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Article abstract

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Slovak poetry in English translation after the collapse of state socialism: tracing the trajectories of internationalisation

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RÉSUMÉ

Le transfert littéraire d'une langue périphérique à une langue hyper-centrale (Heilbron 1999) va à l'encontre du flux général des traductions et dépend largement des agents humains ou institutionnels. Dans cet article, j'examine le fonctionnement de ce processus en m'appuyant sur les traductions anglaises de la poésie slovaque. Ma réflexion part d'une bibliographie des traductions anglaises de la poésie slovaque publiées sous forme de livres entre 1989 et 2020. La liste comprend plus de 2500 poèmes, écrits par 161 poètes et traduits par une cinquantaine de traducteurs. Les observations tirées de l'analyse quantitative permettent d'identifier quels types d'agents traduisent la poésie slovaque en anglais, qui sont les poètes traduits et dans quelle mesure les livres qui résultent de ces projets bénéficient d'un lectorat international. Ensuite, je me sers de la théorie des champs de Pierre Bourdieu et de la théorie de l'acteur-réseau (ANT) de Bruno Latour pour retracer les réseaux d'acteurs qui sous-tendent les projets de traduction des œuvres de deux poètes dont les positions dans le champ littéraire slovaque divergent : Mila Haugová (née en 1942) et Milan Richter (né en 1948).

ABSTRACT

Moving literary texts from a peripheral language to a hyper-central one (Heilbron 1999) goes against the general flow of translations, and agents involved in this process play crucial roles in it. In this article, on the case of English translations of Slovak poetry, I set out to investigate how such processes work. My research starts with assembling a bibliography of English translations of Slovak poetry published in book form between 1989 and 2020. The list contains no fewer than 2,500 poems by 161 poets, translated by more than 50 translators. A few observations from the quantitative analysis I conducted help answer such questions as what kind of agents translate poetry in these projects, who gets translated and how likely it is that the volumes reach an international readership. Subsequently, I use tools from Bourdieu's field theory and Latour's actor-network theory (ANT) to trace actor-networks pertaining to those translation projects concerning the rendering of two chosen Slovak poets who hold different positions in the Slovak literary field—Mila Haugová (born in 1942) and Milan Richter (born in 1948).

RESUMEN

El flujo de los textos literarios de la lengua periférica a la lengua hiper-central (Heilbron 1999) se opone al flujo general de las traducciones y agentes involucrados en este proceso desempeñan papeles decisivos en el proceso. En nuestro artículo, usando como ejemplo las traducciones de la poesía eslovaca al inglés, investigamos como esos procesos funcionan. Empezamos nuestra investigación con recopilación de la bibliografía de las traducciones de la poesía eslovaca al inglés publicadas en libro entre 1989 y 2020. La lista incluye no menos de 2500 poemas escritos por 161 poetas traducidos por más de 50 traductores. Algunas observaciones de nuestro análisis cuantitativo ayudan a contes-

tar preguntas como cuales agentes forman parte del proceso de la traducción de poesía en estos proyectos, quien es traducido o con cual probabilidad los volúmenes obtienen lectores internacionales. Posteriormente, usamos instrumentos de Bourdieu's teoría de los campos y Latour's teoría del actor-red a descubrir actor-redes pertenecientes a las traducciones de dos poetas eslovacos elegidos que mantienen posiciones diferentes en el campo literario eslovaco – Mila Haugová (nacida en 1942) y Milan Richter (nacido en 1948).

MOTS-CLÉS/KEYWORDS/PALABRAS CLAVE

poésie slovaque, traduction en anglais, exportation culturelle, internationalisation, littérature périphérique
Slovak poetry, translation into English, cultural export, internationalisation, peripheral literature
poesía eslovaca, traducción en inglés, exportación cultural, internacionalización, literatura periférica

> The effort to organize encounters is thus first of all the effort to form an association of men in relations that can be combined.
>
> (Deleuze 1968/1990: 261)

1. Introduction

The sociology of translation often views translated artefacts as items travelling between locales and languages occupying different—and unequal—positions on the market of symbolic goods as described and theorised by Bourdieu (1983; 1996). One of the possible conceptualisations of these flows has been offered by Heilbron (1999; further developed in, for example, Heilbron and Sapiro 2007; Sapiro 2010) who sees the translation of books as constituting a cultural world-system based on a core-periphery structure. In this view, the degree of centrality of a language is given by the share of translations for which the given language serves as the source language. With more than half of the translated books worldwide currently being translations from English, this language holds the hyper-central position. Several languages can be marked as central (that is, giving rise to approximately 10% of translations worldwide), a few are described as semi-peripheral (1-3%) and most of world's languages are seen as peripheral. Although acquiring precise data on the production of translations is notoriously difficult and the numbers with which translation sociologists work are often still only approximate (for a recent discussion see, for example, Palumbo 2021), few would disagree with the assumption that Slovak would fall into the last category. From this point of view, bringing Slovak poetry, as the poetry of a literature using a peripheral language, into English is most usually understood as a noble mission aimed at supporting cultural ecology. The sphere in which these translated artefacts are prepared, published and received is sometimes unquestionably seen as positioned within the restricted or autonomous pole of the literary field, that is, as being freed from forces alien to the "disinterested values which constitute the specific law of the field" (Bourdieu 1983: 39). Such disinterestedness in the sense of being "released from the constraint to turn a profit" is also one of the characteristics Venuti (2011: 127) takes from Bourdieu when discussing the translation of poetry. Moreover, the greater the periphery-core distance between the languages in these projects, the greater the evangelical ethos assigned to this journey. However, moving verse between cultures

and locations is never free from ideological considerations, since, as Jones (2016: 59) asserts, "[i]deology also extends beyond politics proper" and in the case of poetry, translation is based on a belief that "the community's poetry is a good that would enrich the lives of readers worldwide." Looking at the export-oriented efforts of poetry written in a peripheral language from a process-oriented point of view can help describe the various paths the agents involved in the projects follow and, in this way, better understand their strategies. To do so, the following probes into post-1989 English translations of poetry originally written in Slovak will employ quantitative analysis and combine Bourdieu's field theory with methodology based on Latour's actor-network theory. In the first part of the article, I will outline basic theoretical concepts and then, after providing an analysis of a bibliography I assembled for the years 1989-2020, I will trace the trajectories, networks and actors behind translation projects concerning two Slovak poets, Mila Haugová (born in 1942) and Milan Richter (born in 1948). Both poets have been active in the Slovak literary field for more than four decades and both have several single-author volumes of translations of their poetry into English to their names. However, their positions in the domestic literary field differ and the success with which they have permeated the international poetry scene is also different.

2. Poetry in translation: agents, actors and networks

The movement of literary texts from a peripheral language to English as the hyper-central language (Heilbron 1999) goes against the general flow of translations and agents as "individuals who devote great amounts of energy and even their own lives to the cause of a foreign literature, author or literary school, translating, writing articles, teaching and dissemination of knowledge and culture" play crucial roles in it (Milton and Bandia 2009: 1). It is only through the active involvement of translators, editors, revisers, publishers, periodicals, financing institutions, literary event organisers and other actors that each step from selecting the text and procuring the funding for its publication to commissioning, conducting and distributing the translation happens. Sociological approaches to the study of translation have been most strongly inspired by Bourdieu's concepts, but more recently, there have been calls for more process-oriented research that would, to a greater degree, account for the active role individuals play in the making of translation. One of the theoretical sources for such a study has been Latour's actor-network theory (ANT). Although Bourdieu and Latour represent two opposing schools of thought in the social sciences, Translation Studies has made attempts at combining the two approaches. In her pioneering article on the possibilities of complementing Bourdiesian inspirations with elements from Latour's theory, Buzelin (2005: 216) proposes keeping Bourdieu's model of the field of cultural production occupied by competing and cooperating agents endowed with different forms of capital while at the same time adopting elements of ANT, most notably with regards to the methodology that "would account for the hybrid, collective and 'networky' character of the translating agent, and a fortiori for that of any translation project."

Investigations inspired by ANT, basically understood as network-tracing activities (Latour 1996: 378), are invitations "for in situ sense-making and sorting out relations and attachments" (Winthereik 2020: 24). Latour's empiricist approach abolishes preconceived boundaries, most notably those between the "social" and "natural"

and discourages actors from seeking explanations through the social aggregates (groups, classes, etc.) lying behind the given activity (in our case translation projects). Instead, it should be understood that "there exists *nothing* behind those activities" (Latour 2005: 8, emphasis in the original). In other words, ANT makes no a priori assumptions, but argues that associations between heterogeneous actors are primary and any meaning, label or category ascribed to a section of experience emerges only from these:

> […] all those heterogeneous elements [concerning chemical bonds, legal ties, atomic forces, corporate bodies, physiological assemblies, political assemblies] might be assembled anew in some given state of affairs […] [T]his is […] the most common experience we have in encountering the puzzling face of the social. A new vaccine is being marketed, a new job description is offered, a new political movement is being created, a new planetary system is discovered, a new law is voted, a new catastrophe occurs. In each instance, we have to reshuffle our conceptions of what was associated together because the previous definition has been made somewhat irrelevant. (Latour 2005: 5-6)

As for the application of ANT to the study of translation, Buzelin asserts that ANT enables researchers:

> […] to acquire data to which translation theorists have rarely had access so far, namely data on the multiple mediators potentially involved in the translation process, including the way they make or explain their decisions (when they are still unsure about the outcome of this process), and the strategies by which they negotiate their place in the process, convince others to participate, etc. (Buzelin 2005: 215)

This perspective, Buzelin asserts, invites Translation Studies scholars "to conceive translation as a production process relying on intermediaries operating in networks" (2004/2005: 39). In this view, a translation "no longer appears as the reflection of a society's norms or of a translator's subjectivity, but rather as the expression of the relations between the various intermediaries that have participated in its production" (Buzelin 2004/2005: 39). An actor-network as the "recorded movement of a thing" is composed of nodes or actors which can be equally human (poets, translators, editors, etc.) and non-human (institutions, funding agencies, distribution channels, literary festivals, study programmes, book series, publishing houses, cultural venues, etc.) and of the connections between them (Buzelin 2005: 378). The more connections an element commands, the more strategic a place it occupies in the network. Such analysis of the production of textual, social and material artefacts, based on the analysis of verbal interaction (accounts, paratexts, interviews, etc.) and other elements in the process of the making of a translation has been able to inspire Translation Studies and helped describe and explain some of the facts that would otherwise be difficult to account for (for such case studies, see for example, Buzelin 2007; Boll 2016; Solum 2018). In my article, I will also make use of Bourdieu's notion of the field of cultural production and of different forms of capital with which agents active in the given field are endowed. Following from Bourdieu (1983/1986: 245), economic capital will be understood as the form of capital readily convertible into money, cultural capital amounts to such things as education, accumulation of cultural artefacts or educational qualifications, social capital consists of a network of acquaintances while symbolic capital is the form of capital recognised as a genuine competence, "authority exerting an effect of (mis)recognition."

3. Slovak poetry in English translation after 1989

The starting point for my analysis is a bibliography of post-1989 English translations of Slovak poetry which provides data on the actors involved in the process and on the division of labour between them as well as on types of projects (anthologies and single-author volumes). The temporal scope (the three decades that the bibliography encompasses) appears to be optimal for an investigation that is both interested in the particulars of actor-networks and in the degree of success of the efforts to bring cultural goods into the global attention economy in which "capital, labour, information, and knowledge are in plentiful supply" (Davenport and Beck 2001: 2).

3.1. Quantitative analysis

My bibliography consists of volumes that contain at least one poem originally written in Slovak which was translated into English and published in a book between 1989 and 2020. The list does not include translations published online or in magazines, but does not exclude multilingual volumes, anthologies of different intentions and scope, poetry written in Slovak by authors not living in Slovakia and publications that accompanied various literary festivals and that are accessible in book format through libraries in Slovakia or elsewhere. Since no reliable and comprehensive international database of translations is available, gathering this kind of data is a time-consuming process.[1] For 1989-2015, I collected my data from several online library catalogues,[2] UNESCO's *Index Translationum*,[3] personal bibliographies published on authors' webpages, the world wide web (via *Google*), the list "Slovak Literature in English Translation (individual authors 1950-2016)" compiled by Julia Sherwood, a translator of Slovak fiction into English and published online in September 2017,[4] the bibliography compiled by Pánisová (2014) as well as personal communication with poets and publishers. For the years 2015-2020, the bibliography was updated from the current lists published on the website *Slovak Literature in English Translation*[5] and I also cross-checked my bibliography with the recently published volume on English translations of Slovak poetry (Andričík 2021). In the following subsections, I will provide data on the translated poets, the translators involved in the projects and the accessibility of the translations outside of Slovakia.

3.1.1. Poets

The bibliography I assembled contains more than 2,500 poems by 161 authors translated by more than 50 translators.[6] These were published in 77 single-author volumes authored by 52 poets and 37 anthologies that contain the writing by 142 authors. These are predominantly poets of the second half of the 20th century and poets who have been active in the literary field in the 21st century. One of the questions an analysis of such a bibliography can answer is whether these are translations of poets consecrated by domestic legitimising agents—poets recognised "by those who recognize no other criterion of legitimacy than recognition by those whom they recognize" (Bourdieu 1983: 320). To find out to what extent this is the case, I compared the list of translated poets with a relatively broad list of poets that Slovak agents with consecrating power view as prominent.[7] Tables 1 and 2 look at how many single-author volumes and anthology entries present Slovak poets legitimised by the actors in the national literary field.

Table 1

Percentage of translations by poets deemed prominent in the national literary field (single-author volumes)

	Number of volumes	% (Total number of volumes)
Single-author volumes by prominent poets	42	55
Single-author volumes by marginal poets	35	45
Total	77	100

Table 2

Percentage of translations by poets deemed prominent in the national literary field (anthologies)

	Number of entries	% (Total number of entries)
Entries by prominent poets	169	66
Entries by marginal poets	87	34
Total	256	100

As Table 1 shows, only 42 (55%) single-author volumes of translations were authored by poets with significant recognition in the Slovak literary field. When it comes to anthologies, out of the 256 entries, 169 (66%) were authored by poets legitimised by domestic agents. Translations are thus almost equally likely to be projects that aim at promoting what the national literary agents deem to be representative as they are endeavours following other goals, such as seeking legitimisation outside of the national literary field.

3.1.2. Translators

More than fifty translators participated in the translation of the poems in my corpus. In Table 3, I provide information on the types of translators (native vs. non-native speakers of English, self-translations) involved in the preparation of single-author volumes.

Table 3

Translators of single-author volumes

		Number of volumes	% (Total number of volumes)
Volumes with the participation of a native speaker of English in the process		57	74
Volumes without the participation of a native speaker of English in the process		20	26
	Out of these self-translations or presumed self-translations	9	12
		77	100

Table 3 shows that most single-author volumes (74%) involved the participation of a native speaker of English and only 12% of the projects were self-translations.[8] Further analysis reveals that a significant portion of the translations (61%) was conducted (often

with the linguistic support of a native speaker of Slovak) by three actors (see Table 4), all highly proficient users of English: the Scottish poet, translator and teacher living in Slovakia since the early 1990s James Sutherland-Smith (born in 1948), the Irish translator and teacher living in Slovakia since 1996 John Minahane (born in 1950) and Ewald Osers (1917-2011), a Czech-born translator who emigrated to England before WWII and worked for the BBC until his retirement.

TABLE 4
Most prolific translators of single-author volumes

Translators (single-author volumes)	Number of volumes	%
Volumes (co-)translated by James Sutherland-Smith	24	31
Volumes (co-)translated by John Minahane	17	22
Volumes (co-)translated by Ewald Osers	6	8
Volumes translated by other translators	30	39
	77	100

When it comes to anthologies and multilingual single-author volumes, translations also include renderings through another language (for example, translation into English from a translation into Spanish), some translations were not attributed and many multi-lingual volumes do not specify which translator was responsible for the translation of which poem into which language.

3.1.3. Accessibility and visibility of the volumes

The sheer number of translations in the assembled bibliography might seem rather high at first sight. However, these numbers are of little informational value if the accessibility and visibility of the translations—their success in reaching the audience—are not considered.

As a tool for detecting availability of the volumes to potential readers and, by extension, the potential visibility of the translations in my corpus, I used data from the world's largest bibliographic database, *WorldCat*. The database was searched for each volume in my corpus with the aim of determining the number of libraries that hold a copy of the given volume.[9] This method does have its limitations—these spring from the fact that the catalogue does not provide information concerning all the world's libraries and that any information gained in this way is not always precise.[10] However, for the purposes of obtaining the most relevant quantifiable results, this method appears to be the most adequate. Tables 5 and 6 give an overview of general accessibility of the books in my bibliography.

TABLE 5
Availability of single-author volumes (data from *WorldCat*)

Visibility (single-author volumes)	Number of volumes	% from total number of volumes
Single-author volumes available through more than 5 libraries worldwide	20	26
Single-author volumes available through 1-5 libraries worldwide	23	30
Single-author volumes not available through libraries via *WorldCat*	34	44
Total	77	100

Table 6

Availability of anthologies (data from *WorldCat*)

Visibility (anthologies)	Number of volumes	% from total number of entries
Anthologies available through more than 5 libraries worldwide	15	41
Anthologies available through 1-5 libraries worldwide	6	16
Anthologies not available through libraries via *WorldCat*	16	43
Total	37	100

With almost half of the volumes not available through *WorldCat* at all (44% of single-author volumes and 43% of anthologies) and only slightly more than a quarter of the single-author volumes (26%) and less than half of the anthologies (41%) being relatively easily accessible (listed in the catalogue of at least 5 libraries), it can be concluded that most translations are generally rather poorly available to potential readers. The insufficient dissemination of translations is correlated with the relatively low visibility in literature (reviews, overviews, encyclopaedia entries)—an example of this is the entry "Slovak" (Partridge 2000: 1292-1295) in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation Into English* (Classe 2000) published in 2000 by Routledge. Out of the 13 volumes containing translations of Slovak poetry published between 1989 and 1999, the encyclopaedia only mentions the translations of poems by Miroslav Válek (1927-1991). Some of the more recent representative reference books list more translations, such as the latest edition of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Naughton 2012), which lists three anthologies and five single-author volumes. With the exception of the anthology *In Search of Beauty: An Anthology of Contemporary Slovak Poetry in English* that (despite the ambitious subtitle) is not a representative selection of poetry by legitimised poets, but a project promoting the work of authors grouped in one Slovak writers' association, these are all works by poets regarded as prominent by domestic agents. When compared with my bibliography, however, it can be observed that at least four further well-prepared single-author volumes of relevant poets and one representative anthology could have been added to the list.[11]

To select projects for my case studies, I looked at which poets were most frequently translated. Table 7 provides an overview of authors with at least two volumes to their name.

As Table 7 shows, three out of the twelve most translated poets are not deemed as prominent by general consensus of domestic agents. For my analysis of actor-networks, I chose to take a closer look at translation projects concerning two poets belonging to the same generation, but holding different positions in the domestic literary field—Milan Richter (born in 1948) and Mila Haugová (born in 1942). Both have been publishing their poetry in Slovak for more than four decades and my bibliography shows that the first English translations of their poetry appeared in anthologies in the early 1990s. This temporal scope provides good comparative ground for my analysis.

TABLE 7
Most translated poets

Poets with at least two books of their poetry containing English translations to their name	Number of single-author volumes published in English translation	Consecrated by the national literary institutions?	Number of libraries holding a volume/volumes
Juraj Kuniak	6	N	5
Milan Rúfus	5	Y	792
Kamil Zbruž	4	Y	2
Jozef Leikert	3	N	2
Dana Podracká	3	Y	41
Milan Richter	3	N	8
Ján Buzássy	2	Y	7
Mária Ferenčuhová	2	Y	23
Ján Gavura	2	Y	0
Mila Haugová	2	Y	55
Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav	2	Y	73
Ivan Laučík	2	Y	17

3.2. Tracing actor-networks: two case studies

Both Milan Richter and Mila Haugová have been active in the Slovak literary field—publishing numerous collections of poetry, translating poetry into Slovak, holding editorial positions, presenting their writing at readings and festivals at home and abroad, etc.—for more than four decades and their poetry in English translation can be found in several single-author volumes with the first ones appearing in 1998 (Richter) and 2003 (Haugová).[12] The general availability of their poetry via libraries is different, but volumes of both poets are accessible (55 libraries list a volume by Haugová, 8 have a holding of a book by Richter). What differs, however, is their degree of recognition in the national (see Table 7) and international literary field. Haugová's name—contrary to Richter's—is one of the few that does get a mention in the latest edition of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Naughton 2012) and she is also the only poet mentioned in an attempt at a comprehensive overview of the post-1989 development of East-Central European literatures (Heim, Elsie, *et al.* 2009: 576). Milan Richter, on the other hand, has received much less international attention of this kind and the renderings did not bring him higher regard in the national literary field either.

3.2.1. Milan Richter

Milan Richter (born in 1948), a poet with three book translations to his name in my corpus, is an example of an actor who is not highly regarded as a poet in the national literary field, but who has used his connections to arrange for his poetry to be translated and published in English. A quick look into authoritative reference books reveals his position in the literary field. The length of the entry on his work (Zelinský 2005) in the authoritative dictionary of Slovak writers (Mikula 2005) is only a third of the size of the entry for a poet like Ivan Štrpka (Šimková 2005), one of the older-generation writers (born in 1944) holding a central position in the field

and, contrary to Štrpka's poetry, Richter's writing did not make it into the most representative anthology of Slovak literature (Bílik, Jenčíková, *et al.* 1998). Nevertheless, Richter has more than twice as many poems published in English translation (72) as Štrpka (28). Richter's verse has been included in three anthologies of Slovak poetry/literature in English translation and he has three single-author books containing poems in English translation, published after 1989, to his name. Meanwhile, there is no single-author volume for Štrpka, although his writing, unlike Richter's, has been included in the three most representative post-1989 anthologies of Slovak poetry/literature in English translation.[13]

The explanation for this lies in the circumstances in which the newly established Slovakia and its culture found itself in the 1990s. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 and before 1999, Slovakia's political regime leaned towards authoritarian and state support for and funding of non-commercial literature was highly politicised and reserved mainly for authors and organisations favoured by the state power (Šrank 2015; Cornis-Pope and Roberts 2004). In poetry, it was often the writing of high (bardic, religious) ethos leaning towards "traditional" and national values that was subsidised. On the contrary, independent agents (publishers, editors, writers, critics) who were trying to enter the literary field adhered to more cosmopolitan values and often sought inspiration in various forms of innovative writing as well as postmodern and feminist philosophy. They depended on other sources of financing, mostly on funds from international foundations, such as the Open Society Fund, Pro Helvetia or the Fund for Central and Eastern European Book Projects (Šrank 2015: 35-36), drew on their own material resources and sought support in the commercial sphere. One of the state mechanisms devised to control the cultural field during the first six years of Slovakia's existence was the Národné Literárne Centrum (The National Literary Centre) founded in 1995. Shortly after its establishment, it created SLOLIA (Slovak Literature Abroad)—a grant scheme with the agenda of supporting the publication of Slovak literature in translation. It was Richter who became its first director, a post he held until 2002. Richter had a set of predispositions for the office: a good command of foreign languages, including English, contacts with foreign literary agents (he had been translating poetry into Slovak since the early 1980s and spent a few months in the USA on a Fulbright scholarship in 1990, among other things). He was on good terms with the political regime (he served as the head of the Slovak Embassy in Norway between 1993-1995) and was a published poet. The activities aimed at the promotion of Slovak literature abroad which Richter led included the organisation of the 18th World Congress of Poets in 1998 and the Ján Smrek International Literary Festival in 2000 (both events were held in Bratislava). The publications arising from these activities include three anthologies containing English translations of Slovak poetry and six single-author volumes. Other publications that Richter prepared, as the director of SLOLIA, were two volumes of the anthology of Slovak literature, *Album of Slovak Writers*, 1 and 2.[14] Together, these account for more than two thirds of source-culture initiated book projects containing English translations of Slovak poems published in the period 1993-2001. All three anthologies included Richter's poems and he was also one of the poets to have a single-author multi-language volume of his poetry published for the congress. Two more volumes of Richter's verse containing English translations were subsequently published (in 2002 and 2013)—all of them from Slovak presses

(two out of three single-author volumes were published by Richter's publishing house MilaniuM). All Milan Richter's single-author volumes received funding from official Slovak institutions (the Ministry of Culture or SLOLIA).[15] Translators involved in Richter's projects included the well-known translator from Czech Ewald Osers or the Scottish poet James Sutherland-Smith.

Owing mainly to his social capital, Richter has thus become one of the most translated Slovak poets since 1989. However, as previously mentioned accounts suggest (Heim, Elsie, *et al.* 2009; Naughton 2012), he has not become widely "recognized as a literary figure outside his […] national borders" unlike some of the famous examples Casanova mentions (2002/2021: 417) and his position in the national literary field has not changed either.[16] Mila Haugová is a different case. She has recently won the Vilenica International Literary Prize, previously awarded to such authors as Olga Tokarczuk and Yurii Andrukhovych, appears in one volume with poets like Anne Stevenson, Maureen Duffy or Antjie Krog, and her poetry has been discussed in *The Guardian*.[17]

3.2.2. Mila Haugová

As the only author in my corpus with two selections from her poetry published by an acclaimed publisher located in an English-speaking country and specialising in poetry (Arc Publications), Mila Haugová appears to have been one of the most successful Slovak poets with respect to permeation into the international infosphere. Her *Scent of the Unseen* (2003) and *Eternal Traffic* (2020), both translated by James Sutherland-Smith (with the philological support of native Slovak speakers Viera Sutherland-Smith and Katarína Šoltis Smith respectively),[18] were subsidised by the Arts Council England and, in the latter case, also by SLOLIA, and were then published by a well-established UK-based publisher, which also provided the volumes with satisfactory distribution and contextualising introductions.[19] These factors give the translations a chance to reach not only a British audience, but also a global readership. The particulars of the production of the two selections are rooted in the specifics of the UK's sphere of publishing of translated poetry and an actor-network in which Slovak and British agents occupy the most strategic places.

With even contemporary non-translated poetry in the British Isles relying predominantly on small publishers (Sperling 2013: 191), putting out translations of poetry greatly depends on the agency of engaged individuals and must be seen as an act of cultural resistance. In the UK's and Ireland's publishing sphere, several publishers tilt at windmills in this way and it is thanks to small and mid-size publishing houses such as Francis Boutle Publishers, Carcanet Press, Tilted Axis Press, Smokestack Books, Dedalus Press, Poetry Translation Centre, Bloodaxe Books, Shearsman Books or Arc Publications that poetry from all around the world is accessible in English translation.

The last three publishers on the list have also put out translations of Slovak poetry with Arc Publications investing the most energy and resources into the cause. The two selections from Haugová's writing are part of its "Visible Poets and Translation" series, both edited by Jean Boase-Beier. According to the description on the publisher's web page, Visible Poets, started in 2000, is less concerned with creating a specific canon of literature from certain geographical and cultural spaces and puts more emphasis on the act of translation and translated poetry as such.[20] Its volumes contain parallel source and target texts and in this way reflect Boase-Beier's intention

that "the whole point should be for a reader to be able to see that they are reading what someone has translated."[21] With regards to the choice of languages, poets and translators, Boase-Beier recollects that she initially contacted eight possible translators to collaborate on the series, but after a couple of years, people started sending her proposals by themselves and there was no need to address further collaborators. In 2002, Sutherland-Smith contacted the editor with an idea to translate Haugová and since Boase-Beier did not want the series to contain just poets writing in "French and German and the usual common languages," she "was keen to have a Slovak poet very early in the series."[22] This was one of the reasons why she agreed to include Haugová in her plan. Another one was that she had known the translator and his interest in translating Slovak women poets, something she appreciated: "James gave a workshop on 'Translating Slovak Women Poets' as part of the series on the MA in Literary Translation which I established at the University of East Anglia in 1993. His workshop was on 19th October 1994."[23] She chose his project because it "sounded interesting and [she] thought it would make a good workshop (which indeed it did)."[24] Boase-Beier adds that one of the poets Sutherland-Smith talked about might have been Haugová. However, as the editor did not remember the exact contents of the workshop, she might have equally well accepted a different poet Sutherland-Smith would offer. Tracing the path further leads us to the question of why Sutherland-Smith chose to translate—and succeeded in these activities—Slovak poetry in the first place and why he chose Haugová to offer for inclusion in Boase-Beier's series—and twice at that? Why, for instance, did he not choose a poet equally (or even more) central to the canon of Slovak literature, Ivan Štrpka? Or one of the younger poets—in the early 2000s, there were quite a few important new names in Slovak poetry with several books to their name. Seeking answers to these questions takes us to the early 1990s.

Sutherland-Smith's first major involvement in the translation of Slovak poetry was his participation in the preparation of the anthology of Slovak poetry in English translation *Not Waiting for Miracles*.[25] The volume was based on an unrealised plan of putting out an anthology of translations of younger Czech and Slovak poets in the UK-based Forest Books run by Brenda Walker. The UK publisher abandoned the idea due to changes taking place in Czechoslovakia at the time and the book was finally published by the small Slovak publisher Modrý Peter, founded in 1991 by the poet, translator and editor Peter Milčák (born in 1966).[26] Sutherland-Smith's motivation for taking part in this project, as he puts it in the preface to the anthology, sprang from the attention he—as a rare specimen of an anglophone poet in Slovakia at the beginning of the 1990s—received from the Slovak cultural space:

> [s]hortly after the revolution Slovak television made a fifty-minute programme on my poetry with poems translated into Slovak, an interview and images to complement the poems. Normally in Britain a poet only receives such attention if he has been dead a hundred years and is therefore not around to enjoy it. So I felt bound to return the compliment and attempt to translate Slovak poetry and get it published. (Sutherland-Smith 1993: [6])

Email communication with the translator suggests that the creation of his habitus as *the* translator of Slovak poetry into English (see Table 4) sprang from personal contacts and subsequent consecration of his translational endeavours by the Slovak critic, Translation Studies scholar and author Braňo Hochel (1951-2015):

> I was introduced to Braňo by [the Slovak poet and translator] Ján Štrasser and Braňo decided to test my credentials as a poet by sending me rough translations […]. I managed to satisfy him, and we proceeded with his selection of poets born after 1940 as required by Brenda Walker.[27]

His interest in Haugová's poetry, as the translator explains, was partly rooted in his urge to disrupt the unquestioned preference for male poets in the selections for the 1993 volume that were made by Hochel who "selected an initial ten poets"—all of them male.[28] On the translator's insistence to add female authors, Hochel chose three woman poets and the fourth one, Stanislava Chrobáková, was added by Sutherland-Smith himself. The fact that the volume was published in Slovakia somewhat limited its potential reach to an anglophone audience, but helped create Sutherland-Smith's reputation as a translator of Slovak poetry and also alerted him to Haugová's poetry.

The translator's wish to disrupt the male dominance of the view of the canon of Slovak poetry is surely one of the most important reasons for the choice he made. However, the gradual internationalisation of Haugová's writing is also the result of the unification of her individual self-promotional activities and national-level export efforts. Throughout the three decades under scrutiny here, the poet has been vigorously producing new texts (poetry, autobiographical accounts, reviews, poetry translations from German and English, etc.) and networking (attending readings, book fairs and festivals at home and abroad, keeping a lively correspondence). She has also been consistently promoted on the national level throughout all parts of the literary field and academia—her work having been anthologised and heavily written about (see for example Bokníková 2000; Chrobáková-Repar 2002; Gavura 2009; 2014; Hostová 2021a; Hrabčáková 2021; Jareš, Rácová, *et al.* 2014; Rácová 2014; 2016; Šafranová 2020; 2021; Šrank 2021; Šrank and Rédey 2005) and the publication of her texts and their translations has been perpetually supported by national grant schemes.

The particulars of the trajectory of Haugová's work in the Slovak literary field in the 1990s also played a major role in her gradual internationalisation. After her relatively conventional first two books, her third collection of poetry, *Možná neha* [A possible tenderness] (1984),[29] received a favourable review from one of the most respected Slovak literary critics, Valér Mikula.[30] Subsequently, the poet immersed herself in translating poetry that shaped her writing (especially Sylvia Plath; see Hostová 2013) and in 1990 and 1991, she published collections of poetry—*Čisté dni* [Pure days] and *Praláska* [Ancient love] – which received intense critical attention, putting her into the spotlight.[31] Therefore, even though "literary fame," as sociological accounts of literature and translation show, is actively produced by rewriters such as critics or translators (Lefevere 1992), the textual qualities (in this case a shift in poetics) cannot be wholly ignored in the process. Haugová's writing is, to a great extent, autobiographical and as such brings the poetic persona close to the authorial one. This helps make connections with the audience at readings and in potential silent solitary reading. At the same time, it has a "contemporary" feeling to it – its fragmented flow resonates with internationalised experimental poetries and through various intertextual procedures, it also directly communicates with world poets whom the author has been translating for decades (see, for example, Hostová 2021b). In other words, even readers who are not familiar with Slovak literature and culture can relate to Mila Haugová's poetry.

Further tracing of the network of which Haugová's translations became a part would include looking at such issues as the distribution and popularity of narratives through which the given writing is promoted (women's poetry, writing by authors living under oppressive regimes, writing by Jewish authors,[32] etc.) or the connections created through editorial activities and at literary festivals.[33]

As the case of Mila Haugová shows, in the absence of events that would draw global interest to a culture using a peripheral language, it is the combination of self-promotional and networking activity, the accumulation of cultural capital on the national level, the ability to connect one's writing with one of the narratives through which poetry is promoted and the active involvement of intercultural actors that leads to a gradual increase in the international visibility of a poet.

4. Conclusion

A more complex quantitative analysis of my corpus and tracing actor-networks of individual projects might address such issues as correlations between the visibility of the translations and factors such as the place of publication, translator type or position of the poet in the national field and the strategies employed in the preparation of anthologies or procuring and using funding intended for promoting literature in English translation.[34]

I predominantly concentrated on book culture here – the trajectories that were traced spanned almost three decades and their focal actors belong to the older generation of poets, translators, and editors. The increasingly internationalising of poetry reception and production space and the growing frequency of geographically scattered poetry events that can attract the attention of audiences in the post-literary culture (Callus and Corby 2015) result in the growing inter- and transmediality of poetry. These transcultural events sometimes amount to (bilingual) performances and are materialised as passing moments not recorded on any medium, at other times they bypass the need to translate (by the use of English or by marginalisation of the importance of the textual part of the work) and increasingly move to the digital space for dissemination. A mix of these tendencies presents both obstacles (for example with respect to the preservation and archiving of the products) and opens new challenges for further research into the translation of poetry, be it hermeneutically inclined (one of these would be investigations into what Jakobson [1959] termed *intersemiotic translation*) or sociological in its nature (for example growing digital archives provide opportunities for more nuanced ethnographic research). However, even as the medium of the book becomes just one of many materialisations in which poetry appears and the (translated) text as such sometimes ceases to be the central carrier of the literary, text-based book translations are still important actors in international poetry networks and should therefore receive scholarly attention. Moreover, despite the fact that national boundaries of literatures have gradually lost their explanatory power and binary notions of source and target cultures are less and less viable—especially when it comes to exchanges concerning globally used English—, languages remain unique sources of complex enrichment. Investigations into the translation of poetry in this light should therefore resonate with the ecology of translation which, as put forth by Cronin (2016), "must seek to […] make available or communicable the commons of language itself." In this line, the sociological

outline presented here also hopes to create a starting ground for more text-focused research into English translations of Slovak poetry.

Tracing the trajectories of the production and distribution of English translations of Slovak poetry published in book form within the past three decades reveals that, with the absence of major attention-attracting events happening in the culture using a peripheral language that would propel demand-driven translation projects (Vimr 2020), the internationalisation of a poet and his or her writing is the result of consistent and long-term active cooperation of variously positioned actors who build networks and repeatedly meet in collaborations. The amount of symbolic capital that the actors involved in the projects possess appears to have a significant bearing on the length of actor-networks and, as a result, also on the visibility of translation projects.

NOTES

1. The unreliability of the international UNESCO database of translations, *Index Translationum*, has been widely discussed (see, for example, Blakesley 2016: 15).
2. *Slovenská knižnica. Portál ku katalógom a zbierkam slovenských knižníc*, <https://www.kis3g.sk/>; *WorldCat*, <https://www.worldcat.org/>; *Library of Congress Online Catalog*, <https://catalog.loc.gov/vwebv/searchBrowse>.
3. *Index Translationum*, <https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsresult.aspx?lg=0&stxt=may%20day&fr=20>.
4. As Sherwood updates the list on a regular basis, this version is no longer available. For the current version, see note 3.
5. MULLEK, Magdalena and SHERWOOD, Julia (2020): Resources. *In*: *Slovak Literature in English Translation*. Consulted on 22 June, 2020, <http://www.slovakliterature.com/resources.html>.
6. The precise number of translators is difficult to obtain, since some of the multi-language volumes do not state which translator is responsible for the translations into which language.
7. With the absence of an authoritative current reference book on Slovak literature, to assemble a representative list, several sources needed to be combined. For the 20th century, I included the poets whose work was presented in the three volumes of the representative anthology of Slovak literature: JENČÍKOVÁ, Eva, JURÁŇOVÁ, Jana, MATEJOV, Fedor, *et al*., eds. (1997): *Čítame slovenskú literatúru I* [Reading Slovak literature I]. Bratislava: Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV. BÍLIK, René, JENČÍKOVÁ, Eva, JURÁŇOVÁ, Jana, *et al*., eds. (1997): *Čítame slovenskú literatúru II* [Reading Slovak literature II]. Bratislava: Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV; BÍLIK, René, JENČÍKOVÁ, Eva, JURÁŇOVÁ, Jana, *et al*., eds. (1998): *Čítame slovenskú literatúru III* [Reading Slovak literature III]. Bratislava: Ústav slovenskej literatúry SAV. To correct for the male-centered bias of the anthology, I added to the list the poets discussed in Bokníková (2000). To cover the period before 1939, I updated the list to include poets discussed in Zajac (2014) and those that were given significant space in entries in the dictionary of Slovak writers (Mikula 2005). For the list of contemporary Slovak poetry, I drew on the comprehensive overview of post-1989 Slovak poetry authored by Šrank (2013) and on Taranenková and Passia (2014). The list contains 118 poets.
8. For my purposes, I consider Ewald Osers to be a native (that is, highly proficient) speaker of English, even though he was born in Czechoslovakia.
9. Data was gathered on 3 March, 2022.

10. Some of the libraries, upon clicking on the link, do not in fact hold a copy of the given book, some of the volumes are listed under several different entries or are described as written in a different language from what they actually contain.

11. For a discussion of volumes listed and not listed in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation Into English* and *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, see Appendix 1.

12. For volumes containing English translations of the poetry of Milan Richter and Mila Haugová, see Appendix 2.

13. For a list of most representative anthologies presenting Slovak poetry in English translation, see Appendix 3.

14. For references on Albums, see Appendix 4.

15. Two of the volumes were also supported by foreign cultural and political institutions.

16. His name does not appear in the more representative overviews of Slovak literature such as Heim, Elsie, *et al.* (2009), Naughton (2012) or Partridge (2000).

17. *Without Skin: 23 Eminent Women Poets*. Interviewed by Ruth O'Callaghan. 2015. London: Soaring Penguin Press; Sampson, Fiona. (2004): Words in the glass of dusk. *The Guardian*. Consulted on 29 April, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2004/may/08/featuresreviews.guardianreview31>.

18. For references on the volumes, see Appendix 2.

19. In the first case, the introduction was written by the British poet, critic, translator and editor Fiona Sampson. James Sutherland-Smith wrote the introduction for the second selection. *The Scent of the Unseen* also contains poems that were published in the anthology *Not Waiting for Miracles* (1993) which Sutherland-Smith co-translated with Štefánia Allen who remains uncredited in *The Scent of the Unseen*.

20. Anonymous (2021): Visible poets. *Arc Publications*. Consulted on 15 June, 2020, <https://www.arcpublications.co.uk/series/visible-poets>.

21. Boase-Beier, Jean (2020): personal email from 29 June, 2020.

22. See note 21.

23. See note 21.

24. See note 21.

25. Milčák, Peter, Hochel, Braňo, eds. (1993): *Not Waiting for Miracles. Seventeen Contemporary Slovak Poets* (Translated from Slovak by James Sutherland-Smith, Štefánia Allen, Viera Sutherland-Smith, *et al.*) Levoča: Modrý Peter. Mila Haugová's poems were co-translated by Sutherland Smith and Štefánia Allen who provided linguistic support.

26. Sutherland-Smith, James (2019): personal email from 20 October, 2019.

27. See note 26 (diacritics and punctuation added).

28. See note 26.

29. Haugová, Mila (1984): *Možná neha*. Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ.

30. Mikula, Valér (1985): Poézia možností [Poetry of possibilities]. *Romboid*. 20(1):79-80.

31. Haugová, Mila (1990): *Čisté dni*. Bratislava: Smena; Haugová, Mila (1991): *Praláska*. Bratislava: Slovenský spisovateľ.

32. This was the case of Milan Richter (see, for example, Holý 2021).

33. Haugová was an editor of the Slovak *Romboid* magazine between 1986 and 1996. The British poet, critic, translator and the editor Fiona Sampson who has been promoting Haugová's writing for years, was the editor of *Orient Express* (2002-2005) magazine and later *Poem* (2013-2018; both magazines published translations of Haugová's poetry). As Haugová's monographer Chrobáková-Repar stated in an email from 29 June, 2020 in response to my enquiry, she and Sampson would meet at the annual Vilenica International Literary Festival and later at the Časopis v časopise [Magazine in magazine] festival. Sampson gave a reading at Ars Poetica literary festival in Bratislava in 2004 which was also attended by Haugová.

34. With respect to the last of the mentioned issues, the activities of Martin Solotruk, poet, publisher, translator and festival organiser might provide interesting insights – in 2012, he was the main actor behind the production of the series of nine volumes of English translations of contemporary Slovak poets (mostly defining voices of contemporary Slovak poetry), Poetry Reaching Out (published with the support of the European Commission's Creative Europe). With only a few copies of each volume having actually been printed, the books – although thoroughly prepared (translated, edited, proofread, laid out, etc.) – remain almost unreachable.

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Zajac, Peter, ed. (2014): *Sondy* [Probes]. Bratislava: Kalligram.

Zelinský, Miroslav (2005): Ivan Štrpka. *In*: Mikula, Valér, ed. (2005): *Slovník slovenských spisovateľov* [Dictionary of Slovak writers]. Bratislava: Kalligram, 546-548.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. English translations of Slovak poetry published after 1989 listed in and omitted from *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation Into English* and *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*

English translations of Slovak poetry published after 1989 listed in *Encyclopedia of Literary Translation Into English* (Partridge 2000: 1294):

Emery, George, ed. (1993): *Contemporary East European Poetry. Expanded edition*. Oxford and New York: Ardis.

Válek, Miroslav (1996): *The Ground Beneath Our Feet: Selected Poems*. (Translated from Slovak by Ewald Osers) Levoča and Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Modrý Peter publishers and Bloodaxe Books.

English translations of Slovak poetry published after 1989 listed in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Naughton 2012: 1311):

Buzássy, Ján (2002): *Melancholy Hunter*. (Translated from Slovak by Viera and James Sutherland-Smith). Mississauga, ON: Modry Peter Publishers Limited.

Haugová, Mila (2003): *Scent of the Unseen* (Translated from Slovak by James and Viera Sutherland-Smith) Todmorden: Arc Publications.

Hochel, Igor, ed. (2010): *Six Slovak Poets*. (Translated from Slovak by John Minahane) Todmorden: Arc.

Hudík, Pavol and Bajánek, Ján, eds. (2003): *In Search of Beauty: An Anthology of Contemporary Slovak Poetry in English*. (Translated from Slovak by James Sutherland-Smith and Ján Bajánek) Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.

Milčák, Peter, Hochel, Braňo, eds. (1993): *Not Waiting for Miracles. Seventeen Contemporary Slovak Poets* (Translated from Slovak by James Sutherland-Smith, Štefánia Allen, Viera Sutherland-Smith, *et al.*) Levoča: Modrý Peter.

Novomeský, Ladislav (2004): *Slovak Spring* (Translated from Slovak by John Minahane). Belfast: Belfast Historical and Educational Society.

Rúfus, Milan (2006): *And That's the Truth*. (Translated from Slovak by Ewald Osers, James Sutherland-Smith and Viera Sutherland-Smith). Wauconda, IL: Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers.

Válek, Miroslav (1996): *The Ground Beneath Our Feet: Selected Poems*. (Translated from Slovak by Ewald OSERS) Levoča and Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Modrý Peter publishers and Bloodaxe Books.

Available translations of acclaimed Slovak poets not listed in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Naughton 2012):

Chrobáková, Stanislava and Sutherland-Smith, James, eds. (2000): *One Hundred Years of Slovak Literature*. (Translated from Slovak by Marián Andričík, Vladimír Gális, Marína Gálisová, *et al.*) Bratislava: The Union of Slovenian Writers, The Association of Organisations of Slovak Writers, Literary Information Centre and Institute of Slovak Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Laučík, Ivan (2001): *Cranberry in Ice*. (Translated from Slovak by Viera and James Sutherland-Smith) Ontario: Modry Peter Publishers Limited.

Milčák, Peter (2005): *Preparation Line 57*. (Translated from Slovak by Jonathan Gresty and Peter Milčák) Ontario and Levoča: Modrý Peter and Fooliar Press.

Ondruš, Ján (1998): *Tightrope Walker* (Translated from Slovak by Martin Solotruk and James Sutherland-Smith) Bratislava: Studňa.

Podracká, Dana (2004): *Forty Four*. (Translated from Slovak by Robert Welch) Cork: Southword Editions.

Appendix 2. Book translations of Milan Richter's and Mila Haugová's poetry

Richter, Milan (1998): *Five Seasons of Life. Poems in English, German, Swedish, New-Norwegian French, Spanish*. (Translated from Slovak by Jascha Kessler, Ewald Osers, James Sutherland-Smith, *et al*.) Bratislava: GRAFIQ Studio.

Richter, Milan (2002): *The Wrecked Temple in Me*. (Translated from Slovak by Jascha Kessler) Dunajská Lužná: MilaniuM.

Richter, Milan (2013): *Sealed with Ashes*. (Translated from Slovak by Ewald Osers, Jascha Kessler, Magdalena Sadlon, *et al*.) Dunajská Lužná: MilaniuM Press.

Haugová, Mila (2003): *Scent of the Unseen* (Translated from Slovak by James and Viera Sutherland-Smith) Todmorden: Arc Publications.

Haugová, Mila (2020): *Eternal Traffic* (Translated from Slovak by James Sutherland-Smith with Katarína Šoltis Smith) Todmorden: Arc Publications.

Appendix 3. Most representative post-1989 anthologies of Slovak poetry/literature in English translation

Chrobáková, Stanislava and Sutherland-Smith, James, eds. (2000): *One Hundred Years of Slovak Literature*. (Translated from Slovak by Marián Andričík, Vladimír Gális, Marína Gálisová, *et al*.) Bratislava: The Union of Slovenian Writers, The Association of Organisations of Slovak Writers, Literary Information Centre and Institute of Slovak Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Hochel, Igor, ed. (2010): *Six Slovak Poets*. (Translated from Slovak by John Minahane) Todmorden: Arc.

Milčák, Peter, Hochel, Braňo, eds. (1993): *Not Waiting for Miracles. Seventeen Contemporary Slovak Poets* (Translated from Slovak by James Sutherland-Smith, Štefánia Allen, Viera Sutherland-Smith, *et al*.) Levoča: Modrý Peter.

Appendix 4. *Albums of Slovak Writers* edited by Milan Richter

Richter, Milan, ed. (2000): *Album of Slovak Writers 1*. (Translated from Slovak by Andričík, Louis Bourne, Andrew Cincura, *et al*.) Bratislava: Slovak Literature Information Centre.

Richter, Milan, ed. (2001): *Album of Slovak Writers 2*. (Translated from Slovak by Marián Andričík, Louis Bourne, Vladimír Gális, *et al*.) Bratislava: Slovak Literature Information Centre.