

PRESCRIPTIVE POLYSYSTEMS, STRUGGLE-FREE FIELDS AND BURDENSOME *HABITUS*

Translation Paradigm Shift in the Wake of the February 1948 Communist Overthrow in Czechoslovakia*

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ABSTRACT

Concentrating on a critical historical moment, the Communist overthrow in Czechoslovakia in late February 1948, this article explores the shifts in the publishing and translation practices with a focus on the position and strategies of individual translators and publishers of translated literature. In the wake of WWII, Czech publishers agreed to self-regulation and coordination in order to establish “ideal literature”. After February 1948, the Communist rulers transformed the self-regulatory and coordinating principles into strict principles of censorship and state-ownership. The article follows closely the rise and fall of the Bridge international publishing project that was supposed to bring most of the small and mid-sized European countries together to support the promotion of minor literatures both in the participating countries and globally. It suggests, among other things, that a deep-rooted *habitus* of a publisher or a translator may under certain conditions disqualify them from participation in the publishing field. It also shows that, contrary to general assumptions, a literary polysystem may be prescriptive.

This article deals with the translational concept of polysystem and the sociological concepts of field and *habitus* as applied to the practice of literary translation and publishing. Focusing on a critical turning point in history, it attempts to explore their strongpoints and their limits and the way they may complement each other. Of the three spatial contexts of translation studies defined by Andrew Chesterman (2006: 11) – cultural, sociological and cognitive – the approach adopted here adheres closely to the former two, treating them as inseparable from each other. Based on historical evidence, the article shows that a literary polysystem may be prescriptive rather than descriptive, that a publishing field may be deprived of its internal struggles for the best position and of any form of autonomy, and that *habitus*, supposedly the unconscious vehicle of stability, may be an obstacle to achieving stability, thus becoming a disqualifying burden to its holder. Moreover, it shows that the theory of polysystems and the concepts of field and *habitus* do not need to contradict each other. Here they are treated as complementary.

* The publication of this paper was supported by GA ČR grant no. 405/08/H062.

It is part of a dissertation project on the history of Scandinavian-Czech literary translation in 1890–1950 with regard to power structures, politics, economics, law and personal involvement.

Descriptive Translation Studies (or DTS) and Polysystem Theory, developed in the 1970s and 1980s (see Toury 1995 and Even-Zohar 1990 for a comprehensive overview), have been widely criticized for what has been labelled as their “gloriously overlook[ing] the human agent, the translator”, (Hermans 1995: 222), or for too strong a preference of structure over agency. Historians of translation, especially, have responded both with practical accounts of the importance of *Translators Through History* (Delisle and Woodsworth 1995) and with methodological tools for translation history, stressing that translators have their physical bodies of flesh and bone, with natural implications for translation. (Pym 1998)

On a more theoretical level, sociological theories, particularly the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, have been applied to translation studies, putting ever more emphasis on the human dimensions of translation (and interpreting) as a practical social activity. (See Gouanvic 1997; Simeoni 1998; Inghilleri 2005; Meylaerts 2008 and a number of other studies) The enthusiasm has gone as far as to claim that Bourdieu’s theory has no real overlap with Polysystem Theory and DTS, describing them as two competing bodies of notions: “He [Bourdieu] develops a body of theoretical notions (*habitus*, field, etc.), all closely dependent on each other, precisely to illustrate the truth of empirical reality – which, in their own way, the polysystem theorists [referring both to polysystem theory and DTS] also do, with the notions of polysystem, of canon, and of norms.” (Gouanvic 2005: 149) At the same time, Bourdieu’s theory, particularly the notion of *habitus*, has been often regarded as complementary to the DTS programme, specifically to the concept of norms, suggesting that “this concept corresponds to and reinforces the notion of norms of translation”. (Rakefet Sela-Sheffy cited in Meylaerts 2008: 93) Polysystem theory, by contrast, has been attacked as insufficient and lacking a subjective dimension: “Systems theory is superficially a kind of prose that does everything possible to suppress a humanized, subjective systematicity.” (Pym 1998: 122) In the following, I intend to explore the notions of (poly)system, field and *habitus* as complementary. However abstract and dehumanized polysystem theory may be, it seems to be a useful tool for the description and study of reality, especially in the moments of history when the human and subjective tends to suppress itself, which may be the case not limited to totalitarian societies. Moreover, I intend to show how the three concepts are challenged by historical events.

For Itamar Even-Zohar and polysystem theory, the key term is “literary system”, “the network of relations that is hypothesized to obtain between a number of activities called ‘literary’, and consequently these activities themselves observed via that network.” (Even-Zohar 1990: 28) System is a descriptive notion based on the observation of a large (and open) variety of activities that are observed as literary and their relations forming a hypothetical network. Such systems evolve over time and they also make part of larger systems called polysystems. Systems are hierarchical and dynamic, determined by a constant tension between new ones in the periphery and canonical ones in the centre; canonical repertoires tend to get conventionalized and replaced by non-canonical ones, reshaping the overall literary polysystem. To distinguish between (sub)systems, one needs to identify their common features. A popular example of two interrelated systems is that of original vs. translated literature. (Even-Zohar 1990:

45–51) In Even-Zohar’s view, translated literature ought to be considered a separate system on the grounds of common selection criteria and the use of specific repertoires. Normally, Even-Zohar claims original literature has the primary position in the literary polysystem, while translated literature attains the primary position only occasionally, such as when a literature is “young” and for instance may “lack” a certain repertoire, filling the gap with translated literature. In this paper, I shall focus on the Czech literary polysystem from 1945 to 1950. I intend to make two major points: 1) that in order to understand the position of translated literature in a polysystem, a more detailed classification of (sub)systems may be necessary, including not only literary texts, but all published texts, making it more appropriate to speak of a (Czech) publishing polysystem; 2) that polysystem does not need to be a descriptive and hypothetical notion only, but also prescriptive and very tangible.

Although polysystem theory makes a number of references to the social dimension of translation, the relationship between the systemic and individual is not substantially developed, and priority is clearly given to the systemic and its intrinsic development, making the systems far too independent of the agents. As Pierre Bourdieu puts it:

[Russian formalists and Itamar Even-Zohar] forget that the existence, form and direction of change depend not only on the “state of the system”, i.e. the “repertoire” of possibilities which it offers, but also on the balance of forces between social agents who have entirely real interests in the different possibilities available to them as stakes and who deploy every sort of strategy to make one set or the other prevail. (Bourdieu 1993: 34)

To describe reality more precisely and to overcome the troublesome dichotomy of structure and agency, Pierre Bourdieu proposes two complementary concepts: field and *habitus*, and he focuses on the relationship between the objective conditions and structures, i.e. fields, and the agent’s social trajectory in time, his/her “system of durable transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures”, i.e. *habitus*. (Bourdieu 1990: 53) *Habitus* is a conservatory principle, rooted in personal experience, “a product of history” that “produces individual and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences.” (Bourdieu 1990: 54) It is not “in any way the product of obedience to rules.” (Bourdieu 1990: 53) Field, on the other hand, is a place where individual agents incessantly struggle for a better position, “the product and prize of a permanent conflict”. (Bourdieu 1993: 35) With the notion of field, Bourdieu grounds the agent’s action in particular social conditions.

As for publishing and translation, the publishing field is a point of example and interest. In Bourdieu’s view, all publishing houses occupy certain positions in the publishing field at a certain moment, “depending on the distribution of rare resources (such as economic, symbolic and technical) and the power they [the resources] confer on the field.”¹ (Bourdieu 1999: 3) He sees the publishing field “as relatively autonomous

¹ All translations of the non-English sources, both primary and secondary, are mine.

social space” which means that it is “able to retranslate in terms of its own logic all the external forces, especially the economic and political ones”. (Bourdieu 1999: 6) This follows his hierarchy of fields as enacted by two principles: the heteronomous and autonomous principles. (Bourdieu 1993: 29–73) The field of cultural production (in our case, the publishing field) is dominated by the field of power (the economic and political forces). Heteronomy arises from desire for success (such as high book sales) and requires willingness to follow the rules of the field of power. Autonomy is “degree specific consecration, [...] i.e. the degree of recognition accorded by those who recognize no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognize.” (Bourdieu 1993: 38) Total autonomy is merely a theoretical possibility; total lack of autonomy, however, would mean effective nonexistence of a field. The position of the agent (e.g. a publishing house) in the field of cultural production (the publishing field) has direct impact on his/her behaviour (publishing strategies). The field is not stable, however, and the respective position of the agents may change, a dominant position can be taken by publishing houses formerly small and new. This process goes hand in hand with the adoption of certain strategies typical for the dominant positions. The dominant publishing houses are typically those focusing on commercial success, representing the heteronomous principle; the autonomous principle is represented by the new, small, often provincial publishing houses that help to transform the publishing field as they strive for a better position: “These small innovative publishers play a very limited role in the overall [publishing] game, they however furnish it with its *raison d’être*, its basic justification and its ‘spiritual point of honour’ – and are therefore one of its principles of transformation”. (Bourdieu 1999: 11) In his essay on the publishing field, in my opinion far too heavily biased by its focus on the French publishing field in 1990s, Bourdieu rather blatantly neglects publishers’ *habitus*, making merely one tentative reference to it (see Bourdieu 1999: 18), and deals mainly with the structure and dynamics of the publishing field on its own. Quite paradoxically, he strongly prefers structure over agency in his article. At the same time, in translation studies, *habitus* is often studied with reference to translators only. In what follows, more stress is put on the importance of a publisher’s *habitus*, showing that it can be 1) an important factor in the publishing and promotion of translated literature as well as 2) a burden and an insurmountable obstacle to the adaptation to a new situation. The latter one may be the case especially when the publishing field is deprived of its internal struggles, its autonomy and it is almost integrated into the field of power, the total dominance of the heteronomous principle not being an outcome of the internal struggle with the autonomous principle, but a totalitarian dictate coming from the superordinate field of power.

In the wake of WWII, Czech publishing and literary life saw a profound reflection of 1) the interwar practices and 2) the practices during the war. This reflection determined the formation of the new publication field and system. The generally liberal interwar era was deemed insufficient because – it was believed – it generated far too sharp a competition resulting in overproduction, a focus on trash literature and a gradual downfall of publishers who were keen on publishing what was regarded as quality

literature. Translation, for instance, was seen in direct opposition and as a threat to original Czech literature because it was cheaper to produce, especially when the quality of translation was not observed. In publishing and literary circles, the crisis of publishing had been a heated topic since the early 1930s, but all attempts to solve the issue came to a dead end with the outburst of the War. During WWII, the Czech publishing and literary field was gradually subjected to an ever harder Nazi censorship; many writers, publishers, translators and other actors of the publishing and literary fields were blacklisted, arrested, and executed. Czech books were confiscated and burnt. (A most telling document on this period and its perception in the first years following the war is Poláček 2004.)

The general strategy of most agents in the Czech publishing and literary fields after the war was 1) to repair the injuries suffered during the war, a goal to be achieved by a strong preference of original Czech literature and 2) to rectify the imbalance of the interwar publishing system through cooperation of publishing houses and coordination of their activities. A detailed programme was formulated by the Association of Czech Booksellers and Publishers (a document of major importance is SČKN 1945) and by the Publishing Division of the Ministry of Information. The latter was to a large extent influenced by the former when drafting legal documents on the regulation of the book market.² The literary system as well as the publishing field was to be regulated in order to achieve what Pavel Janáček labelled *ideal literature*. (2004: 160–170)

The underlying idea was one of the conscious formation of a literature of a small and independent nation, of a literature that needed to be taken care of. Complementary criteria of origin, importance, value and urgency (priority) were imposed. Importantly, original Czech literature was supposed to be protected from too strong an influence of translated literature, preference was explicitly given to Czech canonical literature and to established contemporary authors. As for translated literature, strict quality criteria were introduced, both in terms of title selection and translation itself. Publishers were supposed to maintain the representation of source literatures in proportional and contextual balance. Translations from small and less important literatures, for instance, were not supposed to gain too strong a position over translations from large and influential literatures; only most important works of all world literatures qualified for translation. Moreover, high quality translations were a precondition *sine qua non*. Publishing several translations of the same work concurrently was not desirable either, as it was regarded as wasting resources. Similarly, publishers were supposed to enforce thematic coordination, they were not allowed to publish several books on the same topic at the same time: publishing should have been limited to the best one. Last but not least, the publication of some high quality and important works was urgent, while other works could have been postponed.

² The most telling documents are perhaps the Governmental Decree on book market regulation of 4 June 1945, synopsis of the Governmental Regulation on non-periodicals from May 1945, synopsis of the Presidential Decree on temporary regulation of Czech publishing from July 1945, synopsis of the Presidential Decree on temporary regulation of Czech publishing from August 1945, all reprinted in Janáček (2004: 354–366).

These rules actually define an abstract prescriptive (poly)system of literature, including detailed descriptions of the desirable relationships among the systems of domestic and various kinds of translated literature, as well as internal hierarchy. Only once it is clear what bodies of literature should be published and what state of the literary polysystem should be strived for, does the question arise who is going to publish (and translate) the works, i.e. the question of the publishing field and its organization. The two – the abstract polysystemic ideal literature and the people enacting the idea – are kept apart to a considerably high degree. In fact, the publishers first formulated the rules of an abstract system, the system was subsequently depersonalized and institutionalized, as it was adopted by the Ministry of Information, and finally the publishers adopted it as a prescriptive and binding rule.

At the same time, it was clearly stated that “culture and arts cannot be imposed, but free competition needs to be replaced with controlled planning”. (Bohumil Novák, head of the Publishing Division of the Ministry of Information, 24 November 1945, cited in Janáček 2004: 155) The way one was going to achieve the ideal state of the literary polysystem was thus not through straightforward censorship, but through regulation. The nature of such regulation derived from the organization of the field of power and the publishing field. As a matter of course, the publishing field was not entirely autonomous, but the field of power was not pronouncedly superordinate either; rather, they were intertwined, united by fate and by a common goal. Actually, many agents of the field of power were established and highly regarded authors, critics and publishers. A tacit agreement was made, however, that should some publisher diverge from the programme on purpose and repeatedly, the Ministry of Information would step in. Publishers’ self-censorship was thereby put into practice.

The cooperation between publishers and translators changed substantially. More often than what translators were accustomed to in their lifetime (with the exception of the WWII era), their publishing suggestions were turned down by publishers. To begin with, the excuse of paper shortages was used. Later on it would be accompanied by a short explanation of how important it was to publish those books that not only met certain artistic but also social criteria. (Vimr 2009: 146) In fact, paper shortages ceased to be a real problem as early as mid 1946, but on a political level a decision was taken to export paper and raise cash instead of using it at home. (Cf. Janáček 1998) It seems probable that publishers continued to use the paper-shortages argument, as it might have been more understandable and acceptable for translators, especially those with life-long experience, with complex and deep-rooted *habitus*. (Cf. also Vimr 2006)

To illustrate the complexity of the publishing field and the position of the publishers of translated literature, let us take a look at an enlightening normal-exceptional case. Not surprisingly, we deal with a publisher, not a translator. In the post-WWII era, Bohumil Janda (1900–1982) had been a highly esteemed Prague-based Czech publisher for a long time. He started as a very industrious and innovative entrepreneur as early as the late 1910s, and quickly became one of the leading publishers of (mostly) translated literature. He strived for ever-closer cooperation of the publisher, editors, translators and readers, founding an influential book club in 1930s. Importantly, as a long-serving vice-president of the Association of Czech Booksellers and Publishers and an active

member of the International Publishers Association, he had a strong position in the national publishing field and a large network of international contacts. (See Tomeš 2000) Undoubtedly, to understand his position in the publishing field and his strategy in the post-war era, which must have been rather difficult for a publisher of translated literature in an environment that systemically preferred Czech canonical literature, his *habitus*, or his inculcated experience, is of utmost importance. So far, the cornerstones of his success had been 1) gradual but incessant innovation of his publishing schemes and publishing programme, 2) cooperation both nationally and internationally, 3) trust in expert knowledge of editors and translators, and 4) responsiveness in relation to readership.

In 1947, he founded the Publishers Association of Small Nations (or PASN, see also Manteau 2000: 60) and in late 1947 in cooperation with Max Tau (1897–1976) – a German Jewish editor and literary agent with vast contacts in the publishing and literary circle all over Europe, a 1938 émigré to Norway, and a dear friend of Janda’s – proposed a new scheme of cooperation in publishing and book promotion. It was called the Bridge and supposedly it was open to all publishers of small European nations.³ The main idea was to choose the “best books” from the participating countries every year, translate them into all other participating languages and publish them at the same time, with a multiplier marketing effect. The project was prepared in late 1947 and in the beginning of 1948, and the first general assembly was planned for Prague in the beginning of March 1948. The following press release was prepared for the occasion, openly describing the clearly defined roles of Janda and Tau:

On the birthday of [the first Czechoslovak] President Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk [i.e. 7th March], publishers from small nations gathered in Prague and concluded a cooperation agreement under the label “The Bridge”. The publishers intend to find the best books in their countries and thus represent both their respective countries and cultures. The Prague publisher Bohumil Janda will be in charge of the business management. The literary management will lay in the hands of Dr. Max Tau, Oslo. (Tau 1948a)

The goal was to promote minor literatures both internally (draw attention of domestic readers to other minor literatures) and externally (become visible for larger markets). The main ideas are presented in letters inviting new publishers from other small countries, such as the following one from Bohumil Janda to Henrik Hajdu, a Budapest based Hungarian publisher:

Dr. Max Tau, whom I presume you know well, and I are going to join together the leading publishers of small countries for a close cooperation in order to protect their

³ The history of the Bridge project (the Czech and German equivalents of the name occur as well, *Most* and *Die Brücke* respectively) is based on the correspondence between Max Tau and Bohumil Janda in Max Tau’s archive in the Norwegian National Library in Oslo, Brevs. nr. 550. The collection includes however also a number of copies of letters between other participants in the project.

mutual interests. The association is called THE BRIDGE which means the bridge of understanding and cooperation. [...] I hope you do not mind that I trouble you with this plan, but considering its significance for the favourable introduction of Hungarian literature to the world market, I am sure that I am not bothering you with trifles. (Janda 1948a)

Countries of importance for the project fall into three groups. The hard core of participating countries included Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Holland, Norway, Sweden. In these countries, Bohumil Janda and Max Tau quickly found (also building on PASN) publishers ready to take part in the project. Another group included prospective members, members that they negotiated with. These were Hungary, Romania, Finland, Iceland, Poland, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia. Some were easier to recruit, such as Hungary, some were more difficult, such as Poland (Polish publishers did not want to accept the idea that Poland was a small country, not even taking into account the size of their book market), some were regarded as future members (such as Iceland that lacked a sufficient book market). The third group included passive members: Germany, France, the UK and USA. The point was to find publishers in these countries willing to publish a selection of the Bridge annual portfolio.

Bohumil Janda and Max Tau anxiously planned the marketing of the project. They strived to make the project visible both for domestic readers and for publishers in the large markets. First of all, they offered honorary membership to well known public figures both from the respective countries and outside of them, such as the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs Jan Masaryk, Prince Wilhelm of Sweden, Nobel Prize winners Johannes Vilhelm Jensen, Maurice Maeterlinck, Thomas Mann, etc., big names that would draw the attention of the media and the general public. The project was strictly apolitical, excluding Nobel Prize laureate Sigrid Undset from the list of honorary members and replacing her by a less famous compatriot of hers, novelist Johan Falkberget, immediately after Tau learned that she had published a political article. (Tau 1948b) For promotional purposes, Janda proposed a literary competition too, obviously drawing on his pre-war experience with the All-Nations Prize Novel Competition. (Cf. Graham 1935: 54; Richter 1946: 37; Čáslavská 1977) Importantly, an offer was made by the German publisher Wolfgang von Einsiedel to publish a literary journal in several languages to support the Bridge project. (unknown 1948)

The official literary programme of “ideal literature”, or the official paradigm, and Bohumil Janda’s and Max Tau’s project, or the private paradigm, have much in common. Both involved small nations, big names and coordination and planning. The approach and the definition of these notions, though, differ substantially. The official paradigm started with the idea of a (poly)systemic construction of new literature in defence of a small nation excluding, for instance, as much trash and translated literature as possible. The big names were domestic canonical authors. Coordination involved making the agents of the publishing field – publishers, editors, translators – fulfil the plan of a strong literary (poly)system. The private paradigm, on the other hand,

departed from the idea of international cooperation among small nations. Although the protection of “mutual interests” was a point in their negotiations as well, promotion was a stronger and decisive one. The big names were the names of contemporary supporters of the idea. The *habitus* of the publishers and editors furnished them with trust in the project, as the Bridge scheme was “‘reasonable’, ‘common-sense’ behaviour [...], which [was] likely to be positively sanctioned because [it was] objectively adjusted to the logic characteristic of a particular field [i.e. the publishing field of the time and place] whose objective future they anticipate[d]” (Bourdieu 1990: 55–6). They coordinated their actions in order to gain an ever better position both in the respective domestic publishing fields and in the international publishing field. The official paradigm was largely centripetal and protective, whereas the private paradigm was centrifugal and promotive. Importantly, although it might seem that the official and private paradigms contradicted and opposed each other, they actually coexisted for some time, showing the heterogeneity of the Czechoslovak literary and publishing life in the early post-war years. One might argue that the Bridge project remained on paper only, but the key issue, i.e. the importance of publishers’ and editors’ *habitus* in the struggle for their position in the publishing field is not limited to Bohumil Janda but can be found with a number of others at the time.

The late February 1948 Communist overthrow in Czechoslovakia brought extensive changes to all facets of life in the country, publishing and translating being no exception. However, the story of the failed Bridge project shows that the coup came most unexpectedly and that the changes to come were far beyond the imagination even of the people following regularly the public and political matters, as Janda undoubtedly was. As mentioned above, the general assembly was supposed to take place in the beginning of March 1948 in Prague. It was only in the latter half of February that Bohumil Janda learned that the participants did not get entry visas, despite the fact that Janda had been granted priority assistance both from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Interior. The general assembly was hastily moved to Stockholm, and in Janda’s absence (he was not allowed to leave the country), it elected him the permanent president and Tau the permanent general secretary of the Bridge. On 10 March 1948, Jan Masaryk, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, an important symbol of the democratic regime in Czechoslovakia and an honorary member of the Bridge, was found dead in the courtyard of the Foreign Ministry.

The changes in the publishing industry were gradual, but more and more substantial. They involved gradual obliteration of the autonomy of the publishing field and its merging with the field of power. In the beginning, they followed the ideas of cooperation and regulation formulated and put into practice in the preceding years, which made the transformation smooth and inconspicuous. Some of the enforced changes were strikingly radical though: the head of the book department of the Ministry of Information was dismissed and expelled from the Party, publishing houses were nationalized and merged, and their directors and editorial boards were largely replaced. Bohumil Janda’s two publishing houses were also nationalized, but the process did not arouse much suspicion on his part, and he was optimistic:

As for myself, I am – both personally and professionally – at the height again. Indeed, both my ELK and SFINX publishing houses have got a national steward, who is fortunately a very decent man and knows our job well, since he was in our services a couple of years ago. Moreover, I am still the executive director as before. (Janda 1948b)

Actually he went on preparing the Bridge project. The only substantial modifications they made were due to the unforeseen complexity and heterogeneity entailed in a cooperation of publishers from a large number of rather different countries with varied book markets. Both Janda and Tau kept assuring themselves that their project was unique and had no political bias; it was based on a somewhat idealistic belief in peaceful cooperation and the uniting force of the art of literature. Bohumil Janda, however, was soon dismissed from his publishing houses (which he once founded and owned) and was put to forest work. His publishing houses were gradually merged with other nationalized publishing houses with similar profiles and finally rebranded. Correspondence between Janda and Tau ends in May 1948.

The early post-war programme of “ideal literature” was easy to adapt in conformity with the new political agenda. The abstract and mostly qualitative selection criteria forming a rather flexible and comprehensive literary polysystem were replaced by a more straightforward and restrictive system, now going far beyond literary fiction, incorporating all kinds of texts. The hierarchy of importance within the new literary (or publishing) polysystem was a key to the distribution of the publishing paper available.

The Cultural Committee of the [Communist] Party has established the order of importance of the particular categories as follows:

1. Marxist-Leninist literature
 2. School text books
 3. [Alois] Jirásek
 4. Technical literature necessary for the fulfilment of the five-year plan
 5. Czech and Soviet fiction
 6. Other kinds of literature
- (Report on the inspection and planning of the publishing activity. Summer 1949. Reprinted in Janáček 2004: 373)

The early post-war literary system focused on fiction mainly. While applying a stick-and-carrot method, it encouraged publishers to cooperate and put a complex (poly) system of “ideal literature” into practice, a (poly)system they actually had helped to formulate. The “harmful” and “unnecessary” literature (mostly trash literature and excessive amounts of popular and translated literature) was supposed to give way to more important works, with a strong preference for Czech canonical literature. The post February 1948 system was clearly a polysystem with a concoction of subsystems formed mostly on ideological and practical grounds. Fiction now made up only a less important part of it, Czech literature being equally important as Soviet literature. Translations from

other than Soviet literatures were given no priority at all (see “other kinds of literature”). Interestingly, a trace of the preference for Czech canonical literature was maintained, now limited to one particular author of historical novels, Alois Jirásek (1851–1930), that were officially interpreted in a way favourable to the Marxist-Leninist theories.

The post February 1948 regime introduced a strictly prescriptive literary polysystem. The ideas of cooperation and regulation were brought as far as to annihilate any potential struggle within the publishing field, a precondition for a field to survive and develop. The *habitus* of the agents that brought heterogeneity and autonomy to the early post-war era publishing field was an obvious obstacle to its later homogenization. The durably inculcated *habitus* of these agents (both publishers and translators) did “generate dispositions objectively compatible with these [objective] conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands” and they did exclude “the most improbable practices [...] as unthinkable”. (Bourdieu 1990: 54) But it was these most improbable and unthinkable practices that were actually taking place. The agents with substantial *habitus* that “ensure[d] the active presence of past experiences” had to be replaced. The past experiences were supposed to be present in a negative way only, as something undesirable, disturbing the new homogenous, struggle-free and stable publishing field that was expected to produce a strict prescribed publishing polysystem. If the literary and publishing field had a certain amount of autonomy in the years 1945–1948, now it was fully deprived of it. The publishing field was not supposed to be “able to retranslate in terms of its own logic all the external forces, especially the economic and political ones” anymore, it was supposed to mirror them, to mirror the field of power, to merge with it. The nationalized publishing houses were merged into near-monopolies specializing in clearly defined areas, often bearing rather descriptive names, such as the State Publishing House of Fine Literature, Music and Fine Arts. In the course of the first several years after 1948, merely a few non-Soviet fiction authors were translated and published. Translators lost most of their roles in the process of translation (see Vimr 2009), and a large number of them lost any chance to continue translating, making their *habitus* a burden and obstacle to translation practice excessive and their presence “here, in this world, [...] utterly useless and redundant.” (Walter 1959, see also Vimr 2009) Precautions were taken to eliminate all literature unfavourable to the new regime. Both the form and content of each work and the political profile of the author were assessed: “contracts with foreign authors are signed only after a serious editorial inspection and the clarification of the authors’ political views.” (Report on inspection and planning of publishing activity. Summer 1949. Reprinted in Janáček 2004: 368)

The post February 1948 regime challenges the descriptivism of polysystems because it strictly prescribed one; any description of the system will most probably mirror the prescription. It challenges the strugglesome nature of Bourdieusian fields, because the new publishing field was near-merged with the field of power. Rather naturally, books (and other media) were important for the promulgation of the Communist ideology. Any form of autonomy of the publishing field was therefore unthinkable. And it challenges the conservatory principles of *habitus* that helps its bearer to find the way in the respective fields. The great majority of agents with inculcated *habitués* were dangerous and therefore useless for the new regime. Their

habituses did not favour a strictly prescriptive systematicity or publishing field merged with the field of power. The Communist regime was formed to produce centrally planned systemic stability. The individual and subjective (i.e. the unpredictable) thus had to be suppressed. The case of Bohumil Janda's and Max Tau's publishing project foregrounds the thin but distinctive divide between two utterly different paradigms: a paradigm of self-regulation and a paradigm of totality.

The stability of the post February 1948 publishing system was, nevertheless, questioned rather soon. The death of Stalin (1953) and particularly the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1956) slightly eroded the strict totalitarian system and lay grounds for a gradual regaining of the autonomy of the publishing field, however restricted it remained until 1989. It should not be left unnoticed that the hints of change came from outside of Czechoslovakia, from the Soviet Union. An analysis of the relation and development of the international power and publishing fields as well as the international publishing polysystem within the former Communist bloc, including the inner interdependencies and outer relations to the rest of the world, is beyond the aims of this paper.

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