THE CZECH STRUCTURALIST TRADITION AND TRANSLATION-RELATED SEMIOTIC TEXT ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

The Czech structuralist tradition is vital to several fields of study: linguistics, literary studies, stylistics, pragmatics, semiotics, and translation studies. While in linguistics its legacy is widely acknowledged, other fields do not readily recognise it and some authors refer to it in confusing or even erroneous ways. The aims of the present study are thus twofold:
– to introduce the Czech structuralist tradition as a functionalist tradition and as a formative source of the Czech and Slovak translation traditions in order to argue that it is a relevant current approach to translation,
– to create a model of semiotic analysis as a tool for the analysis of (literary) source texts.
Against the more general background of the academic discussions of functionalism and "pragmatics as a general functional perspective on (any aspect of) language, i.e. as an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. 'meaningful') functioning in the lives of human beings" (Verschueren 2009: 19), the study draws on the semiotic account of language as elaborated by the members of the Prague Linguistic Circle. More specifically, it focuses on the semiotics of literary texts as related to the dynamic notion of function and meaning as a unity that integrates form and content and includes the human factor of meaning-making. The paper seeks to develop the model presented in the monograph *Významová výstavba literárního díla* (Meaning Structure of Literary Works) by Miroslav Červenka (1992) into a tool for the analysis of (literary) source texts as a part of the cognitive process of translation and possibly the evaluation of the quality of translation, pilot testing it on examples, and briefly touching upon the notions of functional equivalence and translatability.

Keywords: Czech structuralism; functionalism; literary work as a sign; semiosis; translation-related text analysis

1. The Czech structuralist tradition: formalism, functionalism, or structuralism?

The title implies the question of how the Czech structuralist tradition is perceived today. Linguistic sources mostly refer to *functional* linguistics (or avoid the issue by referring to the Prague school of linguistics or to the Prague Linguistic Circle), which is logical as they highlight and acknowledge the functional approach based on Bühler's account of language functions and its impact on linguistics. Other disciplines tend to use the terms *formalism* and/or *structuralism* to refer to the Czech structuralist tradition and approve or disapprove of it, depending on the degree to which they approve/disapprove of formalist and essentialist accounts of language. This association of Czech structuralism with formalist and essentialist positions is ill-conceived, however, and causes misunderstandings and misconceptions. This negative influence is especially strong in translation studies (TS) and consequently, the Czech structuralist tradition and the translation theory affected by it have not yet been fully appreciated or utilised.

It is generally recognised that the Czech functionalist tradition shares common traits (the concept of language functions and sensitivity to contextual issues) and a similar impact on linguistics with the British tradition of functional linguistics. Van Valin (2003: 328) stresses the influence of the Prague Linguistic Circle and specifically of Mathesius: "The idea of extending linguistic analysis to include communicative functions was first proposed by Czech linguists. Virtually all contemporary functional approaches trace their roots back to the work of the Czech linguist Mathesius in the 1920s as part of the Prague School." Verschueren (2009: 7) claims:

> *Prague school linguistics* […] was functionalist in the sense that language was viewed from the perspective of the goals it serves in human activity. Though much of the work was devoted to linguistic details, its foundations were linked to cybernetics with its notion of the goal-directedness of dynamic systems. Moreover, there was a stylistic component (e.g., Jakobson 1960) which brought the Prague school close to the concerns of semiotics in general […] Today, most *functional approaches in linguistics* have direct or indirect historical roots in Firthian linguistics or the Prague school or both (Verschueren 2009: 7, italics in original).

But whereas the significance of Hallidayan linguistics for TS has been highlighted and commented on by many researchers (e.g. Catford 1965; House 1977, 1997, 2008; Newmark 1991; Baker 1992; Hatim and Mason 1990; Nida 2001; Hatim and Munday 2004; Malmkjær 2005; Munday 2008; Hatim 2013), Czech functionalism/structuralism has not been so lucky in this respect and it is not internationally acknowledged as a formative source of thinking about translation. There are several reasons for this, as Jettmarová (2008, 16) explains: "Outside his [Levý's] country, isolated behind the 'iron curtain', Prague Structuralism continued to be widely misinterpreted, being equated with Russian Formalism […] [and] linked with French structuralism, and so […] discarded by post-structuralism in the mid 70s." The identification with Russian Formalism is widespread indeed; e.g. Bradford (2005: 11) speaks about "the Russian and central European Formalists", Dosse (1998: 21) about "the early twentieth-century formalists of the Prague

Circle", and Venuti (2004: 6) about "Czech and Russian formalism". Relevant here, and also to the discussion of the stylistic and semiotic aspects, is the statement by Stockwell (2006: 744):

> The third area which influenced stylistics was European structuralism, arising out of Saussurean semiology and Russian Formalism […] Branded "formalists" by their detractors, many of the main concerns of modern poetics were in fact developed by […] the Prague School linguists. These concerns included studies of metaphor, the foregrounding and dominance of theme, trope and other linguistic variables, narrative morphology, the effects of literary defamiliarization, and the use of theme and rheme to delineate perspective in sentences. The Formalists called themselves "literary linguists", in recognition of their belief that linguistics was the necessary ground for literary study (Stockwell 2006, 744).

Within TS, the label *structuralism* is perceived as dissuasive and inimical to the development of the discipline. This opinion is voiced, for example, by Hatim (2013: 17): "The vague and atomistic approach to how language works that was adopted by early models of linguistics (e.g. structuralism) stood in the way of any meaningful application of the subject to the study of translation."[1] But as Králová and Jettmarová (2008: 20) explain with reference to Doležel, Czech structuralism as a whole was rooted in functionalism:

> Prague structuralism started with functional linguistics, transformed as early as the 1930–40s into functional stylistics, which included both poetic and non-poetic types of language use […] the Prague functional theory of communication […] easily subsumed the study of literary poetics as well as the study of non-poetic discourses (Králová and Jettmarová 2008: 20).

It can be argued that neglecting Czech structuralism and the translation tradition based on it is detrimental to TS. This claim may be supported by comparing, for example, Catford's notion of equivalence with Levý's ideas. Catford's 1965 account reveals the still uncertain and vague treatment of contextual and functional issues:

> For translation equivalence to occur […] both SL and TL text must be relatable to the functionally relevant features of situation. A decision, in any particular case, as to what is *functionally* relevant in this sense must in our present state of knowledge remain to some extent a matter of opinion. The total co-text will supply information which the translator will use in coming to a decision, but it is difficult to define functional relevance in general terms (quoted from Malmkjær 2005: 26, italics in Malmkjær).

Levý's model formulated in the 1960s grew out of contextual considerations developed by the Prague school and offers a theoretically and methodologically advanced view of translation and translating. It is grounded in a forward-looking dynamic concept of *function* and in an equally forward-looking concept of meaning as an integration of form, content, and the human factor. "The dynamic aspect of *function*, pointing to the

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[1] The same source (Hatim 2013: 73) nevertheless reflects the Czech and Slovak translation traditions and points out that "the polysystem model owes a considerable debt to the vigorous intellectual activity which Eastern Europe saw in the 1960s and early 1970s" and refers to Popovič (ibid) in a discussion of shifts.

historicity, or socio-historical embeddedness of verbal messages, implies that one and the same text may acquire different (especially dominant) functions at different times and in different cultures" (Jettmarová 2008: 26). Jettmarová (ibid.: 29) goes on to explain that as a consequence, Levý's concept of equivalence departs from other concepts:

> In fact, what counts as equivalence is the reproduction in translation of the (communicatively relevant) functions of dominant SLT message elements (on different hierarchical structural levels, but understood semantically as meaning constituted by both form and content) contributing to the realization of the intended dominant function of the TLT message as a whole. This can be achieved by substituting dominant SLT elements with TLT elements of a similar value (i.e. corresponding in function, and not necessarily in form and/or content) for the target receiver (Jettmarová 2008: 29).[2]

The fact that both the British *and* the Czech functionalist traditions have a great potential for TS is nevertheless acknowledged by some recent sources, e.g. by House (2008: 150):

> A non-bipolar way of taking account of "culture" in translation might for instance follow the model set for some time by various functionally oriented linguistic schools such as the Prague school of linguistics, or the British contextualist school of systemic functionalism – schools where language has long been conceived as primarily a sociocultural phenomenon which is naturally and inextricably intertwined with social situations and culture such that the meaning of any linguistic and, by extension, any translation, item can only be properly understood with reference to the cultural context enveloping it (House 2008: 150).

The present paper is meant as a contribution to discussions of this kind and aims to show that Czech structuralism/functionalism is a tradition distinguished by:
(a) the *semiotic* account of language and its use as *communication* embedded in its social-cultural environment;
(b) the study of *language functions* and the *dynamic* notion of *function*;
(c) the concept of *open structure*, conceived of as a networked system of elements;
(d) meaning as a unity that integrates form and content and includes the human factor of *meaning-making*;
(e) the concepts of *potentiality* and *intersubjectivity*;
(f) the concepts of *style as a unifying principle* integrating all levels of the text and *integrated into the semiotic perspective*.
The prominence within Czech structuralism of communication and its dimensions, including the specific features of literary communication, will be demonstrated by the way Miroslav Červenka, a successor to this tradition, approaches the semiotic analysis of literary texts and defines concepts that are central to literary theory and directly relevant to TS:
– the dynamic character of meaning conceived of as meaning-making;
– the dynamic character of literature, literary texts and their structuring;

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2   The abbreviations SLT (source language text) and TLT (target language text) are used by Jettmarová (2008).

– the notion of the literary text conceptualised as an open structure and thus including not only the text itself but also the author, the recipient, and the social and communicative conditions of reception.

2. Semiotic perspective: Meaning-making and the meaning structure of (literary) texts

This part of the present contribution draws on the 1992 monograph by Miroslav Červenka *Významová výstavba literárního díla* (*Meaning Structure of Literary Works*). Following the above-cited concepts of Prague structuralism, and particularly Jan Mukařovský, the author

– gives a *communicative*, *functional*, and *semiotic* account of literature, claiming that "Literature employs and recreates basic sign systems in an innovative way and restructures the hierarchy of functions affecting the process of communication"[3] and that "the active function of literature goes far beyond the renewal and restructuring of the material of communication, the language; literature spotlights the process itself, foregrounding in the human model of the world its communicative component and presenting the human world as a world of communication *par excellence*" (12);

– treats literature as a *specific phenomenon*, asserting that "the work of literature is a *sui generis* phenomenon that because of its most fundamental existential relations and features uniquely realises the set of functions that only literature is capable of fulfilling in social life";

– makes the notion of *value* the focal point of his considerations, though one that is deliberately not expanded upon, (11): "The 'world' of literature (art) is centred around a dominant feature, and this dominant feature is value" (ibid.).

Červenka conceives of a *literary work as a sign* and a *dynamic set of meanings*. He refers to the Polish philosopher Roman Ingarden and highlights the principle of the hierarchical arrangement of literary works (the elements of lower levels of meaning constitute higher-level systems). Making use of contemporary linguistics, specifically the three-stage model formulated by František Daneš, the author considers literary texts at the level of paradigm (a historically changeable system of literary norms), at the level of discourse (a literary work) and at the level of discourse-as-event (concretisation). According to Červenka (1992), the existence of a literary work

– is merely *potential*: "a work, independent on its concretisations, exists only potentially" (28);

– depends on the *individual* subjective attitude of the recipient, is *open to different interpretations* and "the scholarly analysis of a work constitutes an analysis of one of its concretisations and as such, it is not a priori more objective than any other concretisation" (31),

– this approach does not entail arbitrariness, however, as the creation and reception of a work are rooted in socially constituted codes and consequently, the concretisation is

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3 The quotations from the body of the text by Červenka (1992) were translated from Czech into English by the present author. Some quotations were taken from the English Summary (147–48).

to be *intersubjectively valid*, "ruled by […] optimal knowledge of codes, awareness of ambiguity, tendency towards the sphere of potentiality and coherence criteria" (147).

As far as the traditional Saussurean distinction between signifier and signified is concerned, Červenka utilises Ullman's 1957 study *Principles of Semantics* and stresses the dynamics of the relation between the signifier and the signified: "Meaning is a reciprocal relation between name and sense […] This definition turns meaning from a static into a functional concept; it becomes a relation and thus dynamic in its very essence" (38). To heed this dynamism, Červenka translates Ullman's term *meaning* as *znamenání (meaning-making)*. Another principle underlying Červenka's approach is the reduction of the semantic analysis to the left-hand side of Ogden and Richard's triangle, i.e. to the relation between the signifier (name, signifiant) and meaning (reference, sense, signifié), restricting his analyses to "the 'inner circle' of semiosis (signifier/signified, referent in the background)" (147). For the classification of signs, Červenka uses Peirce's system, suggesting that:

> [t]he symbol is suppressed by the foregrounding of the vehicle, and relative motivation is employed. The iconic principle manifests itself mainly in the process of structuring higher units […] The indices include, among others, stylistic characteristics of the discourse: this establishes a conception of a work as a unified semantic structure (and not as a result of diverse processes, semiotic and stylistic) (ibid.).

Drawing on Roland Barthes's scheme, Červenka first considers a set of preliminary and tentative combinations of elementary and complex sign levels and on the basis of this, he identifies six types of meaning contexts (see Section 4), thus developing a general typology of meaning complexes.

3. The model of semiotic analysis: The process of semiosis

3.1 The principles

The goal of Červenka's semiotic analysis is to investigate the distinct ways in which individual signs form complex signs (sign contexts) in order to uncover the general principles underlying the process of meaning-making. The process of signs giving rise to other signs, i.e. the process of semiosis, explained in this section, forms the first part of the model of semiotic analysis. The second part of the model consists of the above-mentioned six types of meaning contexts that are modelled via schemes and described verbally in Section 4.

Following the concepts introduced above, a literary text is conceptualised by Červenka (1992) as
– a structure unifying lower-order and higher-order signs;
– an *open* structure, a work of an individual author interpreted by its recipients and interacting with its environment ("the structure of other works of the same author and his/her contemporaries, the context of contemporary culture, philosophy, social

activities etc. […] this contextualisation is central for the selection of relevant codes that form the basis for the *interpretation* of the work" (25);

– a work of *literature*.

The semiotic principles described here are general and valid for all text types. Nevertheless, Červenka deals with literary texts and takes their specific features into account. The fundamental specific feature is called *high variety*. It means that each element is simultaneously incorporated into several systems, which accounts for the extreme complexity of literary texts. Underlying this *high variety* are the facts that "[l]iterary communication adds further codes to the basic language code" (147) and that there are multiple contexts interacting within the text (development of the topic, depiction of the characters, composition, rhythmical structure etc. (45)). The abstract schemes which necessarily generalise and simplify will be illustrated by examples taken from a literary text (the short story *Snow* by Ann Beattie), which is available in the Appendix.
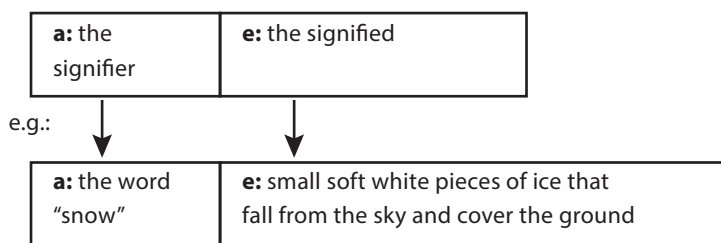
3.2 The process of semiosis

Following Červenka (1992, 80), these abbreviations are used within the model:

	Hierarchical level		
	Elementary sign	Complex signs	Attached meaning complexes
signifier	a	A, A', A"	α
signified	e	E, E', E"	ε
sign (as a whole)	s	S	–

→ incorporation into higher complex
↔ meaning-making relation

The basic element of the process of semiosis is the individual sign. It is a unity of the signifier and the signified as represented by the following Scheme 1:[4]

a: the signifier	**e:** the signified

e.g.:

a: the word "snow"	**e:** small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground

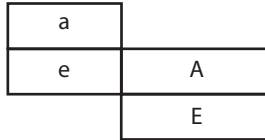**Scheme 1.** Individual sign

The process of semiosis will be delineated in steps A to F and exemplified by the metaphorical context (see Section 4.2).

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4 The definitions of the signified discussed in the paper are taken from the Macmillan Dictionary and Thesaurus: Free English Dictionary Online http://www.macmillandictionary.com.

A. The process of semiosis begins at the level of the individual sign, a metaphor in this case.
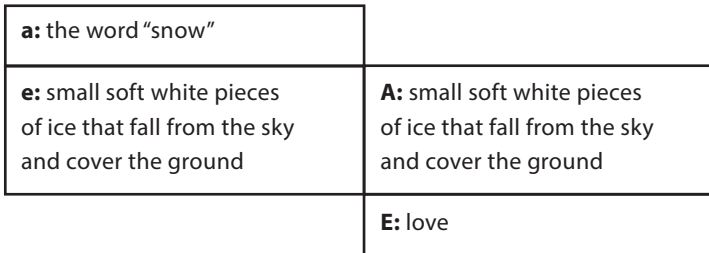
Červenka describes signs in two ways: using the abbreviations and symbols introduced above with explanatory notes and via schemes. For the metaphorical sign, he offers these descriptions and schemes (1992: 84):

a ↔ e – A ↔ E: the signified of an elementary sign (e) becomes the signifier of a complex sign (A); the signified of the complex sign (E) has metaphorical meaning:
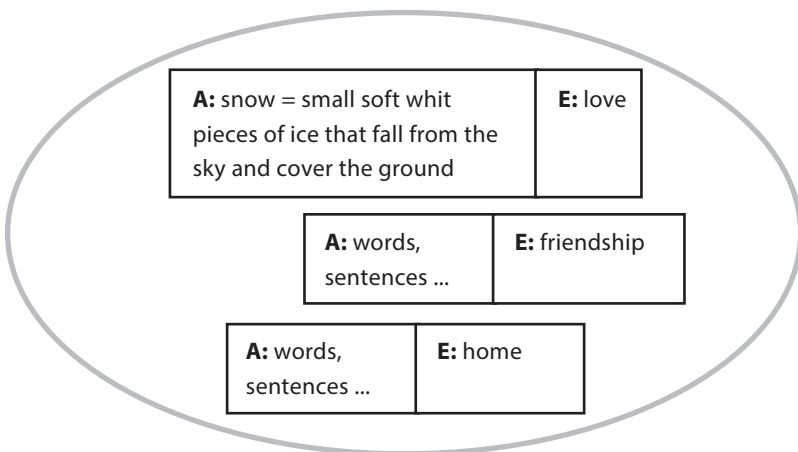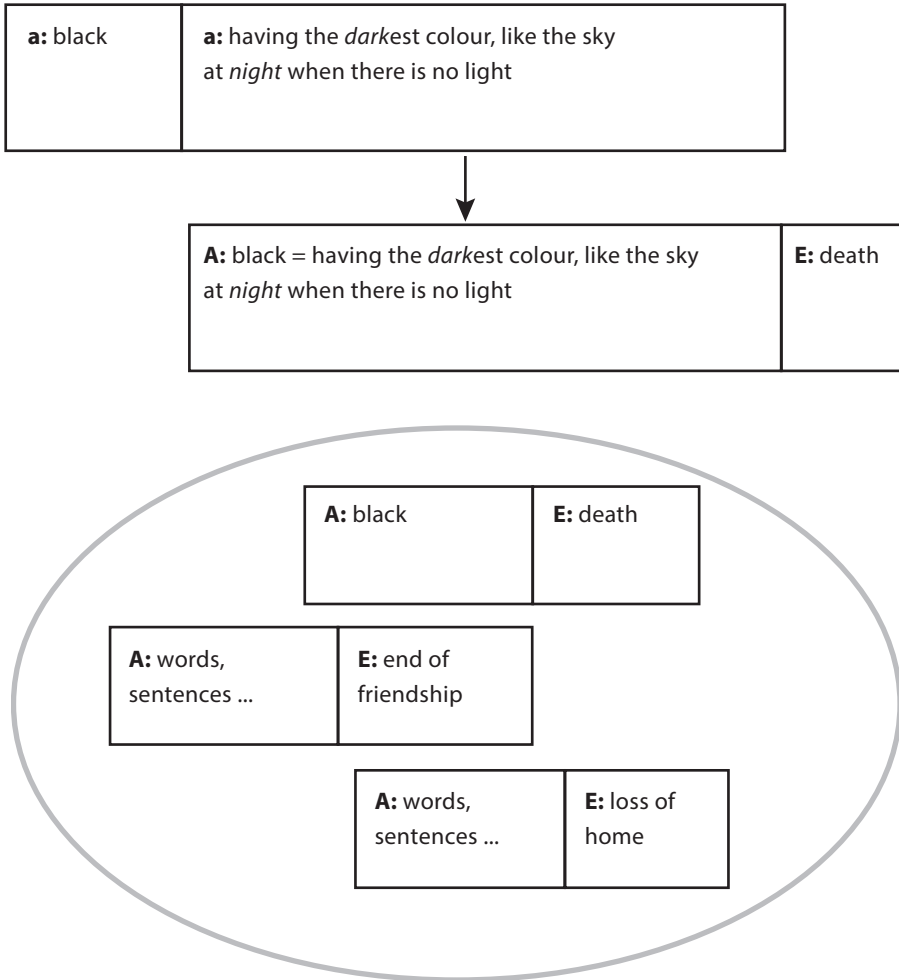
a	
e	A
	E

Scheme 2. Metaphorical sign

Example 1:

a: the word "snow"	
e: small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground	**A:** small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground
	E: love

B. The process of semiosis continues and individual complex signs form contexts (other signs):

A: snow = small soft whit pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground	**E:** love
A: words, sentences ...	**E:** friendship
A: words, sentences ...	**E:** home

Scheme 3. Context consisting of individual complex signs

C. The process of semiosis continues; other elementary signs create complex signs and these individual complex signs form other contexts (other signs), e.g.:

Example 2:

a: black	**a:** having the *dark*est colour, like the sky at *night* when there is no light

A: black = having the *dark*est colour, like the sky at *night* when there is no light	**E:** death

A: black	**E:** death

A: words, sentences …	**E:** end of friendship

A: words, sentences …	**E:** loss of home

Scheme 4. Context consisting of individual complex signs

D. Then the process of semiosis continues, giving rise to the higher complex signs. Červenka explains the formation of higher complex signs in the following way:
e – A ↔ E → A' ↔ E': the signified of a complex sign (E) becomes the signifier of a higher complex sign (A'); the signified of the higher complex sign (E') has metaphorical meaning (1992: 86).
This step is illustrated by the way complex signs (love, friendship, home) create the context (higher complex sign) "meaningful values" which give sense and structure

to the world and our experience of it (scheme 5); other complex signs (death, end of friendship, loss of home) create the context (higher complex sign) "loss and transience of meaningful values" (scheme 6):
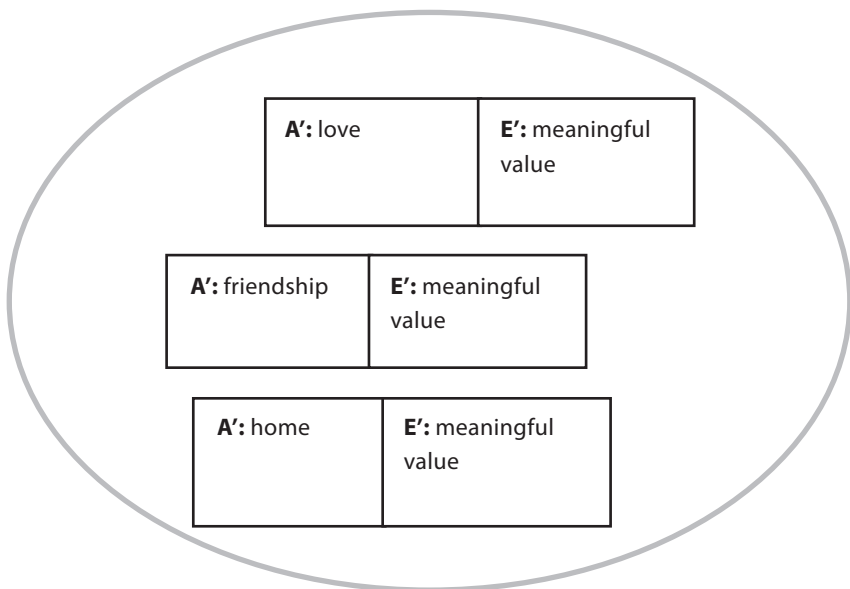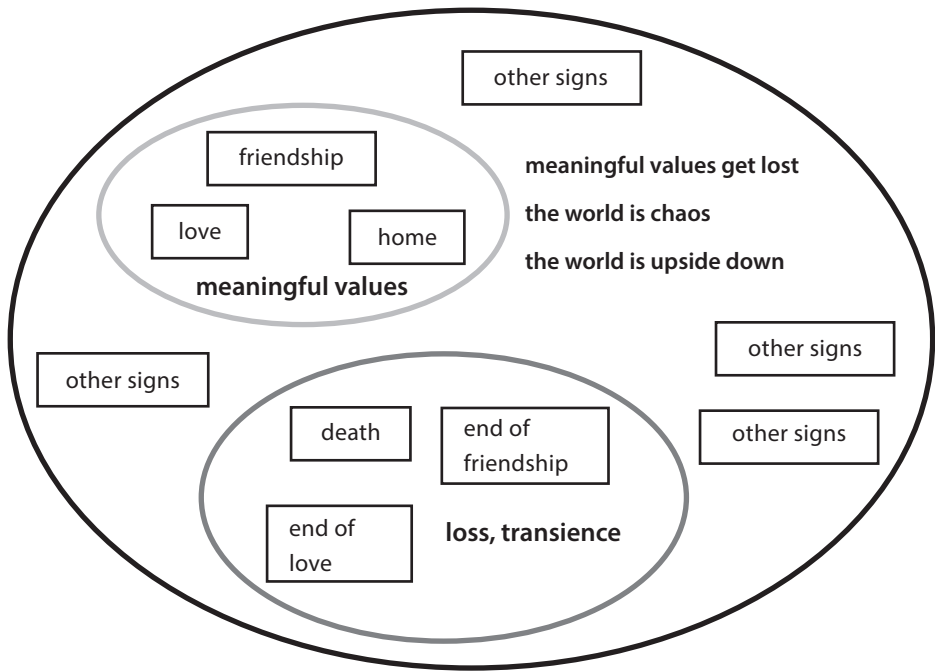

Scheme 5. The context "meaningful values"
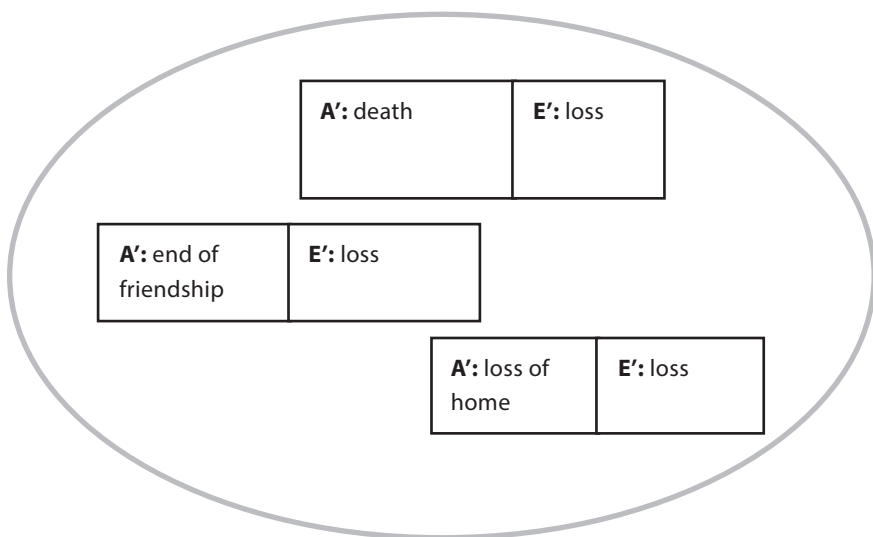
Scheme 6. The context "loss and transience of meaningful values"

E. Then the process of semiosis continues again and contexts form other contexts (signs). The co-activation of the two previous contexts (the context of "meaningful values" and the context "loss and transience of meaningful values") creates a new context "meaningful values get lost / the world is chaos / the world is upside down":
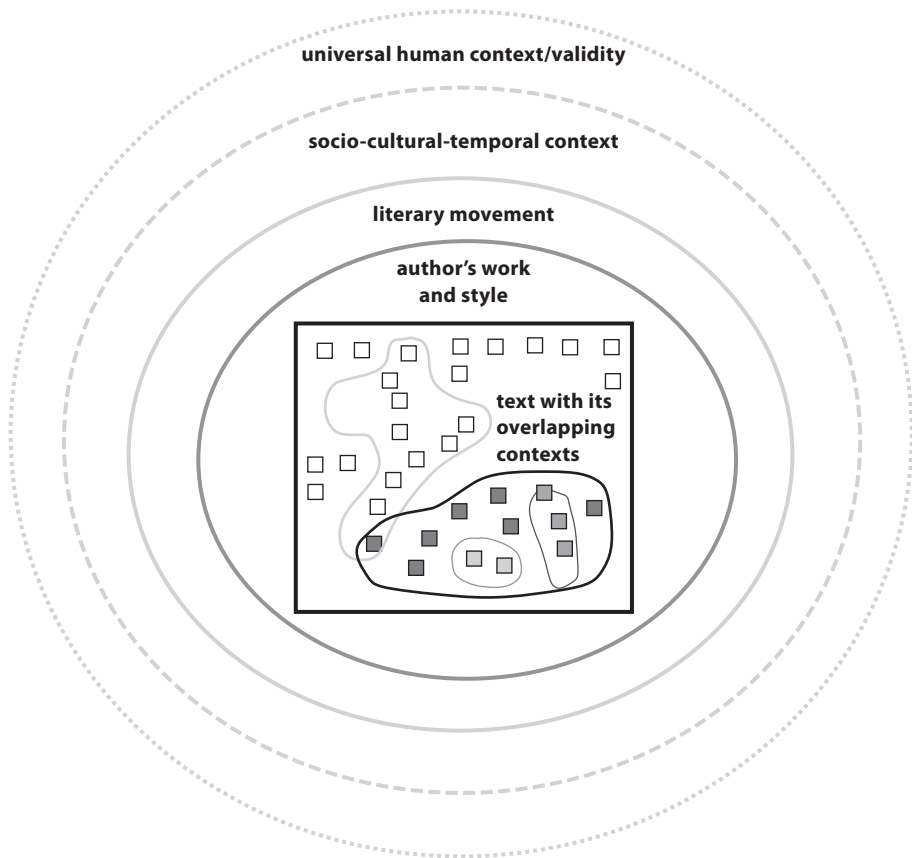

Scheme 7. The context "meaningful values get lost"

F. The process of semiosis continues and crosses the borders of the particular text:
– the text becomes a sign (and along with other signs constitutes the author's work and style with their distinctive features occurring in the particular text and in other texts by the same author);
– the author's work becomes a sign (and along with other signs constitutes a literary movement, minimalism in this case);
– the specific literary movement becomes a sign (and along with other signs constitutes the literary/cultural/social/temporal context, in this case, American/Western culture with its values and conventions, e.g. colour symbolism, e.g. white symbolising purity/positive associations and black symbolising death/negative associations);
– the specific literary/cultural context becomes a sign (and along with other signs constitutes a universal human context with basic human values, e.g. friendship, love, death, or home).

In scheme 8 (below), the particular text with its signs and higher-order signs is represented by the square. The contexts, growing ever broader and broader, are captured by concentric ellipses:

Scheme 8. The process of semiosis crosses the borders of the particular text

In the diagram, from outermost to innermost:
- universal human context/validity
- socio-cultural-temporal context
- literary movement
- author's work and style
- text with its overlapping contexts

4. The model of semiotic analysis: types of meaning contexts

As explained above, Červenka conceives of a literary work as a sign and a dynamic set of meanings, and highlights the principle of the hierarchical arrangement of literary works – the meaning elements are signs, and the lower-order meaning elements constitute higher-level systems (signs). The multiplicity of these complex signs arises from the fact that

– the elementary sign can be incorporated into either the signifier or the signified of the complex sign or into the complex sign as a whole,
– the higher-level sign integrates either the signifier or the signified of the elementary sign or the elementary sign as a whole (1992: 79).

As a result, a wide range of possible relations between the elementary and the complex signs arises. On the basis of Roland Barthes' scheme (ERC)RC,[5] Červenka first formulates

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[5] E = expression, R = relation, C = content

preliminary and tentative combinations of elementary and complex sign levels and then identifies and describes these types of meaning contexts:
– metonymical context (including synecdoche, 'model', and associative contexts),
– metaphorical context,
– form activation context ,
– metalinguistic and intertextual context,
– mythical context,
– context of montage.

The contexts are *not* mutually exclusive; on the contrary, they presuppose each other, and every element enters several contexts simultaneously, including contexts of different types.

4.1 Metonymical context

As mentioned above, Červenka employs verbal-symbolic and schematic forms of representation. For the metonymical context, he devised the following:

$e \rightarrow E$: the individual instances of the signified of lower order create the signified of the meaning complex. Elementary signs are symbols (i.e. the relation $a \leftrightarrow e$ is unmotivated); what is motivated is the complex sign (E), and the motivation is based on the "attached meaning context", i.e. the arrangement of elementary signs (e.g. their succession, or the sharpness of the dividing lines) becomes the signifier (α) of the attached meaning context and its meaning (ε) merges with the signified (E) into the complex signified (E'); schematically:
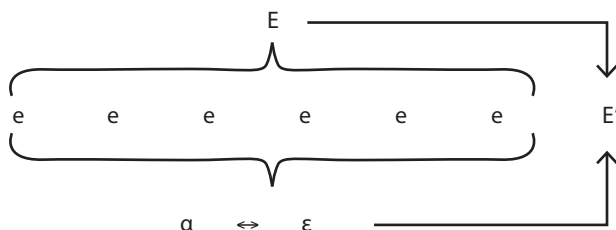
Scheme 9. Metonymical context (Červenka 1992: 81)

The domain of the metonymical context is the topic structure of the literary text (characters, events, settings); its background and the benchmark of compliance/non-compliance are formed by the extra-literary world as the metonymical context creates its close or remote analogy (1992: 80–81).

4.1.1 Synecdochical analogy
In this type of analogy, individual instances of the signified correspond with particular elements of the extra-literary world and merge into such complexes as exist in the signified real world; the author selects the features of the layer of the real world that is being depicted to achieve representativeness. This "synecdoche" context is typical of realistic literature (1992: 81).

4.1.2 Model

According to Červenka, certain specific and very distinctive levels of reality are depict-ed, usually as general lawlike regularities, in this type of analogy. The basic metonymic scheme remains valid and it is supplemented by the transformations of (E) into (E'): e → E → A' ↔ E'. A model can have a metonymical relation to the reality that is depicted, i.e. the model as a whole metonymically captures a certain feature or layer of reality (1992: 82–84).

Example 3: the context "house"
e: concrete meanings (setting, visual aspects etc.)
e: abstract meanings associated with the house (life together with a partner, meetings with friends, protection)
E: complex meaning (description of the house)
A': the complex meaning (E) becomes the signifier of the higher-order sign
E': the house as a home (and a positive value)

Alternatively, a model can have a metaphorical relation to the reality that is depicted, i.e. a metaphor is the "key" to the meaning of the whole complex; it is a transition to the metaphorical context (1992: 83).

Example 4: the context "snow and snowplow"
Metonymical references to snow and to the snowplow are a part of the setting and create the model "the plot takes place in winter"; the metaphor "snow is love" is the "key" to the meaning of the whole complex (see example 7 in Section 4.2.2).

4.1.3 Associative context

The last type of metonymical context that Červenka identifies is the associative con-text, in which meanings of different kinds are freely combined (1992: 83).

Example 5: the context "visitors' stories"
e: individual stories (ring on the beach, Popsicles on the pavement)
E: visitors' stories
A': the complex meaning (E) becomes the signifier of the higher-order sign
E': the narrator's inclination to interpret casual events as something unusual with deeper meaning

4.2 Metaphorical context

In his discussion of metaphorical context, Červenka differentiates between individual metaphors, "multiple" metaphors, and the metaphorical context as such.

4.2.1 Individual metaphor

e ↔ A: The individual instances of the lower-order signified create the signifier of the meaning complex. The basic element of the metaphorical context is the individual metaphor.
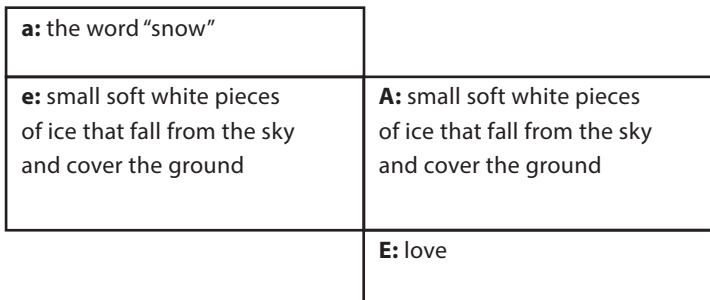Schematic representation: a ↔ e – A ↔ E or:

a	
e	A
	E
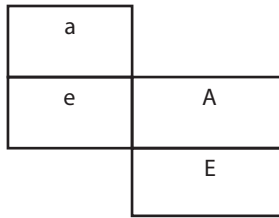
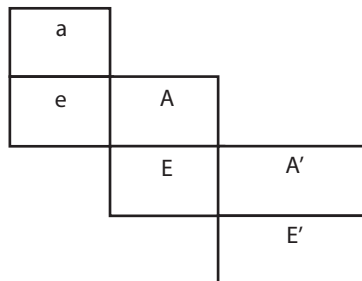**Scheme 10.** Individual metaphor (Červenka 1992: 84)

In an individual metaphor, the transition from the elementary meaning level to the higher meaning level already occurs at the level of a single naming unit, as the meaning of the naming unit becomes the signifier of the metaphorical meaning. However, the "literal" meaning is still present in the higher-order sign, i.e. it does not only serve as the signifier of the metaphorical meaning. A tension arises between the literal and the metaphorical meanings and this tension creates an attached meaning complex (1992: 84–85).

Example 6. The above-described "snow is love" metaphor (see example 1 in Section 3.2):

a: the word "snow"	
e: small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground	**A:** small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground
	E: love

4.2.2 Multiple metaphor
e – A ↔ E – A' ↔ E' or:

a		
e	A	
	E	A'
		E'

Scheme 11. Multiple metaphor (Červenka 1992: 86)

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Example 7: The above-described context "snow and snowplow" with the metaphor "snow is love" as the "key" to the meaning of the whole complex (see example 4 in Section 4.1.2):

a: the word "snow"

e – A : small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground

E: love

A': references to snow/love and to the snowplow/a vehicle that pushes snow/love off the road

E': metaphorical meaning: snow as a metaphor for love and pushing snow away as a metaphor for pushing love away:

Example 7:

| a: snow		
e: small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground	A: small soft white pieces of ice that fall from the sky and cover the ground	
	E: love	A': love the snowplow / a vehicle that pushes snow / love off the road
		E': snow as a metaphor for love, pushing snow away as a metaphor for pushing love away

4.2.3 The metaphorical context

The metaphorical context is created from the signs (individual metaphors) described above. The literal and the metaphorical meanings merge here, as is the case with individual metaphors (1992: 86–88).

Example 8: The above-described "snow is love" metaphor is a part of the context of other meaningful values; this context and the context of loss and transience create the context "the world is chaos" (see example 1 and schemes 3 and 7 in Section 3.2).

4.3 Form activation context

a ↔ E: The lower-order signifiers create the signified of the meaning complex. The individual signifiers unite to form a context that becomes the signified of a meaning; the set of "material" signals (e.g. styles, rhythmical structures, composition schemes, genre conventions etc.) represent a choice, and as with any choice, it has its meaning equivalent. In some cases, these "material" signals allude to an already-existing system, e.g. direct speech that is tinted with dialect or archaic words (1992: 88–89).
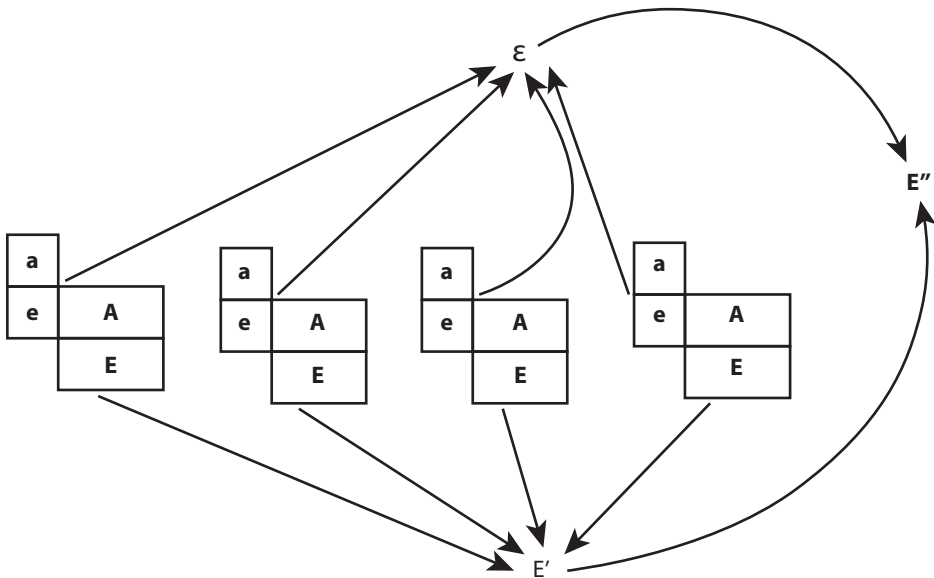
Scheme 12. Metaphorical context (Červenka 1992: 86)

$$a + a + a + a + a \; \ldots$$

$$\alpha \leftrightarrow \varepsilon$$
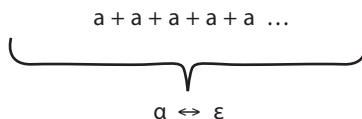
Scheme 13. Form activation context (Červenka 1992: 88)

Example 9:
a: ellipsis
a: contracted forms
a: italics conveying emphasis
a: other signals of spoken communication
E: the mode of discourse ("written to be read as if spoken", see House 1997)

This context is highly relevant to thinking about translation. An understanding of the meaning (E) of the forms (a) used in the ST is the basis of *functional equivalence*: the translator aims at conveying the meanings (functions) of the ST forms, using forms that are conventional in the target language (i.e. they are conventionally used to elicit the same or a similar effect and are thus interpretable in the intended way). By making a selection (and arranging it within the TT) from the repertoire of forms available in the target language, the translator signals the meaning (E) to the target reader.

4.4 Metalinguistic and intertextual context

Whole elementary signs become the signified of a meaning complex (s → E). It is difficult to distinguish the previous context from this one as it is difficult, at the lower sign levels, to separate the signifier and the signified. This context is the domain of metalanguage and intertextuality. Intertextuality is vital from the point of view of both the individual text (via iconically mimicking another text, intertextual features establish contact with it) and the development of literature (via allusions, paraphrases, or parody they make statements on previous developments, establishing positive relations to them or exposing traditions) (1992: 90–91):

```
+---------+-------+
| a       | E     |
+---------+       |
| e       |       |
+---------+-------+
          | A     |
          +-------+
```
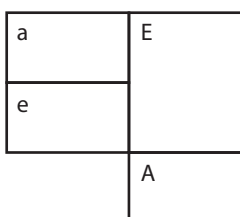
Scheme 14. Metalinguistic and intertextual context (Červenka 1992: 90)

Example 10 (a), (b): Intertextual signals of authorial style (the formula "something is as hopeless/pointless as …" is present in other short stories by the same author and expresses disillusionment and the motif "the world is chaos"):

10 (a):
a: *It was as hopeless as giving a child a matched cup and saucer.*
e: the literal ("neutral") meaning of the sentence
E: the sentence (both its form and content) as a signal of intertextuality and authorial style
A: *It was as hopeless as giving a child a matched cup and saucer.* (the "intertextual" meaning of the sentence)

10 (b):
a: *It's as pointless as throwing birdseed on the ground while snow still falls fast.*
e: the literal ("neutral") meaning of the sentence
E: the sentence (both its form and content) as a signal of intertextuality and authorial style
A: *It's as pointless as throwing birdseed on the ground while snow still falls fast.* (the "intertextual" meaning of the sentence)

4.5 Mythical context

s → A: Whole elementary signs become the signifier of a meaning complex (s ↔ A). This context is similar to the metaphorical context and shares with it the possibility of combining elementary signs to create higher meaning complexes.

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Scheme 15. Mythical context (Červenka 1992: 91)

Unlike in other contexts, where it was possible to separate the signifier from the signified, in this context there appears "an undifferentiated sign, a primary merging of the signifier and the signified, indeed a mythical 'unity' of a word and an 'idea', word and object. […] Such a materialization of the sign is typical of semiotic systems of primeval cultures, of magic formulas and myths and, as Barthes asserted, it is utilized by modern societies as well" (1992: 92).

Example 11: the context "snow as a kiss"
(*Even now, saying "snow", my lips move so that they kiss the air.*)
a: phonemes, words
e: lips kiss the air when saying "snow"
s: lips kiss the air when saying "snow", i.e. the lips pronounce the sounds /snəʊ/, specifically the vowel
A: lips kiss the air when saying "snow", i.e. the lips pronounce the sounds /snəʊ/, specifically the vowel, and their round shape suggests kissing
E: "snow as a kiss" (and a key to understanding the metaphor "snow is love")

Here again, translation considerations are highly relevant, even more so than in example 8, where the meaning can be separated from the forms conveying it. In example 10, form and content cannot be separated; pronouncing the sounds of the direct Czech equivalent *sníh* /sňi:x/ does not round the lips and thus it does not prompt the image of lips kissing the air – the vowel /i:/ actually achieves the opposite effect. That is why the direct equivalent would not do as a translation equivalent because of the inseparability of form and meaning, and the translator would need to devise a creative solution for this problem.

House (2009) discusses the issue of the inseparability of form and meaning as one of the limits to translatability:

> A second limit to translatability occurs when language departs from its "normal" communicative function. This is the case when linguistic form is itself an essential element of the message, as in literature, and particularly poetry, for example. Here meaning and form always operate closely together; they are no longer arbitrarily connected, and cannot be changed without a corresponding change of meaning (House 2009: 41).

4.6 Montage context

s → S:

The lower-order signs create a meaning complex:

$$s + s + s + s + s \ldots$$

$$S$$

Scheme 16. Montage context (Červenka 1992: 93)

This context presupposes a great degree of independence of individual signs. It can be exemplified by a collection of poems or short stories, a novel divided into independent layers distinguished by dissimilar content and formal means, and mosaic-like combinations of relatively stabilised signs (folk songs, fairy tales). Even here, the complex meaning is not a mere sum of the meanings of individual signs as there is always a meaning complex (ε) attached. Its signifier is the ways signs are combined, relations between signs, specific features of the whole set etc.) (1992: 93–94).

5. Conclusions

Translation is a cognitive process based on text interpretation which can be perceived as discovering and revealing potential meanings. In current approaches to translation, there is a strong tendency to explore the translation process, including the once-avoided subjective "human factor". Attention is paid to the participants in the translation process: to translators, their interpretation of verbal and nonverbal signs, their decision process, and their role as mediators and communication experts, to recipients and their expectations and presuppositions, their reception and interpretation of TTs. Here again, it is illuminating to compare existing trends with Levý's ideas developed in the 1960s:

> In 1967 Levý qualifies contemporary linguistic theories of translation as reductive, i.e. reducing the issue of translation to the contact of two languages, or text types in general at best, while ignoring the translator's participant role in the translation process and in the resulting structure of the translated work of art, i.e. in the two fundamental aspects of (literary) translation theory (Jettmarová 2008: 35).

Similarly to many other ideas of Levý's, current trends confirm his foresight that led him to acknowledge the indispensability of including translators and their cognitive processes of ST interpretation and TT (re)creation into thinking about translation. The shift of attention that occurred in TS represents the overcoming of reductionism and is a logical consequence of the development of the field. Referred to as the "sociological" or "social turn", it means that "the object increasingly being studied by translation scholars is the human agent, the translator, as a member of a sociocultural community […] and as an agent of (inter-)cultural negotiation, rather than translations as cultural artefacts"

(Merkle 2008: 175). And yet, like any other "turn", it has its drawbacks as well. It might be argued that by foregrounding the translator, TS neglects translations themselves and that by doing so, the discipline endangers its integrity and compromises its object of study.

The semiotic approach to text analysis pursues a balanced perspective, focused on the text and the meaning-making within the text, while emphasising the socio-cultural environment and impact of the human factor. The paper argues that Červenka's conceptualisation represents such a balanced approach; the main advantage of the model based on it is that it promotes free movement across all levels of analysis, from the smallest linguistic unit of the text to the highest level of universal human values, and across all the phases of the translation process, from the comprehension of the ST to the transfer of meaning and (re)creation of the TT. As such, it is presented as a suitable basis for translation-related text analysis. From this translatological point of view, the following concepts are especially relevant:

– the *functional* concept of meaning as a reciprocal relation between form and content at all levels of text and context,
– the notion of "form activation" as a basis of discussions on *functional equivalence*,
– the notion of the inseparability of form and content (the so-called "mythical context") as a basis of discussions on the "untranslatability" of some text elements or genres (e.g. lyrical poetry), or discussions on the reasons and necessity of adaptations,
– the notion of *open structure* as a means of analysing the meaning of the text and integrating context into the translation-related text analysis; context in terms of relevant codes and, probably more importantly (given the current trends in TS), in terms of the "human factor" – the author, the translator, and the recipients.

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Analysed text

Author	Ann Beattie
Text	Snow
Publication medium	printed book
Format	short story collection
Genre	short story
Literary movement	minimalism
Authorial style	minimalist
Specific features of authorial style	
(favourite themes: *expressive means*):	world is chaos: *the world is upside down*
	disillusionment: *as hopeless/pointless as …*
Overall tone	subdued, unemotional
Mode of discourse	written to be read as if spoken

SNOW

I remember the cold night you brought in a pile of logs and a chipmunk jumped off as you lowered your arms. "What do you think *you're* doing in here?" you said, as it ran through the living room. It went through the library and stopped at the front door as though it knew the house well. This would be difficult for anyone to believe, except perhaps as the subject of a poem. Our first week in the house was spent scraping, finding some of the house's secrets, like wallpaper underneath wallpaper. In the kitchen, a pattern of white-gold trellises supported purple grapes as big and round as Ping-Pong balls. When we painted the walls yellow, I thought of the bits of grape that remained underneath and imagined the vine popping through, the way some plants can tenaciously push through anything. The day of the big snow, when you had to shovel the walk and couldn't find your cap and asked me how to wind a towel so that it would stay on your head – you, in the white towel turban, like a crazy king of the snow. People liked the idea of our being together, leaving the city for the country. So many people visited, and the fire place made all of them want to tell amazing stories: the child who happened to be standing on the right corner when the door of the ice-cream truck came open and hundreds of Popsicles cascaded out; the man standing on the beach, sand sparkling in the sun, one bit glinting more than the rest, stooping to find a diamond ring. Did they talk about amazing things because they thought we'd turn into one of them? Now I think they probably guessed it wouldn't work. It was as hopeless as giving a child a matched cup and saucer. Remember the night, out on the lawn, knee-deep in snow, chins pointed at the sky as the wind whirled down all that whiteness? It seemed that the world had been turned upside down, and we were looking into an enormous field of Queen Anne's lace. Later, headlights off, our car was the first to ride through the newly fallen snow. The world outside the car looked solarized.

You remember it differently. You remember that the cold settled in stages, that a small curve of light was shaved from the moon night after night, until you were no longer surprised the sky was black, that the chipmunk ran to hide in the dark, not simply to a door that led to its escape. Our visitors told the same stories people always tell. One night, giving me a lesson in storytelling, you said, "Any life will seem dramatic if you omit mention of most of it."

This, then, for drama: I drove back to that house not long ago. It was April, and Allen has died. In spite of all the visitors, Allen, next door, had been the good friend in bad times. I sat with his wife in their living room, looking out the glass doors to the back yard, and there was Allen's pool, still covered with black plastic that had been stretched across it for winter. It had rained, and as the rain fell, the cover collected more and more water until it finally spilled onto the concrete. When I left that day, I drove past what had been our house. Three or four crocus were blooming in the front – just a few dots of white, no field of snow. I felt embarrassed for them. They couldn't compete.

This is a story, told the way you say stories should be told: Somebody grew up, fell in love, and spent a winter with her lover in the country. This, of course, is the barest outline, and futile to discuss. It's as pointless as throwing birdseed on the ground while snow still falls fast. Who expects small things to survive when even the largest get lost? People forget years and remember moments. Seconds and symbols are left to sum things up: the black shroud over the pool. Love, in its shortest form, becomes a word. What I remember about all that time is one winter. The snow. Even now, saying "snow", my lips move so that they kiss the air.

No mention has been made of the snowplow that seemed always to be there, scraping snow off our narrow road – an artery cleared, though neither of us could have said where the heart was.