

# Editorial



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The present issue focuses on the notion of cultural transfer. The term was coined by Michel Espagne and Michael Werner and has been used by them since the 1980s as a device for focusing on those aspects of relations among neighboring cultures which appear to be hidden or neglected by standard comparative interpretations. In their analysis of the relations between French and German cultural spheres of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, they wanted to go beyond mere filtering of similarities and differences as well as beyond highly specific approaches such as the history of translations from one language to another. The notion of cultural transfer should capture the dynamics of distinct encounters between various cultures by situating cultural texts into their newly gained contexts, adopting differentiated ways of understanding as well as mixing distinctive partial elements, mutual juxtapositions and hybridization and acculturation, all treated against the background of long-term contacts among different cultural communities. A new context brings out a new production of meanings, new interpretations and highlights which refocus the original reception. It allows us to see everything in other proportions and relationships. The notion of cultural transfer is perhaps less specific (and, needless to say, more open) than the concept of influence and impact involving the idea of an original, 'natural' context as against a novel context which attempts to assimilate a foreign element. The idea of influence proves more functional in Post-colonial Studies; however, it does not work in contexts which cannot presuppose one-directional mechanical flow (impact of something upon something) or which need to study the circulation of features such that they lack a unifying and clear point of origin.

The notion of cultural transfer was coined at a time when traditional concepts, based on the linearity of time, gave way to concepts based on space. It arrived simultaneously with Pierre Bourdieu and his notion of literary and cultural fields. Thus, the notion of cultural transfer carries with it the image of cultural zones, instead of a homogeneous national literature with clear borderlines. Within these zones, various elements rearrange their spatial belongings and the transfer that have some impact just within a partial zone or it can reshape the imaginary borders of such a zone. It helps us adopt the notions of distinct enclaves, zones of transfer and 'bridges'. Such spatial entities can produce spatial rules of movement of distinctive agents which (knowingly or not) participate in cultural transfers.

The present issue of *Word and Sense* offers mainly essays and sketches which originated as papers read at two workshops: *Die Körperlichkeit der Geschichte und ihrer Medien in Bohumil Hrabals Schreiben* (Erfurt, December 2014) and *Übertragende Lektüren: Ein Workshop zu Verortung, Transfer, Etablierung und Ablehnung von Theorien im tschechisch- und deutschsprachigen Raum des 20. und 21. Jahrhunderts* (Prague, February 2015). Both workshops can be seen as results of long-term cooperation between Universität Erfurt (various philological departments, chiefly Slavische Literaturwissenschaft) and Charles University, Faculty of Arts (Department of Czech and Comparative Literature and Department of German Studies). The idea of ‘transferred readings’ as a shared area of interest was suggested by prof. Holt Meyer and it turned out to be genuinely fruitful, functioning as it does as an umbrella concept allowing to link distinctive partial clusters, such as transfers between genres and fields of study (philosophy, literature, political science etc.), translations, and transfers of texts as physical objects. The concept also includes the sphere of media and agents of mediation, which can also have impact on the features of the transferring processes and the content of what is being transferred. ‘Transferred readings’ thus allow to include all the processes of reading and writing located in a new context or in a new relationship which draws up a difference.

The present issue opens with Manfred Weinberg’s *Theorie-Kulturen: Ein Erfahrungsbericht*. His essay approaches the circulation of cultural theories within European space of the last few decades from a personal perspective. The focus then moves from literary theory to history of arts and aesthetics. Josef Vojvodík offers an analytic comparison of the notion of universal arts, as coined by Max Dvořák for the history of visual arts, and the theoretical notion of pure art, as coined by Karel Teige with reference to paintings by Jan Zrzavý and then developed into Teige’s idea of ‘inner model’. Tomáš Murár traces the transfer of the concept of will-to-art (*Kunstwollen*) from its cradle in the Vienna School of History of Arts of the 1890s into the Czech context of the 1920s, with a focus on Vojtěch Birnbaum — by the way a tutor of the young Karel Teige. The focus then returns to literature, as Libuše Heczková and Kateřina Svatoňová analyse the shifts of the term *ostranenie*, introduced by the Russian Formalists; translated as *ozvláštňení*, it stresses one part of its meaning while leaving aside other parts of the original concept. Holt Meyer closes the first section with his analytic interpretation of Bohumil Hrabal’s *Proluky*, which he reads within the frame of Roland Barthes’s *Writing Degree Zero* in order to expose a broad theme of similarities and contrasts between fictional and non-fictional discourses.

The section of Sketches pursues further the notion of cultural transfers. Lucie Merhautová offers an analysis of the image of Czech literary modernism presented by the journal *Aus fremden Zungen*. Tilman Kasten interprets the German translations of the Jaroslav Durych historical novel *Bloudění* as not merely linguistic but also cultural transfer. Marika Kupková offers an account of the mechanisms of production and ideological considerations in the biographical film *Z mého života* (directed by Václav Krška) which transferred the life circumstances of the composer Bedřich Smetana onto the movie screen. Nils Plath interprets the four-volume novel *Jahrestagen* (1970–1983) by Uwe Johnson with a focus on motifs borrowed from non-German cultural contexts and with a special attention on the image of Prague and its role in the novel. The section closes with a group of essays devoted to Bohumil Hrabal.

Heike Winkel traces Rabelaisian and other foreign motifs in the narration of Haňfa in Hrabal's novella *Too Loud a Solitude*. Ina Hartmann presents a reading of his novel *I Served the King of England* from the perspective of the poetics of socialist realism. Anna Förster compares the prose fictions of Bohumil Hrabal and Jáchym Topol, employing the notion of self-referential imagination, particularly via a reflection on the conditions and effects of writing and/or narrating.

The section *A Question for...* offers part of an essay-interview by Barbara Gronau and Alice Lagaay '...die Einladung, Widersprüchliches zu ertragen...'. *Schlaglichter auf den performative turn in Philosophie und Theater/wissenschaft*. It analyses the Performative Turn as a new tendency seen in the recent history of thought, theory of literature and theater studies. The performative dimension consists in a permanent revitalization of certain constant and stable themes and formulas, which are thus not merely brought back to the spotlight; rather, their meanings are tested and shifted in a never-ending chain of novel historical constellations.

Due to the fact that cultural transfer debates have been running through the entire European space recently, most of the essays included in this issue are published in English or German, which should grant them a larger communicative platform. In order to compensate this linguistic alienation of the domestic readers, we have expanded the section of Translations. It offers an essay of Mona Körte (published in 2007 in German) which traces the stereotypes of images of Jewish people in German literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is followed by the translation of the first chapter of the book *Teorie literatury XX wieku*, published in 2006 by Anna Burzyńska and Michał Paweł Markowski. Given the larger extent of most of the main sections, the space left for *Critical Reviews* is much smaller than usual in this journal.

#### **Petr A. Bílek**

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