

# Crossing Borders through Translation: On Reception of Slovak Literature in English-Speaking Countries

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to present the results of research focused on Slovak literature translations into English language and their reception in the The United States of America as well as in the The United Kingdom. The purpose is to summarise how many translations have been released by 2018, by whom they were translated and published, and finally, what is the quality of these translations. This topic had always been marginalised and there are only few partial studies dedicated to it, therefore, there is a hope that our research can help to shed more light on this issue and also to encourage further research in this area.

**Keywords:** translation, literature, reception, English, Slovak.

## 1 General notes on the subject

In 1965, Catford wrote “translation is an activity of enormous importance in the modern world and writers on the subject have approached it from different points of view” (Catford, 1974). In spite of the fact that more than fifty years have passed since these words were written, there are still areas of Translation Studies which, so far, little attention has been paid to. It includes the English translations of Slovak literature as well as their American reception, as if this type of translation did not exist at all. But the information obtained from various books, internet databases as well as the work of Slovak institutions (in particular cultural institutes, compatriot associations, embassies and lectureships of Slovak language, culture and literature) and magazines focusing on support and promotion of the Slovak literature abroad shows it is not true. It is therefore necessary to focus on describing and analysing this information to shed more light on this marginalised issue.

Looking back through the history of Translation Studies in Slovakia, little had been done before 1989 during the reign of communism. In 1970, a bibliography called *Slovenská literatúra v prekladoch 1945 – 1966*, compiled by Libor Knězek, was published. As our research of this publication reveals, it is not only interesting to note that during twenty-one

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years, Slovak literature had been translated to more than forty different foreign languages, they were published by different Slovak and foreign publishers meaning that the interest in translation of Slovak literature was not linked to one publisher or one series only. The bibliography lists about 1145 publications and the geographical spread of them is also very interesting. More than thirty percent of these publications have been translated into the Czech language, followed by Hungarian (twenty-eight percent). Besides dozens of translations into other Slavic languages such as Polish, Russian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Slovenian and Serbian, there were several Slovak books translated into German, Spanish, Italian, French and Portuguese. At first sight, it may be considered paradoxical, but in view of the political and social conditions understandable that in some Latin American countries, especially Cuba, translations of Slovak literature were more frequent. It included the books written by the Slovak poet Miroslav Válek (who was also the Minister of Culture in the government of Slovak Socialist Republic in 1969– 1988), novelist Rudolf Jašík and an author of literature for children and young adults Klára Jarunková (Hermida, 2004). Considering the geographical spread of foreign translations of the Slovak literature, it is perhaps interesting that the selection from Ladislav Mňačko's book entitled *Oneskorené reportáže* was translated into Japanese in 1966. The author of the translation was Kurisu Kei who translated mainly Czech poetry by Jiří Wolker, Jaroslav Seifert, Jan Neruda and some others into Japanese. Initially, he had translated them from Esperanto, but later he learned Czech and he also visited Czechoslovakia several times. Furthermore, in 1962 the book by Ladislav Mňačko was also translated into another "exotic" language – Yiddish. It was a work called *Ja, Adolf Eichmann* and its translator was Yehuda Lahav, who was born in Prešov, Slovakia, in 1930, but was forced to leave in 1942 when his parents were murdered by the Nazis. He moved to Israel where he worked as a journalist and writer. The data from Libor Knězek's bibliography further show that the books written by Peter Karvaš, Peter Jilemnický, Ladislav Mňačko, Vladimír Mináč, Pavol Dobšinský, Fraňo Kráľ, František Hečko, Rudo Moric, Rudolf Jašík, Jaroslava Blažková and Jozef Gregor-Tajovský had been most frequently translated over the two decades analysed in the publication mentioned earlier. A closer look at the translated works of these authors suggests that most of them were ideologically motivated, with the exception of Peter Karvaš and Jaroslava Blažková. Despite not very favorable political and social circumstances, several translations into English appeared, representing two percent of the total translation production recorded in Libor Knězek's bibliography.

Before 1989, translation of books among the *Eastern Bloc countries* was hugely supported, so the official institutions and agencies whose primary function was to produce and promote translations should not be forgotten. These include the Czech agency Artia and the Slovak literary agency DILIZA, which changed to a civil association of authors LITA after 1989 and distributes royalties to authors for the use of their works in the territory of the Slovak Republic, as well as abroad. There was also the Union of Slovak Writers publishing a literary magazine *Meridián* in several foreign languages: English, German and Russian. It provided information about upcoming fiction, as well as non-fiction, books in Slovak language and translation, too. Information on Slovak cultural and literary institutions, publishing houses, as well as interviews with the Slovak writers, presenting

their work to foreign partner organisations, publishers and readers were found there. In addition, the magazine contained translated samples of the Slovak literature. In 1996 the *Slovak Literary Review* was established. The magazine, published twice a year in English and German, is nowadays considered to be the most significant periodical devoted to translation of Slovak literature and its promotion abroad. In the same year, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic launched *Literárne informačné centrum* (The Centre for Information on Literature). Among its most important objectives of the institution belongs cooperation with foreign publishers and institutions, promotion of Slovak literature in book fairs abroad, as well as financial support of translations through the SLOLIA Commission. More than five hundred translations of Slovak literature have appeared over the past two decades. Majority of the books have been translated into Czech, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Serbian, and German. However, it is also quite interesting that translations into Arabic, Norwegian, Finnish, Swedish, Chinese, Hebrew and Turkish have increased recently. Nowadays, translations into English represent only about four percent of the total translation production supported by the Centre for Information on Literature and its SLOLIA Commission.

To sum up, more than five hundred books have been translated into more than thirty languages over more than two decades with support of the Centre for Information on Literature and its SLOLIA Commission. It serves as evidence that the number of Slovak literary works translated into foreign languages has been constantly increasing as well as the awareness of foreign readers about Slovak literature.

## **2 English Translations of the Slovak Literature before 1989**

Our research of English translations of the Slovak literature is divided into two parts: translations before and after 1989, because the end of the communist regime came in that year. The basic goal associated with the fall of communism was freedom in all aspects of human life including literature and its translation. However, the situation before 1989 was completely different. The Communist Party of Czechoslovakia had been in power since February 1948 having the leading position in society. It had been controlling all the aspect of public life including literature. For the communist regime literature was part of the ideological realm and it was meant to serve its interest. At the same time, however, some communist leaders had realised that literature was in its nature free, creative and spiritual activity which had to have a certain degree of openness and multiple meaning that was not possible to ideologically standardise without losing its effectiveness, aesthetic potential, and credibility. This ambivalent approach of the regime to the literature on one hand led to its effort to control and master literature to convey its propaganda messages, on the other hand, the regime attempted to eliminate and remove any kind of literature that could jeopardise the leading position of the Communist Party (Barborík, 2014).

As mentioned earlier, despite not very favorable political and social circumstances, several translations into English appeared, representing two percent of the total translation production recorded in Libor Knězek's bibliography. According to his list, seventeen books were translated into English between 1945 and 1966. The oldest translation recorded in Knězek's bibliography is the anthology *Hundred towers. A*

*Czechoslovak Anthology of Creative Writing* edited by Franz Carl Weiskopf and Egon Hostovský and published in 1945 in New York, The United States. Besides plenty of Czech writers, it contains excerpts from the novels by Slovak novelists Peter Jilemnický and Martin Kukučín as well as a few poems by famous Slovak poets Pavol Országh Hviezdoslav, Laco Novomeský, and Ivan Krasko. In 1950's Jaroslav Vajda translated a collection of passionate anti-war poems entitled *Bloody Sonnets* written by Pavol Országh – Hviezdoslav which was published in Scranton, Pennsylvania, The United States. Hviezdoslav's poetry is considered to be classical in style and often epic in scale dealing with relationship between man and nature, with morality, injustice and beauty of his native land. The uniqueness of his poetry lies in his experimentation with the language using unrivalled expressiveness and plasticity by means of which he hugely enriched the Slovak language (Partridge, 2000). However, as Partridge further adds, in this translation, Vajda shares with Hviezdoslav the ability to bewilder his reader, but little else (Partridge, 2000, p. 1293). However, thirteen years earlier, there was another attempt to translate Hviezdoslav's poetry into English. A tiny book entitled *Paul Orszagh Hviezdoslav; the greatest Slovak poet and some of his poems* containing five of his poems was edited and translated by Andrew P. Slabey and published in 1937 in *West Leisenring, Pennsylvania, The United States*.

In addition, several works by Slovak authors writing for children and young adults had been translated into English, including Klára Jarunková, who was very popular abroad and her books had already been translated into thirty-eight foreign languages. In 1968, her novel *Don't cry for me* translated by George Theiner was released in New York, The United States, where it remained among bestsellers for almost two years. However, Knězek was aware of the fact that his bibliography was not complete due to missing information about translations published abroad as well as due to insufficient evidence of foreign-language translations in Slovakia then.

In 1984, George J. Kovtun published a far more complex bibliography called *Czech and Slovak Literature in English*. As he writes in the *Preface to the First Edition*: "Czech and Slovak Literature in English, which is a bibliography of translations published in monographic form that includes belles lettres and folklore. Several items dealing with journalism are also listed because of the close relationship between journalistic and literary work that is typical of some of the represented authors. Children's literature is excluded except for works of special importance or works by poets or prose writers known for significant contributions to adult literature" (Kovtun, 1988, vii). George J. Kovtun was born in Horincevo, which was then part of the Czechoslovak province of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, on April 23, 1927. In 1948 he left Czechoslovakia and in 1976 he started to work as an editor at Voice of America in Washington, DC. Later he earned a degree in library science at Pratt Institute in New York, and started to work as an area specialist in the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, where he prepared several important bibliographies including *Czech and Slovak Literature in English* (1984, 1988). His effort was to compile his bibliography "as complete as possible," listing all translated writings from the first known works by English translators to the end of 1982 (1988, vii). The first edition of the bibliography was released in 1984. Four years later, a newly revised, expanded, and updated version was published, "While the main reason for

compiling a second edition was to meet reader demand which had exhausted the first edition, a secondary reason arose in the interval between the editions when a special honour was bestowed on Czech literature: Jaroslav Seifert (born 1901) was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1984. The present publication is dedicated to the memory of this great poet who died on January 10, 1986" (Kovtun, 1988, v).

An examination of the records has shown that the first known English translation of Slovak literature was published in 1832 in London, The United Kingdom, in the anthology called *Cheskian anthology; being a history of the poetical literature of Bohemia with translated specimens* compiled and translated by John Bowring. In spite of the fact that it was called *Cheskian anthology*, it contained translations of poems of two writers of Slovak origin, but writing in Czech: Pavel Jozef Šafárik (Šafařík – an alternative Czech spelling) and Ján Kollár. The reason is that Slovak literary language was officially established and standardised in 1843 during the Slovak revival. Before this time, the literary languages in the region had been Czech, Hungarian, Latin and German (Partridge, 2000, p. 1292). Therefore, some of the writers could be considered not only Slovak, but also Czech. As Kovtun (1988) explains, "Czech and Slovak are two distinct, although similar, literary languages and the authors in this bibliography can easily be divided into two groups along linguistic lines. The notable exceptions are Jan Kollár and Pavel J. Šafařík, who are claimed by both Czechs and Slovaks as their writers and cultural figures. The problem of where to place these two writers was solved by a Solomonic decision in reverse. Kollár and Šafařík are listed twice with identical entries in both the Czech and the Slovak author section. The compiler considers this deliberate redundancy tolerable, even beneficial, for Kollár and Šafařík provide two magnificent links between the two languages and literatures" (Kovtun, 1988, viii). In spite of the linguistic similarities between these languages, Slovak literature had a character quite different from that of Czech, but, as Partridge (2000) critically adds, "This difference has been either ignored or completely overlooked in the few available English translations; a token Slovak author or two in an anthology of Czech writing is usually deemed good enough" (Partridge, 2000, p. 1293).

*Cheskian anthology; being a history of the poetical literature of Bohemia with translated specimens* contains two poems by Pavel Jozef Šafárik and forty-one sonnets from the poem *Daughter of Sláva*. In addition, our research has revealed that translations of Ján Kollár's poetry appear to be the most common in the beginning of English translation of Slovak literature. Several anthologies testify this including Albert H. Wratishlaw's *Lyra czechoslovanská. Bohemian poems, ancient and modern, translated from the original Slavonic, with an introductory essay* (1849, London, The United Kingdom); Paul Selver's *An anthology of modern Bohemian poetry* (1912, London, The United Kingdom), Otto Kotouč's *Songs of the Slavs, translations from Czecho-Slovak* (1919, Boston, The United States of America); as well as František Chudoba's *A short survey of Czech literature* (1924, New York, The United States of America). The first anthology which paid more attention to Slovak literature dates from 1929 and was entitled *An anthology of Czechoslovak poetry* published by Columbia University Press in New York, The United States of America. It was compiled by Clarence A. Manning in cooperation with Anna V. Čapek and Alois B. Koukol. The anthology contains excerpts from the works of the following Slovak authors: Ján Kollár (2 sonnets), Ján Botto *The Death of Jánošík* (excerpt), Svetozár Hurban Vajanský (1

poem), Pavol Orzságh Hviezdoslav (3 poems), Ľudmila Podjavorinská (1 poem), Janko Jesenský (1 poem), Ivan Krasko (1 poem), and Ignác Grebáč-Orlov (1 poem). To sum up, twenty anthologies containing excerpts of Slovak literature were published before 1989. One of the most extensive was *An Anthology of Slovak Literature*, published in 1976 in California, The United States of America. It was compiled by Andrew Cincura, who also translated some excerpts by Slovak authors. Jaroslav J. Vajda, Andrew Bachleda and Martin M. Tybor also collaborated on the translation. Although it was a very extensive anthology that contains translations of literary works written by more than sixty Slovak authors, the opinion of James Partridge, the British professor of Slovak and Czech language and literature, on this anthology is slightly contradictory.

“Cincura’s *Anthology of Slovak Literature* (1976) is difficult to evaluate. On the one hand it is useful in that it contains samples of the work of many otherwise unavailable authors, including the poets Valentín Beniak, Laco Novomeský, Rudolf Dilong and Mária Hal’amová (all translated by Jaroslav Vajda...), and writers from the beginnings of Slovak prose through to Milo Urban, Figuli and Švantner, all translated by Cincura himself. On the other hand, the translations are simply not up to the task of persuading the reader that these *are* important European authors. This situation is not helped by the obvious targeting of the book at second or third generation American Slovaks wishing to rediscover their roots – not in itself a bad thing, but it does foster the impression of a parochial literature, not a European or world one” (Partridge, 2000, p. 1294).

Our research has also shown that only two anthologies devoted exclusively to Slovak literature were published before 1989. The first one containing only Slovak literature was entitled *An anthology of Slovak poetry; a selection of lyric and narrative poems and folk ballads in Slovak and English*. It was composed and translated by Ivan Kramoris and it was published in 1947 in Pennsylvania, The United States of America. Undoubtedly, the most extensive anthology of Czech and Slovak literature in English translation published before 1989 in former Czechoslovakia was the anthology entitled *Lipa – The Linden tree. Anthology of Czech and Slovak Literature 1890 – 1960* (1962) compiled by Mojmir Otruba and Zdeněk Pešat.

As the information already presented suggests, mostly only excerpts from the works by Slovak authors were translated in anthologies; however, more than twenty novels have been completely translated and published in separate books including Jozef Cíger Hronský’s novels *Predavač talizmanov* (1947) and *Jozef Mak* (1933). The first one mentioned was translated into English by John J. Kester as *Seller of Talismans* and published in Scotch Plains, The United States of America, in 1978. Novel *Jozef Mak* from the inter-war period, “depicts the inner life of an ‘ordinary man’ from a Slovak village, submissive but ever resilient before the repeated blows of fate. At the same time Hronský portrays the symbiosis between man and nature in a powerful almost mythical language. Andrew Cincura, the translator of *Jozef Mak* (in 1985), does not fully capture this elemental power in the language, which tends to make some parts of the translation rather heavy going. Nevertheless, *Jozef Mak* is an important and interesting novel and Cincura’s translation is welcome” (Partridge, 2000, 1293). In addition, some works by great Slovak novelists were released, for example, Janko Jesenský’s long, wearingly humorous social-

satirical novel *The Democrats* translated by Jean Rosemary Edwards (1934, 1937, 1961). Furthermore, in 1960s, several World War II novels were translated into English including Rudolf Jašík's *Dead soldiers don't sing* (1963) by Karel Kornell and *St. Elizabeth's Square* (1964) by Margot Schierl as well as Ladislav Mňačko's *Death is called Engelchen* (1961) by George Theiner. In addition, it is worth noticing that some of the books had been translated into

English from languages other than Slovak, mainly from Czech, for example, novels by Janko Jesenský, Rudolf Jašík, and Ladislav Mňačko. Moreover, Mňačko's novel *The Taste of Power* was translated into English from the Slovak manuscript and previously unpublished German translation and published in New York in 1967, one year earlier than it was officially published in Slovakia. Similarly, The English translation of Mňačko's political essay *The Seventh Night*, originally written in German, was published in New York, The United States of America, in 1969, twenty-one years earlier than it was published in

Slovakia. As Partridge notes, Mňačko was the only Slovak writer from the 1950s and 1960s who had made any impression in English-speaking countries. He was a well-known and outspoken dissident who wrote as early as in 1964 about the abuses of Stalinism in Slovakia. All his books are considered to be fast-paced and provocative (Partridge, 2000, p. 1294).

Besides Knězek's and Kovtun's anthologies, there were other important sources for our research including an online international bibliography of translations of the Index Translationum, which was created in 1932 and contains bibliographical information on books translated and published in about one hundred of the UNESCO Member States between 1979 and 2009 in all disciplines: literature, social and human sciences, natural and exact sciences, art, history and so forth. Furthermore, during our research we also worked with records, archives and collections of the Slovak National Library and UCL SSEES Library in London, The United Kingdom; and finally, we personally contacted, or via e-mail, translators of Slovak literature into English. It helped us to get as much information as possible to conduct research on the subject. There may be some information missing though. To sum up, about sixty separate books containing English translations of Slovak literature before 1989 have already been recorded within our research, including twenty anthologies. It is important to note that almost fifty percent of the translations had been published in The United States.

### **3 English Translations of the Slovak Literature after 1989**

The fall of communism in 1989 caused huge changes in all aspects of life, including literature. As Sherwood (2013) writes, there has been a veritable explosion of writing in Slovakia, both by authors who rose to fame under the previous regime and by a new generation of writers. In addition, the works of the older generations of writers who could not have published their literary works due to political reasons before the "Velvet Revolution" in 1989 started to be officially released. Therefore, our list of English translations of Slovak literature after 1989 includes their works also. For example, a younger Slovak writer Martin M. Šimečka, a son of the notable Bratislava-based Czech dissident writer Milan Šimečka, wrote an autobiographical novel reflecting the life of a

dissident's child *Džin* before 1989, but it was officially released in 1990. In 1993, its English translation entitled *Year of the Frog* by Peter Petro was published. The book was awarded the *Pegasus Prize for Literature* which is a literary prize established in 1977 to honour works from countries whose literature is rarely translated into English.

Slovak poetry has also been affected by the changed conditions after 1989. Despite the fact that many poets pursued their pre-revolutionary ideas, the new quality has emerged in a form of the Christian spiritual line (Marčok, 2006). It includes Milan Rúfus, one of the central names in post-war poetry. After the revolution he gradually shifted the focus of his poetical interest from adults to child readers and published several collections of poetry. Selections from his poetry have been translated into more than twelve European languages (Marčok, 2006). However, his poems have only recently been released in English – in 2006 a bilingual, English-Slovak book entitled *And That's the Truth*, and two years later another *To Bear the Burden and Sing* (2008) translated by the writer and translator John Minahane, who comes from Ireland and has been living in Slovakia for almost twenty years. Through self-study he gradually acquired Slovak, which enabled him to start working as a translator. He focuses mainly on translation of poetry. He translated selection of poems written by Laco Novomeský *Slovak Spring* (2004, Ireland) and Ján Buzássy's *Eighteen Poems* (2012, Slovakia). As John Minahane claims, Laco Novomeský belongs to his favorite Slovak writers and the translation of his poems into the English language was initiated by himself, "I found Novomeský fascinating both because of his poetry and for what he revealed about the history (political and intellectual) of his times. Because nothing had been written on these lines, I gradually came to feel I could/should do it myself. That was how I began" (Minahane, 2013). Furthermore, his translation of Hviezdoslav's *Bloody Sonnets* that was published in 2018 in London has been considered to be the best translation of his anti-war sonnets so far and it has been hugely marvelled by literary critics in English-speaking countries. As an editor Joseph Schreiber writes, "Translator John Minahane has taken on a formidable challenge here. Hviezdoslav, working within the constraints of the Petrarchan sonnet, was trying to express the intense emotions welling up inside. Rhymes are never easy to accommodate across linguistic borders but the results sing with overwhelming power, energy, and passion" (Schreiber, 2018). In addition, Queen Elizabeth II received a special edition of the book as a gift from the Slovak Embassy in London and she appreciated the strong humane message sent out by one of the most prominent poetic works of Slovak literature with an anti-war theme written by one of Slovakia's most celebrated poets (Minarechová, 2018).

Some other books of famous Slovaks poets have been translated since 1989 including Miroslav Válek' *The Ground Beneath our Feet: Selected Poems* translated by a prominent translator of Czech origin living in The United Kingdom, Ewald Osers, and published in 1996 in Great Britain. In addition, five years later, Ivan Laučík's collection of poems entitled *Cranberry in Ice: Selected Poems* translated by James and Viera Sutherland-Smith was published in Canada. James Sutherland-Smith who comes from Great Britain has lived in Slovakia for almost thirty years and is one of the most active translators of Slovak literature into English, "I began translating Slovak poetry with the help of other people, notably Stefania Allen who was my co-translator for 'Not Waiting for Miracles', the first anthology ever of contemporary Slovak poets in English. Since then with my wife, Viera, I

have translated over 100 Slovak poets with significant collections of the work of Ivan Laucik, Jan Buzassy, Mila Haugova and Milan Rufus" (Sutherland-Smith, 2013). Besides this anthology, several others have been published in Slovakia and abroad together with *Smejúci sa anjel / The Laughing Angel* (published in 2000 in Slovakia), *In Search of Beauty: An Anthology of Contemporary Slovak Poetry in English* (published in 2004 in Slovakia and The United States) and *Six Slovak Poets* (published in 2010 in The United Kingdom).

There has been an increase in English translations of Slovak contemporary fiction published after 1989. For example, the translation of Peter Pišťanek's trilogy *Rivers of Babylon* (2007, 2008, London, The United Kingdom) by Peter Petro was appreciated by literary critics in English-speaking countries including the Scottish writer, William Boyd, marvelling at the genuine Pišťanek's novel and its translation by Peter Petro, "Peter Pišťanek's novel *Rivers of Babylon* (Garnett Press) is an astonishing find. Brilliantly translated from Slovak by Peter Petro, this story of a small-town loser, turned enterprising bravura gangster in post-communist Slovakia, is fuelled with formidable energy and ice-cool satire. It displays a fierce black humour that is both ruthless and exhilarating" (Boyd, 2007). In addition, the novel was compared to Gary Shteyngart's *Absurdistan* (Fischer, 2008) and appreciated for its satire on both communism and capitalism, "It was a bombshell of a satire on both socialism and capitalism, a gangster novel high on the fumes of comic amorality, an anti-fable, a full-blown fairytale-nasty. It foretold a significant phase of Europe's post-Communist future and should have been seized for translation as fast as an alert British publisher could acquire the rights; as fast, say, as with Patrick Süskind's *Perfume*. Instead, 17 years later a tiny university-backed publisher has brought out a small edition in a loving translation. It sold out within a week of its publication last month, and Garnett Press is reprinting. We are a slow lot" (Evans, 2008). However, the second and the third part of the trilogy were not so successful, mainly due to the lack of an equally compelling narrative framework (Rutherford, 2008). Daniela Kapitáňová's *Cemetery Book*, another successful English translation of contemporary Slovak fiction by Julia Sherwood, was published in 2010 in Great Britain. As Boyd (2010) writes, "**Samko Tále's Cemetery Book** (Garnett Press) by the Slovak writer Daniela Kapitáňová offers us, in a superb translation by Julia Sherwood, one of the strangest and most compelling voices I have come across in years. Muriel Spark meets Russell Hoban. An astonishing, dark and scabrous novel." Julia Sherwood also translated the short story by Leopold Lahola *Birdsong* as well as Ursula Kovalyk's short story *Lace* published in the anthology entitled *Counterfeits (Two Lines, World Writing in Translation XVIII)* (2011) released by *The Center for the Art of Translation* in San Francisco, The United States. Moreover, in 2014 Jana Juráňová's novel *Ilona. My Life with the Bard* translated by Julia and Peter Sherwood was published by American publishing house Calypso Editions. In addition, English translation of Peter Krištúfek's novel *The House of the Deaf Man* was published in the British publishing house Parthian in the same year. Furthermore, several anthologies containing excerpts of contemporary Slovak fiction have been published after 1989. For example, in 2002 the anthology *In Search of Homo Sapiens: Twenty-Five Contemporary Slovak Short Stories* was published by Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers in Wauconda, The United States of America. It includes the short stories of twenty-three Slovak writers including Július Balco, Mária Bátorová, Marína Čeretková-Gáľlová, Etela Farkašová and Anton Hykisch. In

2010 the second issue of the thirtieth volume of journal *The Review of Contemporary Fiction* was dedicated to Slovak fiction. It contained excerpts from the works of sixteen Slovak writers including Ladislav Ballek, Dušan Dušek, Braňo Hochel, Michal Hvorecký, Rudolf Sloboda and Pavel Vilikovský. A three-quarterly journal is published by American publishing house Dalkey Archive Press and beside other activities it has a special affinity for the works of foreign writers who may otherwise go unread in The United States. It had already published special issues dedicated to Italian, French, Japan, Finnish, Lithuanian and Romanian literature and the issue dedicated solely to Slovak literature undoubtedly helped to promote it in English-speaking countries. In 2015 the anthology entitled *Dedalus Book of Slovak Literature* was published by British publishing house Dedalus containing excerpts of works by twelve prominent Slovak writers including Martin Kukučín, Jozef Cíger Hronský, Milo Urban, Dominik Tatarka and Dušan Mitana. It was edited by Peter Karpinský and excerpts had been translated into English by Janet Livingstone, Magdaléna Mullek and Denis Dobrovoda.

In conclusion, our research revealed that besides dozens of articles and translations published in British and American journals, more than a hundred English book translations of Slovak literature were published after 1989. This figure indicates that interest in Slovak literature has slightly increased over the past thirty years. Considering the geographical spread of these translations, most of them were published in The United Kingdom, not in The United States as it was before 1989. A fascination for Slovak literature has always been quite noticeable in The United Kingdom and currently is developing (Ciprianová, Miššíková, Ruda, 2016). As for the genres of Slovak literature translated into English, the translations of fiction prevail. It is noticeable that there has not been yet any separate book translation of drama after 1989. Translations of plays have been published rarely in anthologies, for example, Vladimír Hurban Vladimírov's *Snowdrifts (Záveje)* in the anthology entitled *Visegrad drama, 1. (Plays from the countries of the Visegrád Group. Translated from Czech, Hungarian, Polish, and Slovak)* (2002); or in the journals, for example, Pavol Janík's *Dangerous Comedies: 3 plays "A Private Striptease," "A School Graduation Suit" and "The Trap"* published online in *Academic Electronic Journal in Slavic Studies* by University in Toronto in 2002.

#### **4 Conclusion**

In comparison with other current topics in Translation Studies in Slovakia or abroad, translating Slovak literature into English and its reception in English-speaking countries has received relatively little attention. The statistical report entitled *Publishing Translated Literature in the The United Kingdom and Ireland 1990 – 2015* (Trentacosti and Nocholls, 2017) showed that between 2000 – 2015 the percentage of translations among all publications in the The United Kingdom remained around the much-quoted 3% mark. As Fiona Sampson, the British editor and writer, notes, "UK book culture is notoriously monoglot: there is certainly international writing, but for historical and also linguistic reasons (the end of empire was succeeded by the empire of language) it is dominated by international writing in English: from the Indian subcontinent, Africa, the Caribbean,

Australia and New Zealand, the US and Canada. Each of these regions contributes big-hitting novelists to the British publishing scene. Faced with these cultural continuities, which are daily reinforced by popular culture in the Anglophone world, it may seem almost impossible for the unfamiliar, highly characteristic and specific literary culture of a country like Slovakia, to get a hearing in the UK” (Sampson, 2004, s. 79) However, the situation has been changing. According to Julia Sherwood, a translator of Slovak origin who has been living in London for years, Slovak literature was virtually unknown in The United Kingdom until recently, but that situation has begun to change and some contemporary writers are now available in English (Sherwood, 2018). Our research has revealed that almost two hundred books containing English translation of Slovak literature have been published from 1832 to 2018 and this figure is constantly increasing, despite the limited funding of translations, their publication, promotion as well as distribution. As Sampson (2004) further adds, to improve the situation, it is necessary to continue in publishing and promoting English translations of Slovak literature as well as to increase the awareness of foreign readers about Slovak literature, but also the awareness of Slovak writers and English translators about the possibilities of publishing Slovak literature abroad. As a result, the growing number of translations published in English-speaking countries as well as the growing interest of translators, writers, readers and translation theorists serves as evidence that the situation has been changing. Plenty of projects related to translation of literature into English have recently been conducted. For example, the research project *Translating the Literatures of Small European Nations*, conducted in the University of Bristol and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, was aimed at understanding both the challenges and opportunities that exist for literatures written in less widely spoken languages as they try to break into the cultural mainstream in the The United Kingdom. The results of this research have showed that the widespread and enduring pessimism about the prospects for translated literature in the The United Kingdom is outdated as well as that the number of independent presses publishing translated literature has markedly increased in the past decade (Chitnis, Stougaard-Nielsen, Atkin, Milutinović, 2016). Similarly, another piece of evidence of some gradual improvement in the approach to translation of literature in English-speaking countries, is a project conducted at the University of Rochester, which runs an online database of books translated from foreign languages into English and published in The United States. The research has revealed an increase in the number of translated publications – the amount of translations in The United States has almost doubled over the past ten years (Post, 2019). All the previously mentioned information clearly proves that interest in translation of Slovak literature into English has been increasing. One of the benefits, which should be kept in mind when thinking about translation of Slovak literature into English, is the fact that translated literature not only opens the door for readers of the English language, but it also points the way to a myriad of other doors leading to possible translations into other world languages (Straumanis, 2013).

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