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Review of “Translating Slovak Literature into Foreign Languages”

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This special issue of the *Bridge* journal is dedicated to the translation of Slovak literature into foreign languages from various perspectives. The issue suggests that, on a global scale, the significance of national literatures depends more on outward than inward translation.

The aim of the introductory article, “The Shadow Heroes of Translation: On Translators of Slovak Literature into English” by Ľudmila Pánisová is to describe the history and current situation in the field of English translations of Slovak literature. Pánisová reveals that more than two hundred books containing English translations of Slovak literature were published between 1832 to 2020. These were translated by almost a hundred translators. Pánisová also discusses the role that translators play in promoting Slovak literature and touches on the quality of the translations. The author equally delves into the way that these translations have helped shape the image of Slovak literature in the English-speaking world.

Marián Andričík’s “Slovak Poetry in English Anthologies” is a survey of English translations of Slovak poetry ranging from the seminal John Bowring’s *Cheskian Anthology* (1832) to the latest selection from the work of six Slovak poets published in Great Britain in 2010. It attempts to list and briefly analyse each of the thirty anthologies, including those that were primarily focused on Czech poetry but also published poets of Slovak origin writing in Czech such as Ján Kollár and Pavol Jozef Šafárik.

As becomes clear from the books mentioned, the penetration of Slovak poetry into the English-speaking world has faced various difficulties ranging from the unsystematic approach of editors through to the limited dissemination of some of the anthologies published in compatriot communities to the varied skills of different translators.

The article by Ivana Hostová, “On Slipping Beauty and Gender Identity in Poetry Translation”, draws methodologically on the applications of psychoanalysis in Translation Studies. Hostová looks at James Sutherland-Smith’s translation of one of the leading Slovak poets, Mila Haugová. Since her writing deals with female identity, the translation undertaken by a male translator also provides fruitful ground for investigating the question of whether the gender of the author and translator has a bearing on the target text. According to the author’s results it turns out that, in this case, it does.

Gabriela Miššíková’s “Translating Cultural Capital in Michal Hvorecký’s novel *Dunaj v Amerike (Danube in America)*” aims to analyse the (authorized, but unpublished) translation of Hvorecký’s novel as a re-creation of a text promoting the culture and history of Slovakia, while retaining the literary-aesthetic qualities of the source text. The pragmatic translation analysis reveals that the target text may benefit from employing the techniques of pragmatic translation as an efficient alternative to semantic translation and may solve many of the translator’s problems. It would be possible, for example, to preserve the literary aesthetic qualities of the source text by reducing the number of footnotes.

Andrej Zahorák's article "The Problem of Precedentness in Contemporary Slovak Literature and its Translation – as Reflected in M. Hvorecký's Novel *Tahiti*" and its German translation deals with the issue of precedentness (precedent phenomena – intercultural peculiarities of literary texts) in translation communication. The article focuses on thematic and expressive specifics of the analysed novel and seeks to decode precedent phenomena in the source text through comparative analysis. The aim of the analysis is to explain their meaning and ethnocultural connotations in the Slovak sociocultural space and to evaluate potential problems of their transfer to the German sociocultural space.

The article "The Presence of Slovak Literature in Spain" by Mónica Sánchez Presa traces the history of the translation and reception of Slovak literature in Spain during the past hundred years placing a particular emphasis on the period since the creation of Slovak Republic in 1993 until present day. Translators, especially those educated at the Madrid Complutense University, have played a crucial role in the dissemination of Slovak literature in Spain, especially since the 1990s when Spanish translations of Slovak literary works, supported by Slovak institutions, most notably by the Centre for Literary Information, started being published regularly. More than forty titles have been published on paper and around a dozen on the internet. At least sixteen further (as yet unpublished) translations have been produced and several more are in the process of being published.

In the case study "Translating Contemporary Slovak Poetry into English", Jonathan Gresty talks about his experience of translating Ivan Štrpka's poetry. He discusses the difficulties with comprehension and adequate interpretation of the poem *Neviditeľná vlajka. Deti na úteku* [Invisible flag. Children on the run]. This leads to an account of how the poet himself and then the commissioner of the work both became involved in this process. Despite the apparent benefits of such collaboration, questions emerge about how effectively such a poem can be translated into English.

Charles Sabatos' article "Translating Ján Uličiansky's Modern Slovak Fairytale (and Musical) *Puss on Skates*" proposes the concept of "ephemeral translations" to refer to unpublished works that are usually invisible in the history of literary translation. It also focuses on the author's translations of *Puss on Skates* (*Kocúr na kolieskových korčuliach*) in both prose and dramatic form. It discusses cultural differences between English and Slovak, translation of puns and zoological nicknames. Most of these translations, the fruit of a five-year collaboration between author and translator, have not been published. Such ephemeral versions represent a significant lacuna in translation criticism, particularly in the landscape of less translated languages.

This issue edited by Ludmila Pánisová is an ambitious project that brings together pieces analysing translations from Slovak into various foreign languages. Despite difficulties associated with accessing foreign editors and limitations in funding, the key focus remains on the efforts to continue translating and promoting Slovak literature to the world.