exchange of scientific knowledge, paradigms and schools of thought that would lead to comparisons and, at the end, to the self-affirmation of Slovak scholarship in the face of foreign thought. Needless to say, this was not easy at the time.

Popovič was able to represent Slovak research abroad.⁶ At this point, the words of Sáva Šabouk, Popovič’s close associate, come to mind. In relation to the theory of literary communication and aesthetic metacommunication he expressed grief at the too slow and cautious way in which this system and its terminology were being

adopted at home: “I fear that one day we might find our own terms imported and back-translated to us through some Western publication without us knowing of their Czech origins” (Popovič 1976, 247). In fact, we have already imported many analogous paradigms. As it will be shown later on, mainly in the field of literary meta-communication, Popovič anticipated or simultaneously pursued research that would become today’s prominent research areas, mainly in Western Europe. Although most of his research has not resonated abroad, Popovič himself is far from unknown. Gideon Toury, José Lambert, Lieven D’hulst and many others did a great job in introducing Popovič to their peers. His *Teória umeleckého prekladu* (Theory of Artistic Translation) was translated into Russian (1980), Hungarian (1980), Serbo-Croatian (1980) and Italian (2006); an entry on Popovič can be found in a number of TS encyclopaedias (e. g. *The Routledge Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*). Yet it still seems that not enough has been done. It is a matter of fact that Slovak scholarship before 1989 was heavily damaged by international isolation and it was almost impossible to catch up in many areas when communism fell.⁷ On the other hand, however, Slovak scholarship has failed to promote itself adequately, so has often been impossible to reasonably interconnect research on both sides of the “Iron Curtain”.⁸

Popovič pursued his activities with a deep desire to collaborate, since he understood the need for teamwork in interdisciplinary research. This was to a certain extent also a by-product of the structuralist research heritage, as was established in the Association for Scientific Synthesis (1937–1940, 1945–1950). As Ján Bakoš claims:

Not only did the Association for Scientific Synthesis bring attempts to create interdisciplinary research, that is, establish a modern understanding of interactive cooperation between individual sciences, but it also helped protect the intellectual elites in a sea of provincial conservatism” (1992, 14).

Popovič created a first real team of researchers in Nitra,⁹ where in 1966 the Society for Literary Studies SAS was founded. He also had a team of colleagues in Bratislava at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting at the University of the 17th of November. This institution was unique not only in the whole of Czechoslovakia but also in Central Europe – it was the only university offering a specialized training for literary translators with certified diplomas. Popovič was also able to fire his students’ enthusiasm for research and gave them room for self-realization. From 1975 he organized the progressive Summer Schools of Interpretation of the Original and the Translated Text, where the basics of translation criticism were taught. He also had students present their papers at conferences and took pains to motivate them in their studies. Popovič was always happy to be around young as well as established scholars whom he was (at times even too) eager to get aboard his own projects. Due to his openness, Popovič was able to overcome academic particularism. Together with František Miko he managed to establish a scientific school (the Nitra School), a real school comprising a huge team of researchers. The broad research interests Popovič had would have been mere plans without team cooperation – and he was the heart of it all.

Popovič, who launched his research in literary history and comparative literature, started to treat aspects of translation in his comparative literary analytic stu-

dies already in the early 1960s.¹⁰ From that time on, Popovič took up translation as his research interest, an ever-present focal point in all his following research. In the first studies on translation, his goal was to define translation methods and mark out the thinking behind early translation theories through analyses of translations themselves and work methods of early translators. Popovič also started to systematically study the possibilities for and methodology of literary translation history. Having summarized these attempts in the 1968 monograph *Preklad a výraz* (Translation and Expression), Popovič called for a comparative translation history of the Central European cultural space. He himself even compared some aspects of translation and its position in the development of literature in the Czech and Slovak parts of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. As it is, such comparative histories of translation in the broadly understood Central and Eastern European region are nowadays being researched at Institut national des langues et cultures orientales (INALCO) in Paris.¹¹

To translation theory, which grew to be his other great research interest, Popovič arrived through interpretation of poetry translations. At this point he had already been using exact statistical analytical tools and had adopted historical poetics, the latter of which was widely accepted as standard practice in structuralist poetry analyses at the time. Along these lines he also studied methodology and demarked his own position on the structuralist heritage in Slovak literary studies. He offered his own critical reading of so-called classical structuralism and its development in the monograph *Štrukturalizmus v slovenskej vede (1931 – 1949). Dejiny, texty, bibliografia* (1970, Structuralism in Slovak Science /1931–1949/. History, Sources, Bibliography). Until the 1990s this book was the only synthesis on Slovak structuralism that existed.¹² A critical re-evaluation and re-thinking of the structuralist groundwork naturally lead Popovič to constitute a semiotic theory of literary communication and metacommunication.

Literary history and comparative literature, literary and translation theory and aesthetic communication are the three main areas of interest in Popovič's work. As it was, they often overlapped and complemented each other – and so it is impossible to view them separately. At the end, his life's work seems to form a circle of interests.

Popovič was a very complex scholar whose thinking grew out of methodology of sciences, and, drawing on both synchronic and diachronic aspects, he moved on to text interpretation and to seeing text as a theoretical problem. In other words, he moved from the particular and the concrete to abstractions, from surface descriptions to deep-level analyses.

FROM STRUCTURALISM TO SEMIOTICS

In the 1960s, when Popovič formulated his model of comparative literature based on translation, structuralism in Slovakia had already become a closed chapter. Literary studies referred to it in this way, and its influence was visible mainly in the tendencies to accommodate historical poetics and also in several microsystems construed by individual scholars that relied on interdisciplinarity (linguistics, aesthetics, comparative literature, psychology, etc.).¹³

Structuralism became the common denominator of all 1960s theory. All significant theoretical initiatives drew on its heritage. It was carried on by Bakoš in his historical poetics project which sought to lay the grounds of a new comparative literature. Structuralism was at the heart of Miko's communicative semiotic understanding of style and also at the heart of Popovič's translation theory. It was the backdrop to Oskár Čepan's archaeology of cultural memory. The need to protect Structuralism against Marxist literary theory and the need to critically re-evaluate Structuralism at the same time was what led Milan Hamada to formulate his phenomenological existential model of literature¹⁴ (Zajac 2008, 102–103).

Naturally, Popovič participated in Bakoš's comparative literature project from 1964, and, thus, the structuralist influences made a mark on his translation theory. Popovič, who was a systematic and structured thinker in his own right, showed a strong desire to re-establish a methodological toolset which would enable him to describe his object of examination in exact terms. As has been noted, (original and translated) texts were his primary object of enquiry, so he adopted a linguistic approach to the analysis of literary works, rooted primarily in the understanding of style as a correlation of theme and language. This is why it is natural that Miko's conception of text and style – the so-called expressive system – became Popovič's tool for text analysis. Together with Jakobson's model of communication, it marked the beginning of a new phase in thinking about literary communication and metacommunication (starting in 1967). This became the field of translation theory as well. At the initial phase, such a theory of translation entailed attempts to discover communicative strategies in texts and the creation of a complex interpretational methodology for original and translated literary texts.

Popovič also criticized the lack of an adequate methodological toolset for thematic analyses of literature. For this purpose he expanded Lotman's semiotic interpretative method, which offered a system of opposites for modelling the world in text. This system represents the concept of a literary work, the platform of text creation in which binary oppositions mark out the meaning of the work. The model of world in text is a set of instructions for semiotization in the reception process. Popovič introduced the concept of culture to literary studies, and he also spearheaded a sociological approach to literature. When analysing the creation and the reception of a literary work, he saw the distance between two cultural systems as the most important element. He stressed "the importance of viewing the work as a sign, as a structure of individual linguistic, literary, and/or cultural signs" (Popovič – Liba – Zajac – Zsilka 1981, 4). From the social, historical, and cultural context of literary works Popovič moved on to define generalized cultural experiences, as demonstrated in archetypes, myths and symbols. All in all, he understood mythological interpretations of literary works as legitimate. In Slovakia this was something novel, although fully in line with Lotman's conception of culture and contemporary research in the West. Yet, Popovič had to tread delicately around religious archetypes and refer to Mircea Eliade only with reservations.¹⁵ It is also important to note here that in his systematic treatment of the terminology of an integrated translation theory, Popovič mentions a theory of translation of biblical and sacred texts under the headline "Specific translation theory". In doing so, he refers to Eugene Nida's and Charles R. Taber's linguistic theories of Bible translation.

However, he never really studied this area. It can be argued that this was because of political restrictions but also because of the deep-rooted entrenchment of Protestant and Catholic positions which effectively barred any real translation of biblical texts.

As soon as Popovič strived for a broader understanding of literary texts and their translations as part of a modelling semiotic operation based on the model opposition of text to reality, he moved into the second phase of his life's research. In his work with František Miko he focused on the communicative conception of texts. Together they described the characteristics of aesthetic information, which is what falls under the concept of style (as defined by Miko). Apart from the stylistic communicative aspect, the semiotic and communication properties were foregrounded, leading to a focus on the social dimension of literature as well. The functional concept of style paves the way to a functional conception or literary genre. Genres "can be aligned to a typology of readers and social communication needs. When the communicative dimension of genres is taken into account, traditional opinions about their conventionality lose ground" (Popovič 1983, 14).

The third phase of Popovič's research brought a further development of his theory of text (namely, text grammar, intratextual links, issues of genre, context, etc.) and further research into the categories of author and reader (author ↔ text, author ↔ reader). The author was viewed as a social agent, as an agent in literary life, the creator of the literary text, and as a subject in the text. Popovič assumed that every literary work is the result of intertextual relations in the realm of texts, which Lotman termed "semiosphere". The work exists at the intersection of the synchronic and the diachronic, and extraliterary as well as axiological factors partake in its existence. A very similar way of thinking about the literary process came about in the 1960s under the label of intertextuality (Julia Kristeva and *Tel Quel*) or as part of the text-intertext conceptualization (Roland Barthes), or as the concept of transtextuality (which Gérard Genette sees as the relation between a first and a second text, where the second text comments on the first without the need to quote or even acknowledge any relation). For Popovič, the nature of intertextuality – its scope, intensity, and aesthetic effects – depends on the author and his literary education. At that time Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault had published their ideas about the death of the author. By introducing his views on intertextuality, Popovič opened up a new perspective, in which the author is understood as a recipient and the reader has a twofold relation towards literature – a confrontational creative and a confrontational interpretative one. In other words, the author reacts to his text and those of other authors based on his experience with literature. Such an experience, however, does not bar him from being the creator of a unique work. Apart from the author, the category of the reader is one of great importance. This category was examined in terms of the binary oppositions of high ↔ low and adult ↔ children. From this the categories of the reader's impression, the reader's experience,¹⁶ the reader's taste, the reader's stereotypes, the image of the reader in the text and many others were derived. Thus, by expansion, the phenomenon of popular literature (as opposed to high-brow literature), where translation¹⁷ had always played a huge role, gained prominence and so did children's literature.¹⁸

In the last phase of his research activities, Popovič wanted to research the relations between text and reality (the reflectional axiological aspect) and metatextual relations (relations of texts to traditions of national literatures, supranational literature, world literature, folklore and to other art forms) paving the way to aesthetic meta-communication. His main claim is that each metatext requires an original, a prototext. The nature of the metatext is derived from the textual invariant. This notion lies at the very core of the communicational translation theory. When commenting on this phase of his research, Popovič used to say that

[t]he notion of metatext was based on empirical studies of translated texts. It has become clear that the textual rules of the translation process can be viewed as a model. This means that they can be applied to illustrate the textual relations in congeneric metatexts (affirmative and controversial). Thus, the description of translation communication could be re-adopted for use in a comprehensive communication model (knowing the translation is determined by knowing the original). Translation theory has helped develop the concepts of intertextual invariant and shifts of expression and their typology. It enables us to construe communication-based models of translation creation and its reception and even delve into the processes of encoding and decoding of surface and the deep structure of the original. In this way translation theory was able to 'pay its dues' to literary theory, since it would enable literary scholars to effectively address the processes of primary and secondary literary communication (1983, 28).

Presumably the methodological circle was closed, yet it still remains open for new and alternative approaches.

Popovič's translation theory is fairly well known both in Slovakia and internationally. It is important to mention more categories of literary communication and meta-communication, such as *literary education*. Simply put, this is defined as a system of notions/texts about literature. It is part of the system of literary communication and as such it performs three functions. First of all, it has an informative or mediating function which lies in a mediation of the original (by means of creating its images – such as translations, paraphrases, reader's editions etc.). Secondly, literary education performs receptive functions. This means that it gives the reader instructions on how to read the texts, thus creating a subsystem of literary education. There may be literary historical, literary theoretical, or literary critical readings of texts. Lastly, there are advertising functions of literary education which create established canons of literary value by means of tradition and the affirmation of classical status. The texts of literary education come about as products of metatextual processes. They are models of their respective prototexts. They can have the character of mediation (resumes, reproductions and destructive texts) and can be instructions for reception and even literary advertisements. Functions of literary education can overlap. It is a whole system of possible secondary texts. A part of the possible corpus of literary education metatexts is similar to Genette's 1980s system of paratexts. In his taxonomy there are *epitexts*, which textually and visually accompany the work, and *peritexts*, which inform about the book (blurbs, authorial dedications, epigraphs, forewords and afterwords, and texts in the book itself – titles, subtitles, dedications, epilogues, footnotes, advertising texts etc.). Translation has an important place in the system of literary education and

receptive instructions. Anthology (of both originals and translations), for example, is especially noteworthy. It is viewed as a result of metatextual operations and as a kind of literary synthesis. An anthology can have either a distant or a surrounding and direct relation to reality; as to its character, it can be cultural, literary, and linguistic; as to its relation to tradition, it can be deductive, complementary, selective or affirmative. Popovič's classification from 1978 could help answer the questions asked by Lieven D'Hulst in his 2014 book *Essais d'histoire de la traduction* (Essays on Translation History).¹⁹ Drawing on research from the 1990s of Even-Zohar, and the Göttingen figures H. Essmann, A. P. Frank, and H. Kittel, D'Hulst asks how we should systematize anthology, edition and pseudotranslation.

The book *Komunikačné projekty literárnej vedy* (1983, The Communicate Projects of Literary Studies), on which this part of the study was based, was Popovič's last comprehensive synthesis.

POPOVIČ ON TRANSLATION HISTORY

One of the research areas which Popovič outlined but never really did any synthetic work on was literary translation history. It can be claimed that this project of his has been left unnoticed by international TS, since the reception of his work outside Slovakia tends to be limited to the issues of equivalence, literary analysis, and metacommunication. However, the hypotheses in Popovič's methodical outline of translation history have enabled Slovak TS to construe a model of translation history as a part of cultural history. Popovič had been gradually dealing with the methodology of translation history basically all throughout the 1960s. From the late 1970s his ideas on translation history were mainly theoretical and methodological.²⁰ Popovič addressed translation historiography when he did his critical analyses of the structuralist heritage and developed theories of literary communication and aesthetic metacommunication. In his 1975 monograph *Theory of Artistic Translation* Popovič created a map of translation theory, argued for the establishment of an independent branch of scholarship dealing with translation, and outlined a preliminary research model of translation history. At this stage the model was a juxtaposition of six research areas, which included bibliography and bibliometrics, translation praxeology, translation methods, literature along with its sociological aspects, and translation typology. At this stage he did not mention periodization, a key issue for every real historiography. However, he did so in the entries "Communicational aspect of literary diachrony" and "Translation history" in the dictionary *Originál/preklad. Interpretačná terminológia* (1983, Original/Translation. Interpretation Terminology). Yet, the systematic outline in *Theory of Artistic Translation* remains a mere model comprising multiple systems.

The period between 1967 and 1983, during which Popovič was active, is a preliminary period of Western European discourse on translation history methodology. This discourse focused either on the history of (written) translation or the history of translating (i. e. including interpreting) or the general history of translating.²¹ From the very beginning, Popovič wanted to connect translation history to the target language (TL) national culture and literature; that is, he wanted to develop a model for

a Slovak translation history. However, the project of a literary translation history in Slovakia remained largely in theoretical form until 1990. Apart from a number of literary historical analyses and partial comparative literature syntheses the project was left intact and was pursued mainly after 1990.²²

Popovič's concept of translation history rested on two or three pillars. First of all, it can be viewed as an independent discipline, then as part of Slovak literary history and its literary historical process, and, lastly, as part of the reception of literary texts.

Popovič primarily viewed translation as a literary phenomenon embedded in the context of the TL literature and, secondarily, as a phenomenon of literary metacommunication. Above all, he has founded his translation theory on the notions of linguistics, text analysis and literary history. Secondary aspects of translation should be examined by interdisciplinary means (comparative literature, psychology, sociology, anthropology, communication theory, information theory, statistics etc.). Popovič saw the inherent historicity of translation as essential not only for the history of source language (SL) national literature but also for translation theory that should seek to describe the development of translation concepts and methods. For him a feasible theory was the required result if one should study the internal tendencies of the art of translating in the wider context of "external" relations and in close connection to SL literature. Thus, Popovič saw the function of translation as the function of "being a translation" and the function of a heteronomous impact on the development on SL literature.

Popovič even toyed with the idea of writing a translation history as a history of translation method. Yet, he very soon realized the limitations of such a project. The idea had come to mind under the influence of Jiří Levý, whom he often referred to in his work. However, Levý always staunchly denied that his book *České teorie překladu* (1957, *Czech Theories of Translation*) should be deemed a translation history. Additionally, the position of literature in the Slovak context made Popovič abandon such bold attempts. This was due to the noticeable lags in the development of Slovak literary norms and movements and due to fragmentary and unsystematic relations of translation to national literature, the relative meagre corpus of translated literary texts, a noticeable absence of translation theory, and also due to other circumstances which he outlined but never really researched in considerable depth (e. g. the phenomenon of plurilingualism and its impact on the states of translation). Today we can speak about these specifics in relation to the consequences of the political gesture, the denominational phenomenon, the development from heterolingualism to monolingualism, from exoidentity to ethnoidentity, and from fragmentary to total translation etc. In the mentioned model we can already find clear signs of the need to view translation history in a systemic and intersystemic manner. Accordingly, Popovič often referred to the socio-cultural determinants of literary translation as well as to its literary and interliterary contexts and the social and pragmatic roles and links translation presupposes (translation and the reader, translation and its impact on the reader's taste, etc.). However, the emphasis on the development of empirical, proto-theoretical and theoretical views on translation, and the role and significance of translatorial activity was just one of the many relevant aspects of translation history. Later on, how-

ever, Popovič saw *historical poetics* as the foundation stone of all translation history.

If initially Popovič understood translation history as an independent discipline, he very soon became convinced that translation history must transgress the borders of one discipline to be a part of the literary historical process. This conviction derived from an understanding of translation poetics as a point into which many partial aspects converge, creating a whole. These aspects include various theoretical opinions on translation and the impact of contemporary aesthetic values on translation and translatorial activities. Popovič claims that historical poetics, which is founded on style typology, basically reconstructs the translation event on grounds of the concepts such as the author, the literary movement, the literary period, and practically the entire literary historical situation. This is why he sees historical poetics as the essential tool that would allow us to discuss the historicity of translation in a systematic manner.

Yet, this is the point where Popovič replaced the concept of translation history with that of the literary historical process. This was because he believed in the methodical primacy of the target context, its cultural and literary milieu, for the research of translation. Therefore, in Popovič's undertakings, translation historiography remained a mere prospect, and he moved on to study the position of translation in the literary historical process. Doing so, he took into account semiotic, structural, and functional systemic relations. It must be added that he understood the literary historical process like Hans Robert Jauss did – as a diachronic sequence of synchronic periods.

Popovič aimed to theorize translation not just as a text of literature but also as a text of culture. Translation informs about a foreign culture and, when translating one must draw on “the relation between two cultures which are textually realized by the proportions between ‘self’ and ‘other’” (Popovič 1972, 15). Since he viewed translated literature as part of the literary historical synthesis (canons of reception and literary norms), Popovič went as far as to suggest²³ that literature be theorized as a system comprising *both* SL works and translations. If the literary historical process does not incorporate translations, it is reduced and fragmentary: an originality fallacy appears. Thus, literary history should strive to encompass functions of intertextual relations and functions of literary metacommunication. Not doing so would mean creating non-feasible monopolistic cultural theories.²⁴ At present it seems that Popovič was right in proposing such an open-ended approach, especially when we look at the research of Slovak classicist literature.

In any case, if translating and translation should be part of the literary historical process, the development of literature must not be viewed solely in retrospect. Translation operates on the basis of the dialectics of three interdependent and interwoven dimensions: past, present and future. Moreover, such a three-fold time frame is realized “in the dialectic tension between the physical, historical, and cultural times. Thus, the literary historical process is the function, or form, of the cultural time” (Popovič – Liba – Zajac – Zsilka 1981, 57). In this context the cultural time is seen as a relatively independent semiotic system whose momentum is determined by the civilizational development in a smaller dimension (i. e. national culture). The time of culture is by no means equal to the historical time. Isomorphism in development

of the individual cultural stages,²⁵ as Lotman has it, is at the root of the dynamics of metatextual relations between cultures, within one culture, and, at the same time, it defines the specifics of individual translation histories. Here a whole set of issues seems worthy of note. First of all, the *choice* of texts for translation and *translation methods* must be discussed in historical perspective with the emphasis on the historically specific functions of translation (developmental and retarding function, complementary and competitive function). Also, the *developmental value of translation* plays a huge role. By and large, translation disturbs the status quo of a literature and, thus, helps set up a future for it.

The concept of the literary historical process is an attempt to construe a history of reception of an individual literature. Such a history is also a history of the constitution and re-constitution of (literary) tradition in different stages. At the same time, it documents the changes in the syntheses of literary processes.²⁶ Tradition is defined as “a set containing all possible relationships among texts at the given stage of literary development” (Miko – Popovič 1978, 286–287). Popovič sees tradition as a paradigm of certain possibilities for intertextuality and as a concrete contemporary state of intertextual relations (from the syntagmatic point of view). From an analytical point of view, tradition can be described as a configuration of intertextual relations, as seen by literary history and historical poetics. It can thus be seen as an expansion of the affirmative and controversial, conformist and non-conformist, and continual and discontinued relations that form the *modus operandi* of metatextuality. It is at this point that Popovič invites us to view translation history an ever-changing sequence of transitional and non-transitional stages. In the transitional stages, translation brings new texts and sets out and channels new impulses, establishing a new communicative and literary situation. Such openness is typical for transitional stages in literary history, e. g. the transition from romanticism to realism, from realism to modernism or even from classical literature to modern literature. A model of translation history as reception history seems useful and feasible. It is the transitions, crises in translating and viewing translation, the surpluses, lack of translation or even non-translation that matter most for translation history.

CONCLUSION

A kind of scientism (of the kind we sometimes call hard science) is very typical for Popovič's way of doing literary scholarship. We should not consider this a fad or fashion, however. What he wanted to do was to dissolve the then-prevailing conservative traditions of Slovak literary scholarship (mainly visible in its treatment of style) and a dysfunctional nostalgia for certain terms.²⁷ Popovič's scientism was a result of the structuralism he so much internalized. It was an organic outcome of the development of scientific thought and a modern tradition inspired by formalism and further developed by structuralism. He drew on Hrušovský's propositions for a dialectical scientism which emphasized both experience²⁸ and theory along with the strictly rational and scientific principles of systemicity and functionality. In Hrušovský's own time this meant that scholarship should “adopt invention, follow the development of science, adhere to a defined methodology, and take on scientism and

an interdisciplinary integration of sciences in response to an ethnological, Positivist – and to a degree provincial – understanding of the humanities.”²⁹ In the long view, this scientism can be considered part of the ill-fated story of Slovak structuralism. During normalization in the 1970s a structuralist rationalism seemed to be a very effective defence mechanism against the ideology encroaching into literary studies at the time. The official catchphrase at the time was to understand art scientifically. Popovič was able to use contemporary political rhetorics when he, de facto at the onset of normalization, wanted to present contemporary Soviet semiotics in the Slovak context. Under the politically correct headline *New Currents in Soviet Literary Studies* (1971)³⁰ he was able to rather comprehensively introduce Lotman’s ideas on the literary text. While another short selection of Lotman’s translated studies came out in 1994, it is safe to assume that thanks to Popovič Slovak scholars were familiar with the basic concepts of Lotman’s semiotics already in the 1970s. At this time the translations of Lotman came into existence, but they had been not published. If Popovič, a Russian and Slavic studies scholar, intentionally drew on impulses from the then-blooming Russian and Soviet literature and literary studies, we ought not to hold this against the way he wrote. With his scientifically strict writing he did not seek to win concessions, since he was skirting on the edge of what could be officially said. This is what Vajdová means when she claims that formalism and structuralism “oftentimes helped the scholars in Eastern and Central Europe find shelter against ideological misuses, while in Western Europe they were considered a novelty” (Vajdová 2007, 15). This is what Popovič’s close associate Ján Kopál had in mind when he pointed out that Popovič’s research was often at odds with the ideologically rigid socialist realistic research line of literary studies of the time.

It was Ján Kopál, one of Popovič’s most relevant commentators, who sums up not just the work of Popovič but also the work of the Nitra School (since the two entities are intrinsically related) when he claims the following: “The semiotic communicational orientation of literature research has proved to have made a huge impact on Slovak literary studies. This conception was in contact with contemporary European trends and, thus, it was and still is a unique initiative not only in Slovakia but also in Czechoslovakia as a whole” (Valentová 1993, 9–10).

TRANSLATED FROM SLOVAK BY IGOR TYŠŠ

NOTES

¹ Today operating as the Institute of Literary and Artistic Communication at the Faculty of Arts of Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia.

² The quote is one of the most frequently made official, canonized points on the scope of activities of the Nitra School, all of which Plesník lists in a footnote. The referenced study is his own analysis of Nitra School research, mainly as regards projects instigated by Miko.

³ More in Popovič 1970. In his study *Teoretické iniciatívy v slovenskej literárnej vede dvadsiateho storočia* (2008, 105, 108; *Theoretical Initiatives in 20th Century Slovak Literary Studies*) P. Zajac provides us with a rich, mainly German, bibliography of sources on Slovak structuralism. This body of work came about from the interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars from Tartu, Zagreb, Slavic scholars from Göttingen, and German Czech studies experts in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

- ⁴ Literary scholar Nora Krausová (1920–2009) was a member of the Slovak Association for Scientific Synthesis.
- ⁵ Popovič was invited to the Netherlands by the research council Nederlandse Organisatie voor Zuiver-Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek (ZWO). He wrote about his stay and about James S. Holmes in the article *Holandské spektrum* (1969; *Romboid* 3, 5: 32). In this text he also talks about the translation studies book *The Nature of Translation: Essays on the Theory and Practice of Literary Translation* (The Hague – Paris – Bratislava: Mouton – Slovenská akadémia vied, 1970) which came about in cooperation with the University of Amsterdam. The book featured studies by Slovak translation scholars along with colleagues from abroad, among whom featured also José Lambert. James S. Holmes's theoretical articles on translation appeared in the Slovak journals *Romboid* and *Slavica Slovaca* in the 1970s.
- ⁶ Popovič was published in renowned international journals such as *Babel*, *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature*, and *Literatur und Kritik*, and his articles were featured in international proceedings that came out in Tel-Aviv, in Italy, the Netherlands, Canada, Poland, Hungary, and in other places. One of his most significant publications is an English encyclopaedia of literary translation terminology, the *Dictionary for the Analysis of Literary Translation* (Edmonton, The University of Alberta, 1976), translated also into Turkish (*Yazın çevirisi terimleri sözlüğü*, 1987. Çağaloğlu, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları). More in his personal bibliography *Bibliografia prác Antona Popoviča (Výber 1956 – 1982)*. Popovič also brought about the publication of many translation studies works in their original languages (mainly in English or German) in Slovakia.
- ⁷ The isolation that Slovak scholarship suffered from can be illustrated by Krausová's statement about the position of structuralism in Slovakia and in Europe: "In Slovakia, the history of Structuralism has been a rather tragic one. At a sad moment in this history, Structuralism started taking root and shape in the West, while in Slovakia we were barely allowed to read the newest theory (e. g. due to the intentional restriction on imports of foreign books and magazines). Thus, in the early 1960s we in Slovakia could all but watch how some of the basic tenants of Czech and Slovak Structuralism were adopted and further developed by other Structuralist schools (in France, Poland, Germany, or even in the Soviet Union)" (1992, 6).
- ⁸ One of the few attempts was an initiative at the Faculty of Arts at Comenius University in Bratislava and the Institute of Art History of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Its aim was to newly re-evaluate Czech and Slovak structuralism. The initiative led to an international symposium which took place in 1991. The project of the symposium was created by Ján Bakoš and Peter Michalovič.
- ⁹ More on Popovič's biography can be added: in 1968 he became Associate Professor in the field of Literary Theory and the History of Slovak Literature; in 1977 he was awarded a DrSc in literature (doctor scientiarum, 2nd degree PhD); in 1978 he was inaugurated as Professor. From 1964–1973 he worked as a researcher in Bratislava at the Institute of World Literature and Languages and the Institute of Literary Studies of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS). From 1966–1972 Popovič was part-time lecturer at the Pedagogical Faculty in Nitra, and in 1967–1973 he was part-time researcher at the Cabinet of Literary Communication and Experimental Methodology in Nitra. In 1970–1973 he worked part-time at the Department of Translation Theory of the University of the 17th of November (at the Institute of Translation and Interpreting). In 1973 Popovič became leading researcher and head of the Cabinet of Literary Communication in Nitra; in 1976–1981 he led the Department of Slovak Language and Literature at the Pedagogical Faculty in Nitra.
- ¹⁰ Here we mean not only the monographs *Ruská literatúra na Slovensku v rokoch 1863 – 1875* (1961, Russian Literature in Slovakia in 1863–1875) and *Preklad a výraz* (1968, Translation and Expression) but also the studies *Teórie prekladu v slovenskom romantizme* (1964, Slovak Romantic Era Translation Theories) and *Prekladateľské metódy v poromantickej poézii (Sytniansky a Nezabudov)* (1965, Translation Methods in Post-Romantic Poetry /Sytniansky and Nezabudov/). In these works Popovič came up with detailed analyses of translations done by the leading figures of Slovak literature (M. Bosý, L. Kuzmány, S. Štúr, A. Sládkovič, S. H. Vajanský, and P. O. Hviezdoslav). Focusing on translations from Slavic languages as well as from English, these publications are still relevant empirical surveys on particular aspects of Slovak translation history.
- ¹¹ The synthetic, collective (25 authors) translation history of Central Europe entitled *Histoire de la traduction en Europe médiane* is in print at the time of writing this study. Another interesting publi-

- cation is the Bulgarian-French comparative translation history under the title *Miroir de l'altérité: la traduction: deux exemples emblématiques de la constitution et de l'affirmation d'une langue-culture par la traduction en Europe: la Bulgarie et la France du IXe siècle au début du XXe siècle* (2006) authored by Marie Vrinat-Nikolov.
- ¹² In 1965 he published the extensive study *Formálna metóda v slovenskej literárnej vede* (Formalism in Slovak Literary Studies).
- ¹³ An example of this is the stylistics of František Miko and his systemic reconstruction of styles; Oskár Čepan's linguistic approach to text uses analogies between the linguistic and literary sign; expanding the concept of historical poetics, Viliam Marčok tries to strike a balance between structural unity and aesthetic concepts of the human being; on the other hand, Ján Števček focuses on genre typology and a theory of readers; with Viliam Turčány's interpretative position, the focus lies on the analysis of rhythm in verses, which is viewed as the organizing principle of the entire composition and the main factor in the meaning of a poem; last but not least there is the structuralist model of comparative literature created by Dionýz Ďurišin and many others.
- ¹⁴ On historical poetics see Bakoš, Mikuláš. 1973. *Literárna história a historická poetika*. Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ.
- ¹⁵ Let us go back to archetypal interpretation, which F. Miko also adopted in his readings of some Slovak literary works. This approach has proved fruitful also in translation analysis – the basic Slovak cultural archetypal oppositions of peasant ↔ pastoral and rural ↔ urban can be used for analysing translation choices, in analysing colloquialisms in the language of translations etc.
- ¹⁶ Translator's note: The Slovak-English-German glossary of terms in the *Original/Translation* (1983) encyclopedia gives the translation “the reader's experience” for both of the notions of experience and impression. I have opted for a more literal translation to differentiate the two and, thus, underline the different nature of the mental images involved.
- ¹⁷ See the research and works of Peter Liba, who has studied the status of popular literature and the specifics of its translation.
- ¹⁸ Mainly Ján Kopál's research.
- ¹⁹ Interestingly enough, in 1981 L. D'Hulst published a study entitled “Les variantes textuelles des traductions littéraires” (*Poetics Today*, 2, 4: 133–141), where he analysed the processes of syntheses in literature. Here he also reflected upon Popovič's concept of literary syntheses.
- ²⁰ See Popovič 1967, 118–123; Popovič – Koli 1982, 28–33; Popovič et al. 1983 – the entries “komunikačný aspekt literárnej diachronie” (communicative aspect of literary diachrony) and “dejiny prekladu” (history of translation).
- ²¹ More in the publications of György Radó, Jean Delisle, Michel Ballard; later Lieven D'Hulst, Henri van Hoof, Antony Pym, etc.
- ²² See the comprehensive bibliography in Vajdová 2013.
- ²³ See Popovič – Koli 1982, 28–33.
- ²⁴ See Popovič – Koli 1982, 29.
- ²⁵ Miko – Popovič 1978, 291.
- ²⁶ Popovič – Liba – Zajac – Zsilka 1981, 58.
- ²⁷ Popovič 1983, 13.
- ²⁸ Here the role of recipient was anticipated as a semantic category in the literary structure.
- ²⁹ This is how the link of Slovak structuralism to Russian formalism and the Vienna Circle has come to be viewed. See Matejev – Zajac, eds., 2005, 10.
- ³⁰ Here we refer to Lotman's *Struktura xudozhestvennogo teksta. Statii po tipologii kultury* (1970, The Structure of the Artistic Text. Typology of Culture). See Popovič 1971, 1–9. The following works of Soviet semiotics have been translated into Slovak: Vladimir Propp *Morfológia rozprávky* (1971, Morphology of the Tale), Michail Bachtin *Problémy poetiky románu* (1973, Problems of Novel Poetics), *Estetika slovesnej tvorby* (1988, Esthetics of Verbal Art – also available in 1970s Czech translations), Jurij Lotman *Semiotika filmu a problémy filmovej estetiky* (1984, Film Semiotics and Problems of Film Esthetics), *Štruktúra umeleckého textu* (1990, The Structure of the Artistic Text).

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Slovak-Slavonic literary relations. Theory of literature. History of translation.
Romanticism. Post-romanticism. Poetics of artistic translation. Semiotics.

The theoretical thinking of Anton Popovič on translation and conception of the discipline of translation studies was formed between two boundary positions: comparative literature and semiotics. Popovič's early scholarly works published in the late 1950s focused on Russian-Slovak literary relations and, at the same time, on the more broadly understood Slovak-Slavonic literary relationship in the 19th century. He completed this linguistic and literary scope with the study of translations from English and the analysis of Slovak translations of Shakespeare. In the 1960s, he already formulated the conceptions of literary translation in the period of Slovak romanticism and in post-romantic poetry. In the work of Anton Popovič, comparative literature and history were increasingly moving towards literary theory (Slovak structuralism, formal method, theory of the verse), history of translation, but first of all theoretical questions of translation. This research finally ended in the book *Poetika umeleckého prekladu. Proces a text* (Poetics of Artistic Translation. Proces and Text) in 1971. The paper concentrates on the first decades in the scholarly work of Anton Popovič and sums up the starting points leading to Popovič's understanding of translation as a semiotic category.

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