

OBSAH / CONTENTS**EDITORIÁL / EDITORIAL**

IVANA HOSTOVÁ

Translation and creativity ■ 2

OKRÚHLÝ STÔL / ROUNDTABLE

SUSAN BASSNETT – LAWRENCE VENUTI – JAN PEDERSEN – IVANA HOSTOVÁ

Translation and creativity in the 21st century ■ 3

ŠTÚDIE – TÉMA / ARTICLES – TOPIC

JÁN ŽIVČÁK

Vision ou manipulation ? Les problèmes éditoriaux d'une anthologie slovaque des troubadours ■ 18

MARY WARDLE

Translation as an embodied practice: The case of dance notation ■ 32

ZUZANA HUSÁROVÁ – KAREL PIORECKÝ

Reception of literature generated by artificial neural networks ■ 44

DISKUSIA / DISCUSSION

IVANA HOSTOVÁ

Queer perspectives in translation studies: Notes on two recent publications ■ 61

ŠTÚDIE / ARTICLES

ADAM BŽOCH

Hovoríť striebro: Konverzačná kultúra v nizozemskom „Zlatom veku“ ■ 79

RECENZIE / BOOK REVIEWS

Jitka Malečková: “The Turk” in the Czech Imagination (1870s–1923)

(Haluk Ihsan Talay) ■ 98

John Corbett – Ting Huang (eds.): The Translation and Transmission of Concrete Poetry

(Anna Fosse) ■ 100

Roy Youdale: Using Computers in the Translation of Literary Style:

Challenges and Opportunities (Marián Kabát) ■ 101

Martin Djovčoš – Mária Kusá – Emília Perez (eds.): Translation, Interpreting and Culture:

Old Dogmas, New Approaches (Lenka Poľaková) ■ 103

Translation and creativity

IVANA HOSTOVÁ

With technologies employing artificial intelligence becoming almost ubiquitous in all aspects of our lives, humankind has been increasingly trying to redefine what it means to be human. Creativity, as usually understood by both specialists and the general public, appears to be one such characteristic. Translation studies has been repeatedly arguing for defining translation not as a simple invisible tool for information transfer, but as a creative process. Although machine translation has improved significantly with recent advances in natural language processing, the creative work, that is indeed an inseparable part of the translation process in my opinion, is still the domain of the human translator. Creativity enables the translator – prototypically a literary translator, but also a translator dealing with other text types, tackling such problems as the linguistic transfer of original terminology – to carry a challenging text beyond the boundaries of its cultural and cognitive domain. Creativity is equally a quality we wish for in research, be it in humanities, postdisciplinary areas of research, but also in natural sciences that similarly make dialogues with other fields, which help them overcome their limitations and engage with the world in a more complex way.

This issue of *WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES*, inspired by a discussion at the conference *Translation, Interpreting and Culture 2: Rehumanising Translation and Interpreting Studies*, held on 22–24 September 2021 in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, takes creativity and translation as its two core topics. The contributions position themselves to these themes in various ways, ranging from addressing creativity in translation on the theoretical level, through the employment of methodologies creatively appropriated from other disciplines and applied on hybrid objects of study, to inquiries into interactions between humans and technologies and persisting hierarchies of power. Not all of the articles deal with both translation and creativity: the composition of the volume, addressing such topics as dance, troubadour poetry, neural networks or queer perspectives in translation studies, rather encourages the reader to embrace the cross-pollination of research objects and methodologies and engage in creative academic reading.

Translation and creativity in the 21st century

**SUSAN BASSNETT – LAWRENCE VENUTI – JAN PEDERSEN –
IVANA HOSTOVÁ**

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The discussion below, which took place during a roundtable at the conference Translation, Interpreting and Culture 2: Rehumanising Translation Studies held in September 2021 in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia, addresses topical issues pertaining to translation and creativity in contemporary translation practice and research, both in general and focused on literary and audiovisual translation.

INTRODUCTION

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: With the incessantly expanding number of texts to be translated for the globalized market and international institutions, instrumental thinking has to a great extent become ingrained both in translator training programs and in research on translation. Recent years have also seen heated debates concerning the unethical employment of poorly post-edited machine translation, misguidedly used with the intention of preserving small or minority languages (Baumgarten and Cornella-Dettrel 2018). Theory is making visible the consequences of accepting the instrumental view of translation by addressing such issues as the depletion of language commons as expressive linguistic resources (Cronin 2016a), the commodification of education, and the occlusion of human agency in these circumstances (cf. Cronin 2016b; Dizdar 2014; Venuti 2019). Creativity as manifested in the complex handling of languages in cultural contexts has been advocated as one way in which translators can fight the impact of this crude commodification of linguistic transfer. To translate poetry, to tackle wordplay when translating subtitles, to deal with complex intertextualities in a novel – all these endeavors require enormous time expenditure and bring little immediate profit. However, to engage in these is to perform activities that in the long term help to alleviate the detrimental effect that the superficial handling of interlingual transfer can have on languages, cultures and the translation process.

“Creativity” is a term that – similar to “translation” – escapes a single definition. Some scholars have argued that it is intimately connected with language, since “creativity stands at the core of both the emergence and evolution of different forms

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of language practices, well beyond art [...]. In the absence of language there would be little, if any, creative action” (Demuth and Glaveanu 2016, 54). It is therefore not surprising that “creativity” is a concept which is often used when we write or speak about translation. For the purposes of the following discussion, we can outline three topical areas concerning translation and creativity.

(1) The secondary status of translation springing from the binary of source and target texts by definition renders the translator as the less creative actor (if indeed creative at all) – compared to the author/authors – in the process of text production.

It is creativity – thinking outside the box, transgressing common norms, making individualized translation choices, introducing elements unprovoked by the text undergoing translation – that enables a literary translator to carry a challenging text (especially texts like poetry, philosophical treatises or innovative/experimental/conceptual writing) across the boundaries of its cultural and cognitive domain.

Innovative writing often employs translation as one of its procedures or handles the foreign text as a source of creative material, especially in the writing of poets who are also translators, both explicitly as in US-based poet and translator Brandon Brown’s *The Persians by Aeschylus* (2011) or the Scottish poet and translator Peter Manson’s *English in Mallarmé* (2014) and less conspicuously as in the Czech poet Viky Shock’s *V předsíni dýchal idiot* (An idiot breathed in the hallway, 2020) or *Batéria* (Battery, 2014) by the Slovak poet and translator Karol Chmel (cf. Piorecký and Škrabal 2020, 571; Hostová 2015, 2). But when investigated very closely, even exemplars of what we would call prototypical “literary translation” or “original writing” contain procedures that dilute the illusion that writing a text and translating one are two radically different activities. Moreover, as Lawrence Venuti argues, “a translation can only communicate an interpretation of the source text, never that text itself or some form or meaning believed to be inherent in it” (2011, 426).

The status of the source and target text is especially unclear when it comes to such areas in translation as localization (Pym 2004, 35) or audiovisual translation (Pedersen 2019, 51). These issues pose a number of questions, such as: (a) Has the basic binary model of source and target (text and culture) become obsolete or can it still serve as an explanatory model, as a certain backdrop from which further thinking can spring (in teaching for example)? (b) Where – in the practices that combine translational and non-translational procedures – are the boundaries between a translation and a new text? Is it even necessary or productive to insist on these boundaries? (c) Would a more radical abolishing of the boundaries (between translated and non-translated texts and between source and target texts) in any way threaten translation studies as a field?

(2) With the quickly improving natural language processing technologies and the growing number of texts that need translation, human creativity in the translation process might become restricted as the quantity of translations that require post-editing limits the extent to which humans and human creativity are involved in the process.

Intellectuals from various domains have argued that instead of rejecting these technologies, translation studies and translation practice and products included, should look for ways to cooperate with phenomena like artificial intelligence, to insert human sensitivity into the machine and to create *with* it, since ignoring technological advances could ultimately enclose the arts, literature and the human sciences within their individual domains and prevent them from engaging with broader public debates and having real impact on the shape of the world. This prompts the question of whether (and how) we can (or should) fuel a transdisciplinary and intermedial dialogue (e.g. by building creative teams) between the natural sciences and technologies on the one hand and human-centered fields and areas of practice.

A recurrent fear voiced by translators and translation scholars is the diminishing role of the human translator (and, by extension, of creativity) in the process of interlingual exchange. However, in *The Stack: On Software and Sovereignty*, Benjamin Bratton argues that “[t]hinking with tools, and [...] working with the fixed capital of advanced technologies, is a good thing. It is part of the genesis of our species. It is how we mediate the world and are mediated by it; we become what we are by making that which in turn makes us” (2015, under “Preface”). Even the invention of writing and, later, of the printing press which enable us to create and move texts in translation at all are technologies. Or, as Karin Littau puts it, “[t]here is [...] something wrong with an overly anthropocentric emphasis on mind, consciousness, language, meaning, discourse, critique, etc., if it makes us blind to the very things that arguably are the conditions of possibility for humanization: the material technologies and techniques that underpin cultural practices such as reading, writing, translating, painting, counting, etc.” (2016, 84). This raises at least two questions: (a) why are pre-machine translation technological advances generally deemed acceptable in translation and translation studies while services using neural machine translation have become such an enemy and (b) how can translators use the machine translation that is perceived as a threat so as to take the current state of natural language processing technologies into account and turn them into an advantage.

(3) Translation studies often lacks sufficient creativity that would help it escape the confines of its own domain and enter new transdisciplinary dialogues, including the new models of thought as outlined by such thinkers in critical post-humanism as Rosi Braidotti (2013, 163).

Susan Bassnett and David Johnston (2019, 184) have recently pointed out the perceived “lack of original thinking [...] in many conferences dedicated to translation” which prevents the discipline from being able to enter wider transdisciplinary discussions that have the ability to address the pressing crises faced by the planet. The key points here then would be (a) how this impasse can be overcome and (b) what tools can be used to reinsert creativity into translation research and teaching.

OPENING STATEMENTS

SUSAN BASSNETT: I believe that all translation has a creative dimension. Translation involves finding solutions to problems that arise as one moves between languages, hence translating all kinds of text, whether they are epic poems, plays, tourist brochures, legal texts or instruction manuals always has its creative dimension. When I first came across functionalist theory years ago, particularly as promoted by Katharina Reiss and Hans Vermeer, I found it very useful and applicable also to literary texts, because the whole basis of skopos theory is simply to just be mindful of the purpose for which the translation is being undertaken, and then to make those linguistic selections that appear most appropriate. The translator has to take responsibility and taking responsibility for a text – whether it is a translation of a business letter or newspaper report on a football game or a recipe or whatever – involves freedom on the part of the translator to reshape it accordingly.

My interest is in literary translation. I have done a lot of judging of international literary prizes in the last twenty years, and I find that a fascinating process in terms of thinking about translators' creativity. For many years, I was one of the judges on the Spender Poetry in Translation Prize, and I noticed that the texts to which we awarded the prizes tended to be the ones that took the greatest risks. Risks included taking a 19th-century Italian dialect poet and translating him into Scots or translating short Greek epigrams into text messages or transforming the Latin poet Catullus into a contemporary rap artist. In other words, exercising a freedom, as Anne Carson (King 2012) called it, to "crazy" things up a bit. Another thing that one has to bear in mind is the instability of the original with earlier texts, and my argument here is that in a sense, the older the text, the more textual manipulation it has gone through with multiple hands and therefore the more creative a translator needs to be.

As to some of the questions Ivana has outlined: one of them asked whether the binary model of source and target has become obsolete. I think it was always inadequate, except perhaps as a pedagogical tool for the teaching of a foreign language. Also, can we talk about boundaries, that is, when is a translation not a translation, when does it become an adaptation? I do not find this distinction helpful at all. The basic criterion in theatre translation when people talk about the difference between an adaptation and a translation seems to be the distance perceivable in the freedom of the translator that a text has travelled from its source. And I do not find that helpful. As to the problem of translating small languages, I would again like to refer to one of the translation prizes which I have judged – the Warwick Prize for Women in Translation. This is the fifth year and we can see something quite interesting here, which is not only a number of small publishers willing to take risks, but an interesting number of prize winning entries from small languages. In the first year of the prize, we awarded it to Yoko Tawada, a Japanese-German writer. The second year it went to a Croatian writer, and last year it went to a Georgian writer. The only major language was French – we awarded the prize to Annie Ernaux in 2019. But looking at which languages are represented in our shortlists, one can see that there are very interesting artworks written in small languages – we had a Georgian writer, two Finnish ones, three Hungarian, three Korean, five Polish, a Russian, Sudanese.

I think that when we are thinking about creativity, we also have to take into account the unpredictability. Also, what I call the randomness of translation success because, well, the Elena Ferrante phenomenon, for example, I think is a classic example of this. I read those four books in Italian and I thought they will never work in English, they are just culturally too tied to the Italian context. But I was wrong. And there are endless examples of writers who one assumes will be hugely successful but who have not been successful at all in the target culture. In other cases, and it is not just Elena Ferrante, I would cite the famous J.K. Rowling and *Harry Potter* or the Brazilian Paulo Coelho, who has become an international bestseller, a global phenomenon, it is the other way around. Both of those are writers that were pretty well ignored when they first came out. So I think the unpredictability factor which has everything to do with how readers read and thankfully cuts across the marketing process has to be taken into consideration.

LAWRENCE VENUTI: Anything said about translation always assumes a concept of what translation is. And the fact is that not every concept can disclose in a comprehensive and incisive way the nature of the translator's creativity. Consider a concept of translation that has long dominated the history of translation theory and commentary throughout the world right down to the present: I call it instrumentalism. It understands translation as the reproduction or transfer of an invariant contained in or caused by the source text, an invariant form, meaning or effect. Here it would seem that the translator's creativity lies, not in perceiving the source-text invariant – that cognitive ability would constitute basic competence – but rather in choosing or developing a form, meaning, or effect in the translating language that exactly matches that invariant. I say “choosing or developing” because the corresponding form, meaning, or effect may not preexist the translation process in the translating language; it may have to be constructed somehow. Hence instrumentalism imagines the translator's creativity as a certain resourcefulness, the results of which are evaluated as to correctness or accuracy against the source-text invariant. To be creative in translation, then, is to get the source text right in these terms.

Yet just how creative is getting it right? Doesn't an instrumental model of translation essentially reduce the translator's labor to mechanical substitution? Translation here is largely a matter of replacing one word by one word, whereby a formal, semantic, or effective invariant in the source text is believed to be preserved intact during the translation process, that is to say reproduced or transferred so that it is communicated or signified in the translated text. We can call this process one that requires resourcefulness, but finally that seems to be a misnomer, since by “mechanical” I mean that a machine can do it, properly programmed.

To discover a way out of this quagmire we must acknowledge that instrumentalism carries an egregious corollary. This is the empiricist assumption that the invariant is simply available to perception without the translator's construction or interpretation. The invariant, however, doesn't exist: it is in fact a variable interpretation.

You may of course object by insisting that source-text words have stable, inherent grammatical features and meanings so the translator need only perceive them to locate formal, semantic, and effective invariants. But this objection doesn't stand up. Why not?

Merely by choosing the word as the unit of translation, you have already initiated the process of constructing the so-called invariant since *many* different units of translation are possible – not only the word, but the phrase, sentence, paragraph, section or chapter, right up to the entire text – and the choice of a specific unit will inevitably affect how the translator construes grammar and meaning at a lower or smaller level in the scale of units. Moving between languages, furthermore, releases the possibility of synonymy, where similarity in meaning cannot be treated as identity, pointing to the fact that meaning in language is ultimately determined by context. Translation builds a context for the source text in a different language and culture, so that differences in form, meaning, and effect are inevitable – even when the translator struggles to establish a semantic correspondence and stylistic approximation, not so much to the source text itself as to the translator’s understanding of the source text. The invariant, then, does not exist as a readily perceptible essence residing in any text, since any text is never available in some direct, unmediated way but always already processed or interpreted.

To reveal the translator’s creativity, we need a concept of translation that is fundamentally hermeneutic. Translation can be understood as an interpretive act that inevitably varies source-text form, meaning, and effect according to intelligibilities and interests in the receiving culture. The translator applies interpretive factors drawn from receiving cultural forms and practices that are arranged in a hierarchy of authority or prestige. An interpretation is inscribed in the source text through linguistic patterns, cultural traditions, and translation conventions, through the styles, genres, and discourses of specific media, which enable the translation to support meanings, values, and functions in the receiving situation. This interpretive act reveals translation at its most creative because any source text can support the construction of multiple and conflicting interpretations. The institutions in and through which translations are produced and circulated delimit a range of acceptable interpretations even as those institutions try to control how the translations themselves are received or interpreted. Translation of any kind of text, whether humanistic, pragmatic, or technical, regardless of the medium, should be seen as creative precisely because it has the potential to be a powerful act of interpretation – depending, of course, on the translator’s inventiveness in construing verbal choices at interpretive moves.

An example is offered by Darcy Paquet’s English subtitles for Bong Joon-ho’s 2019 film, *Parasite*. An instrumentalist model might fault Paquet’s translation at two points where it deviates from specific words on the Korean soundtrack. Thus he changes a reference to “Seoul National University” to “Oxford” in a scene where the Kim family fabricates a resume to secure a lucrative job. With the Korean word, “chapa-guri”, a neologism that splices together two brand names for instant noodles, “chapa-ghetti” and “neoguri”, Paquet used “ram-don”, which is also a neologism, although formed from two Japanese words, “ramen” and “udon”. The Japanese borrowing thus deviates from Korean usage: Korean viewers would immediately recognize as Korean the neologism, “chapa-guri”, along with the two brand names from which it is formed. In interviews Paquet himself has acknowledged these deviations, explaining his choices as an effort to increase accessibility. They would be easier to understand for Anglophone viewers.

Yet Paquet's choices need not be regarded as deviations, since they actually adhere to the film, if not the soundtrack. From a hermeneutic point of view, they are interpretive moves that develop key themes. They glance at the foreign domination that Korea has suffered since the beginning of the 20th century – first by Japanese colonial rule, then by the United States military presence – insofar as they indicate the characters' fascination with Anglophone and Japanese cultures as repositories of cultural resources that are perceived as valuable and therefore worthy of imitation. This fascination is represented in the film by the wealthy Park family whom the impoverished Kim family exploit to improve their own financial situation. It is Mrs. Park who requests the beef noodle dish called “ram-don” in the subtitles. Even if Paquet did not intend the thematic resonances that I have located in his verbal choices, they can be seen as constituting inventive interpretations that point up the postcolonial discourse in the film.

JAN PEDERSEN: I do not find these translation solutions to be errors either. I think they are indeed interpretations that could validly be made in the subtitles of *Parasite*. I also agree with Susan that all translation is creative – that is, all *human* translation is creative. My notion of creativity involves intent and intentionality, and machines and algorithms cannot have intentions. So machines cannot, to my mind, be creative.

I work mainly in subtitling and in this field, the binary opposition between instrumentalism and hermeneutics needs to be nuanced. To me, it is a question of perspective. As subtitles themselves are not the target text – reading subtitles without the original film makes little or no sense – we need to separate process and product here. Because of the well-known constraints of the medium (time and space constraints, shift from spoken to written language, semiotic cohesion etc.), the process of subtitling inevitably means choices, priorities and interpretation. In other words, the process of making subtitles is a highly hermeneutic and creative act. However, viewed as products, subtitles are instrumental. How could they not be? No one ever went to the cinema with the sole intention of reading subtitles. In subtitling, the target text is best defined as the source text plus the subtitles. The subtitles are thus instrumental for accessing and enjoying the film. This form of instrumentalism is nothing new in audiovisual translations. We find old axioms like “the best subtitles are those that you never notice” (Søndergaard 2000), “willing suspension of linguistic disbelief” (Romero-Fresco 2009) and “a contract of illusion” (Pedersen 2011). And there are similar metaphors in other forms of translation as well, e.g. the “translation pact” (Alvstad 2014) for literary translation. To me it is clear that viewers (and readers) are aware that they read a different text from the original; it is obvious as the original dialogue and the subtitles are co-present in the subtitled target text. However, they disregard this knowledge in order to immerse themselves in what they consciously deceive themselves to be the source text.

When it comes to the issue of creativity, there is a big discussion about creative subtitles these days, because with improved technology, a lot of text on screen is included in the source text films. In the translation process, some subtitles now also appear in various places and interact with the source text in fascinating ways. And the common name for that, both in business and academia, is *creative sub-*

titles. So, for example in the TV series *Sherlock* (Gatiss and Moffat 2010–2017), text messages appear on screen, a business letter gets constructed in that form in the subtitles or, in dream sequences, the subtitles appear in a mist. There are various other forms of creative use of subtitles interacting with other semiotic channels on the screen.

However, I do not think the label *creative subtitles* should be reserved for such ways of handling the subtitles only. To my mind, creativity in subtitles also lies elsewhere. For instance, in the creative interpretative solutions from *Parasite* just mentioned. And there are more overtly creative solutions in traditional subtitles as well. Consider for example the Danish subtitles of the TV series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* (Chapman et al 1969–1973). In the “Trouble at the mill” sketch, there is a caption on screen that simply says “Jarrow-1912”, and the Danish subtitle of that says just “se ovenfor” – “see above”. The subtitle interacts with the source text, and communicates a direct instruction to the viewer. These are still traditional subtitles, but they are handled in a very creative way. And further on in the same sketch, the character says “there is trouble at the mill”. Then he specifies the trouble, but the words are undecipherable. The Danish subtitler translated that into “mumlenogsåovenikøbetpådialekt” (mumblingandthenalsoevenindialect). So instead of reproducing the nonsensical message – it becomes apparent in the dialogue that neither the speaker nor the hearer understands what the message means – the subtitler focused on the style and interpreted the utterance functionally, rather than semantically. My other example comes from the Swedish subtitles of the TV series *Little Britain* (Walliams and Lucas 2003–2007). In the series, the character of Vicky Pollard speaks very quickly and very nonsensically. In one of the episodes, she is asked if she bit a fellow pupil. In her fast and confused reply, she does not address the question. Her utterance instead reproduces the stereotype of the original Essex girl. The Swedish public service broadcaster created a translation with a new meaning, which is more related to the way she speaks rather than to what she says. These are all examples of creative subtitles, too. I think that it is misleading to talk about creative subtitles only when they look different, e.g. when they have unusual colours, fonts or placement. I think that creativity is a continuum and requires intent. Therefore, Stavroula Sokoli, Rita Menezes and I have suggested the term “free form subtitles” (as noted by Romero-Fresco 2021) for the first examples I quoted, because they mainly stand out by where they are placed and what fonts they use and how they look on screen and so on. This term is more adequate in my opinion, since all forms of subtitling are in fact creative.

DISCUSSION

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: Let us now move to some of the points I wanted us to discuss. Susan, you opened the question of the viability of the old binary of source and target text and you said that in your view, it is not something really stable or existent. . .

SUSAN BASSNETT: Yes, I do not think the opposition is particularly helpful. It can be useful, I think, as a pedagogical tool. It can assist you with the teaching of a foreign language and also with the teaching of translation. This is one of the rea-

sons why in my translation workshops I like to give my students a range of different possibilities. Because when you show the possibilities inherent in translating a text, you immediately see how that kind of binary distinctions start to dissolve.

JAN PEDERSEN: I agree that the binary is useful for teaching purposes, both in languages and in translation. But I also think that the binary opposition is not a very good way of seeing it. I think we need to have a more nuanced and pluralistic view of source texts and target texts. But I also like to strongly state that they are different texts – the source and the target text. A translation can never change the source text because the source text is still there, and the target text is then created as a different text. The source text remains untouched by the translation. The only way in which a translation – a target text – can change the source text is when a reader comes to a source text after having read the target text. In this way, in his or her mind that reading of the source text may be affected by the translation that she or he has read. But that is not a change in the source text itself, it is a change in the way that the reader sees the source text. And then, of course, there are many different levels of source and target texts. Also, there are often, especially in subtitling, many different source text versions, therefore source texts are not really stable over time anyway, and target text can be worked upon in many ways. Some target texts do not even have source texts – take the example of pseudotranslations. So while it is a complicated issue, I think we do need some sort of common ground for that purpose. I think the terminology is useful to be kept.

LAWRENCE VENUTI: Among the problems with thinking of translation as simply a process of moving from a source to a translated text is certainly that it conceals the translator's creative development and application of interpretive factors. No translation can be produced without this third category insofar as it involves factors that are formal (e.g. a concept of equivalence, a style, a discourse) and thematic (e.g. an ideology, a function). To reduce translation to a source and a translated text invites the sort of naïve comparison that has long rested on the instrumentalist notion of a source-text invariant, typically a semantic essence that the translator can and should reproduce to translate effectively.

It is also important to recognize – in my view – that a sharp distinction exists between instrumentalism and a hermeneutic model of translation. They are mutually exclusive. Instrumentalism stresses invariance, reproduction or transfer, and in some formulations untranslatability, whereas a hermeneutic model stresses variation, interpretation, and translatability. Not only would I argue that instrumentalism is a hoax – the invariant doesn't exist – but it is not possible to think of translation in both instrumentalist and hermeneutic terms at the same time (even if a commentary on translation may assume contradictory models in different statements).

Most film viewers who depend on subtitles tend to bring to their viewing experience the instrumentalist assumption that the subtitles reproduce essential meanings contained in the soundtrack. This assumption underpins the imaginative engrossment they experience, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's notion (he applied it to theatrical performance) of the "willing suspension of disbelief", and it is this very assumption that enables them to succumb to the realist illusion, effectively

erasing the distinction between art and reality. If, however, viewers treat the subtitles as an interpretation, they would be more detached in their viewing, certainly perceiving the meanings they need to make sense of the entire audiovisual image, but also grasping subtleties like tone, dialect, style, and intertextuality while regarding them as provisional, admitting of other possible interpretations, especially as gauged against the audiovisual image. Or at least this would be the first hermeneutic step. It is a step, however, that is not routinely taken by viewers, by film scholars, even by translation scholars – unless some linguistic peculiarity appears in the subtitle that dislodges the viewer from the illusionism. At which point, of course, the viewer need not process the peculiarity as an interpretive move. It can be folded back into a semantic essentialism, a meaning contained in the soundtrack, or just denigrated as bad translation.

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: The question of whether the source text does or does not get changed by the fact that it has been translated probably depends on the definition of the source text – on whether its reception, not just on the individual level, but on the level of the source culture, is a part of it or not. Because when a text is translated from a small language into a dominant language, the source text changes its status – it becomes more important, sometimes even canonical.

JAN PEDERSEN: I agree that the status of the source text will change, but the source text itself would remain the same.

LAWRENCE VENUTI: The idea of distinguishing between the source text and its status – I don't really see how that can be helpful, because the source text is only available to us through mediations, interpretations. We can say that the words on the page of the source text stay the same – if the text is still under copyright, copyright law will ensure that it gets copied in that way. But translation does materially change the status of the text. Pascale Casanova (1999) speaks about translation as a consecration of source languages, source texts, source literatures. That is a key example of the power of translation. But we are not going to see that power if we understand the source text as purely a succession of words on the page. The source text is not just that. What ultimately matters is the way the text is understood, the way it is interpreted, the way it is processed in translation or other forms of interpretation – even the way it is typeset can affect the meaning of the text.

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: Let us now move from the opposition between the source and target text to the opposition of the human and the machine in translation. Some translators and translation scholars perceive current developments in natural language processing as a threat to human languages and to translation. Others call for translation studies and translation practices to look for ways to cooperate with these phenomena and to try to insert human sensitivity into the machine, to interact with the artificial intelligence in a creative way. And the idea behind these practices is not to replace human agency, but to humanize the machine. Do you see such transdisciplinary and intermedial dialogue between natural sciences and technologies, on the one hand, and human-centered fields – humanities, social sciences, arts – on the other, as something that can alleviate the possible detrimental effects of technologies in translation practice?

JAN PEDERSEN: I definitely think so, because there is too little dialogue between the tech industry which makes the machines and the humanists who have to use the machines. That is why, in my opinion, humans currently get to be used by the machines and not vice versa. There needs to be a more intense dialogue with the developers of software also about what it means to translate. This is because the notions that many technology people or natural science people have of translation are very different from the many and various forms of definitions and understandings of translation that translators and humanists have. I think that there is a lot to be gained from a dialogue all the way through from the very beginning, to understand the concepts and also to understand the needs of the translators and also the needs of the viewers and readers.

SUSAN BASSNETT: I think this is an important point also because there are enormous generational differences in technological awareness. I admit to being what I call technologically semi-literate. During the eighteen months of the pandemic, I have given a lot of consideration to this because clearly we are all finding ourselves using technology in ways that many of us could not have imagined two years ago. We have been forced to rethink our relationship with technology as a means of communication. But this is very difficult to generalise exactly because of these generational differences. We are witnessing a massive generational transformation – the scale of which, of course, differs across cultures – and that has to be taken into account. I always used to with my students in, let us call it, the age of the book draw attention to the way in which written texts, whether they are novels, newspapers or any other kind of text, manipulate the readers. I think that the question of manipulation or, if I am going to go extreme, one could almost say brainwashing, is more significant now than it has ever been, particularly for a generation that may not read books and may get their news entirely from the (new) media. And also we are witnessing a number of ongoing debates now over the nefarious impact of social media which is something that has been heightened during the pandemic. All these issues are kind of floating around in a sort of vast soup at the moment. And there is most definitely the need for a lot more dialogue about the role of machines and the human.

LAWRENCE VENUTI: Let me begin with an admission. I use Google Translate. I happen to be translating a novel at the moment – Dino Buzzati's *Il deserto dei Tartari* – and Google Translate as well as online dictionaries have been very helpful. Buzzati wrote his novel in the 1930s, and the syntax of some of his sentences is so strange from the vantage point of contemporary Italian that it sometimes helps to feed a sentence into Google Translate to get some sense of how the syntax is working (even if the machine doesn't always make it intelligible). Yet what machine translation is currently unable to do is to perform the interpretive act that translation is. A translator can and should interpret a source text by drawing interpretive factors from the hierarchy of cultural forms and practices that characterize the receiving situation, always a complex conjuncture of residual, dominant, and emergent values where verbal choices and interpretive moves mean taking a stand, often an ideological standpoint. This task is fundamentally human. Machine translation

remains helpful – and remarkably efficient – in generating versions on the basis of an electronic database of texts, versions that might multiply possibilities while illuminating the source text.

JAN PEDERSEN: I would just like to point out that even though I said that machine translation cannot be creative, it does not mean that machine translation cannot be used creatively – there were probably technophobic people who were very much opposed to using quills and ink. I just want to say again that I think it is important that the users are involved in the process of producing the software. It is very similar to what we see in media accessibility these days, where groups of people with various disabilities insist on being involved in the processes that lead to the accessibility for them under the slogan of “nothing about us without us”. I think that translators should also make their voices heard and insist on being involved in the processes that create the tools they use.

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: And how about creativity in translation studies as a discipline? Creativity is a crucial element in furthering research...

SUSAN BASSNETT: That is a huge question. Part of the thinking behind the special issue of *The Translator* devoted to the outward turn that David Johnston and I co-edited (2019) sprang from the feeling that although translation studies has spread enormously around the world in the past few decades, there seems to be a tendency on the part of some people working in translation studies to talk only to one another, to use a code that is only comprehensible to one another. And I think if you believe, as I do very firmly, that translation is crucially important not only in today’s world, but always has been in terms of enabling communication across cultures – the whole history of literature, I would argue, is a history of translation – then I think it is problematic that much of the value of thinking in translation studies is not finding its way out into other disciplines. The point we were trying to make was that most of the thinking done in translation studies has not been speaking to other related disciplines. The two of us are now co-editing another volume for Routledge, which is simply entitled *Debates on Translation* which will address current debates on translation and a number of the issues that we are talking about here.

LAWRENCE VENUTI: One way to address the issue of creativity is to begin re-thinking curricula in translation studies and translator training where the relationships between theory, history, and practice are not explored in productive ways. Translator training programs are producing large numbers of professional translators who lack the sort of theoretical sophistication and historical knowledge that can not only advance translation practices but present translation to the people who commission it and use it.

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: That – I mean the degree of interconnectedness between theory and practice – probably also depends on the specific country, region and so on.

JAN PEDERSEN: And I think the degree of creativity in research may also be field-specific because in audiovisual translation I think we are highly creative. It may be due to the fact that the field is younger. We borrow methodologies and work together with cognitivists and sociologists and anthropologists and film and media studies and disability studies and computer scientists and so on. So there is a lot going on between disciplines and also with user groups. I do not feel that there is such a great lack of creativity and isolation from practice in audiovisual translation.

LAWRENCE VENUTI: A question worth asking is: where is audiovisual translation in the study of film and television? What are film scholars doing with translation studies? How many film scholars are studying dubbing and subtitling, drawing on translation research or research they themselves do into translation? Markus Nornes – a film scholar who is also a subtitler – is one of the very few. In his groundbreaking essay “For an Abusive Subtitling” (1999) he immersed himself in translation studies. Then he wrote a book called *Cinema Babel* (2007) which examines translation in film. How many anthropologists are studying translation? How many historians? Those are the kinds of interdisciplinary connections I want to make. Needless to say, the question can be redirected at translation scholars. How many scholars of audiovisual translation are actually in dialogue with film theorists and historians?

SUSAN BASSNETT: I was just going to say that Jan has the advantage of working in and from a small language, and we have the disadvantage of being handicapped by English and by the problems of the Anglophone world in not being willing to talk openly about translation and also not translating – not nearly as much as you are translating in Sweden, in Denmark, in Slovakia. We are deeply handicapped by this and I think some of our defensiveness comes from the awareness that this is the problem, where you have a language that is considered a global means of communication, you have a lack of interest in translation. Unfortunately, I will end on that gloomy note.

IVANA HOSTOVÁ: This is not a very optimistic way to round up our discussion.

JAN PEDERSEN: But it is – for thinking of translation in Slovakia.

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Translation and creativity in the 21st century

Creativity. Randomness. Instrumentalism. Hermeneutics. Creative subtitles. Transdisciplinarity.

The discussion addresses a host of issues pertaining to various intersections between creativity and translation. Embracing the inevitable vagueness of the concepts, the speakers outline several clusters of topics, including the unpredictability of translation success (Susan Bassnett), critique of instrumentalism in translation (Lawrence Venuti) and the definition of the notion of creative subtitles (Jan Pedersen). The speakers also take positions on such complex and sometimes inherently contradictory issues as functional approaches to translation, source

and target text, translation process, the pros and cons of new technologies in current translation practice and the lack of a true transdisciplinary dialogue felt in today's translation studies. The last point hints at a problem the discipline has been facing for a while: although the field has (for the most part) been incorporating inspiration from other research areas, disciplines for which translation is crucial (as a means of acquiring research corpora, disseminating results, etc.) still tend to overlook the translational character of their work. "Translation and creativity in the 21st century" springs from a roundtable that took place at Translation, Interpreting and Culture 2: Rehumanising Translation Studies (TIC 2) conference held on 22–24 September 2021 in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. TIC 2 was the second in the series of translation and interpreting studies conferences organized by scholars and professionals affiliated with several Slovak and European institutions. The 2021 organizational team was managed by Associate Professor Martin Djovčoš (Matej Bel University).

Susan Bassnett, professor emerita of comparative literature
University of Warwick
Coventry CV4 7AL
United Kingdom
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9468-9800>

Lawrence Venuti, professor emeritus of English
Temple University
Philadelphia
Pennsylvania
United States
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8590-9958>

Associate Professor Jan Pedersen, Ph.D.
Institute for Interpreting and Translation Studies
Department of Swedish Language and Multilingualism
Stockholm University
S-106 91 Stockholm
Sweden
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9189-0330>

Mgr. Ivana Hostová, PhD.
Institute of Slovak Literature
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Dúbravská cesta 9
841 04 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
ivana.hostova@savba.sk
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0901-3759>

Vision ou manipulation ? Les problèmes éditoriaux d'une anthologie slovaque des troubadours

JÁN ŽIVČÁK

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Un paradoxe étrange caractérise la réception slovaque de la poésie occitane du Moyen Âge. D'un côté, grâce aux manuels de l'enseignement secondaire (p. ex. Minárik, Koutun et Jančinová 1984, 19), le mot « troubadour » (*trubadúr*) tient une position stable dans la langue du pays et s'emploie même au sens figuré. D'un autre côté, l'accès à la production de ces chantres de l'amour-passion demeure très restreint. Hormis trois dossiers publiés dans des revues littéraires durant la seconde moitié du XX^e siècle (Turčány 1975 ; Slobodník 1989 ; 1997), époque marquée par le socialisme et les conséquences de sa chute,¹ un seul livre est à même de le faciliter. Il s'agit d'une anthologie de traductions, intitulée *Danteho trubadúri* (Les troubadours de Dante). Sa parution en 1972 chez Tatran, maison d'édition nationale et de grande envergure, est le résultat d'une des dernières initiatives communes de Jozef Felix et Viliam Turčány.

Peu connu dans le monde francophone (car l'échange des biens symboliques n'est jamais égalitaire), ce duo a joué un rôle de prime importance dans l'histoire des études romanes en Europe centrale. Jozef Felix (1913–1977), grand amateur du français, de l'italien et de l'espagnol, a fait découvrir aux Slovaques les œuvres de Villon, Boccace, Cervantès, Molière, Flaubert, etc.² Il s'est distingué aussi en tant que critique littéraire, éditeur et enseignant universitaire. Aujourd'hui encore, ses études déterminent le regard que la Slovaquie pose sur certains phénomènes culturels et notamment sur la traduction. Quant à Viliam Turčány (1928–2021), il a consacré toute sa carrière à la poésie non seulement au niveau académique (spécialiste en théorie du vers traditionnel, il était membre de l'Académie des sciences), mais aussi pratique. Il a publié plusieurs recueils poétiques, reconnus pour leur virtuosité formelle. Ses contacts professionnels avec Felix, dont il a suivi les cours à l'Université Comenius de Bratislava peu après la Seconde Guerre mondiale, étaient systématiques et ont duré de 1952 jusqu'au décès de ce dernier (Turčány 2014, 52–53).

PRÉSENTATION DU CORPUS ET OBJECTIFS DE L'ÉTUDE

L'anthologie mentionnée ci-dessus est un exemple de traduction participative ou, plus précisément, de traduction en binôme (Truhlářová 2014a, 37–38 ; Tyšš et Gro-mová 2020, 32–33). Cette technique, assez fréquente en Slovaquie socialiste,³ visait

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à réunir un philologue, capable de comprendre les moindres nuances de la civilisation source, avec un poète en vue de perfectionner le résultat. Même aujourd'hui, elle est valorisée par les traductologues locaux car, contrairement à l'usage en Union soviétique, elle n'a presque jamais été imposée par les structures du pouvoir (35–36). Il faut avouer, cependant, que les agents impliqués l'adoptaient parfois pour neutraliser leurs incompétences. En était-il ainsi pour Jozef Felix et Viliam Turčány ? Bien que, d'après mes connaissances, Turčány n'ait jamais décrit la genèse du livre en détail, il avait une maîtrise très satisfaisante du français et de l'italien et pouvait comprendre, au moins approximativement, la langue d'oc. Ses analyses poussées de la versification de Peire Vidal en apportent une preuve évidente (Turčány [1973] 2003, 101–104). Il est donc sûr que Felix ne lui fournissait pas des gloses interlinéaires complètes, mais seulement un guide de lecture, contenant des renseignements d'ordre historique, littéraire et éventuellement philologique.⁴ En effet, telle était la méthode de travail qui sous-tendait le projet le plus monumental du duo, dont l'objectif était de promouvoir les écrits de Dante Alighieri (Turčány 1994, 159–160). Sa deuxième étape, une traduction de l'*Inferno* (1964) en tercets strictement réguliers et rimés, a connu un franc succès.

En Slovaquie, les trajectoires des deux agents dans le champ de production culturelle (Bourdieu [1992] 1998, 425–429) ont été soumises à un examen minutieux. Celle de Felix, plus sinueuse, suscite un intérêt durable. Entre 2007 et 2014, Jana Truhlářová a rédigé plusieurs travaux avec pour objectif d'élucider les principes professionnels de l'érudit et ses positions épistémologiques. À partir d'une interprétation à la fois « interne » et « externe » de ses essais ainsi que des paratextes de ses traductions, une série d'hypothèses a été formulée (Truhlářová 2008, 17–76). En 2012, dans le cadre d'un projet de recherche coopératif, Jana Truhlářová, Paulína Šišmišová, Eva Palkovičová et Magda Kučerková ont porté leur attention sur les notes et fragments manuscrits, conservés dans l'archive personnel de Felix. Le fruit de cette entreprise est exposé dans les actes du colloque *Jozef Felix (1913–1977) a cesta k modernej slovenskej romanistike* (Jozef Felix (1913–1977) et la voie vers la romanistique slovaque moderne ; Truhlářová 2014b, 68–132, 202–223), illustrant les tendances praxéologiques et « humanisantes » qui commencent à s'imposer dans les études littéraires en Slovaquie. Le présent article reprendra, tout naturellement, une partie de la problématique. Il tâchera d'y jeter une lumière nouvelle en se focalisant sur un corpus tardif (comme l'indiquent les détails ci-dessus, Felix est mort cinq ans après la publication de son anthologie des troubadours) et largement négligé jusqu'à ce jour. Hormis quelques remarques éparses (Kučerková 2014, 128–129), une seule étude lui a été consacrée (Živčák 2021). Malgré une méthodologie en voie de constitution et, par conséquent, moins exemplaire, les documents des années 40, 50 ou 60 (p. ex. la traduction du *Testament* de François Villon) ont éveillé nettement plus de curiosité.

Cependant, l'objectif principal que je poursuivrai sera différent. L'histoire et de la traduction littéraire en Slovaquie pendant la soi-disant « normalisation » (période suivant le Printemps de Prague, définie par une dépendance plus étroite du champ de production culturelle vis-à-vis de celui du pouvoir), devient, ces dernières années, une des préoccupations majeures des traductologues locaux. L'enquête la plus approfondie a été achevée en 2018 par Marianna Bachledová. Sa monographie

analyse les stratégies discursives dans les prologues et épilogues qui accompagnent les œuvres de prose importées de l'étranger entre 1968 et 1989. Dans ce corpus, le taux d'endoctrinement par le marxisme-léninisme s'élève à 69%, chiffre que l'auteure considère comme significatif, même si souvent, les traducteurs ne cherchaient pas à ramper devant les censeurs, mais à les ruser (5, 70, 90, 92). L'ampleur de mes réflexions qui, comme l'annonce leur titre, ne se consacreront qu'à un cas particulier, sera plus modeste. Conçues comme une synecdoque, elles auront une ambition historiographique limitée. Je crois néanmoins que l'anthologie de Felix et Turčány ne devrait pas tomber dans l'oubli, et ceci pour deux raisons :

1) Elle est dotée d'une consécration institutionnelle et charismatique sans pareille, due à l'habitus du duo (voir Bourdieu [1992] 1998, 205, 351).

2) Le secteur du champ traductionnel slovaque qu'elle permet de saisir se caractérise par un haut degré d'autonomie vis-à-vis des structures économiques (360–363).

En effet, il serait difficile de trouver en Slovaquie des années 70 un ouvrage plus marginal, malgré son apparence *reader-friendly*. Imprimé dans la collection bibliophile *Ars librorum* en 2000 exemplaires, il se compose de feuillets sans reliure, brunâtres et épais. La plupart d'entre eux sont décorés d'enluminures du Ms. 65 du Musée Condé (*Les très riches heures du duc de Berry*, début du XV^e siècle), reproduites en couleur sur un morceau de papier lisse qui se détache du fond. Un art qui se suffit à lui-même, pourrait-on dire. Quant au public visé par Felix et Turčány, ses réactions (ou plutôt leur absence) confirment l'impression qui ressort de cette description matérielle : d'après mes connaissances, les poèmes n'ont fait l'objet d'aucun compte-rendu et ont été intégralement réédités une seule fois, dans un florilège de traductions de Turčány (1980, 110–136).⁵ En plus des pistes déjà évoquées, cet article abordera donc les facettes de l'élitisme esthétique dans la Slovaquie d'avant 1989. Ses perspectives sont d'autant plus prometteuses que les recherches de Bachledová se focalisent sur des projets qui font preuve d'un degré d'autonomie plus faible et confirment la vision standard de la politique culturelle socialiste.

Pour toutes ces raisons, mon argumentation s'articulera autour de deux axes. Dans les deux premiers chapitres, je m'arrêterai sur la grille de sélection dont se servent les deux agents pour initier leurs lecteurs à la poésie des troubadours. Ensuite, je me tournerai vers les paratextes de l'anthologie, en essayant de repérer leur orientation idéologique. Du point de vue méthodologique, je m'appuierai sur les approches récentes du concept d'anthologie (p. ex. Naaijkens 2006) et sur l'éthique des échanges littéraires, envisagés dans leurs dimensions textuelles et sociales.

TRAVAIL DE SÉLECTION HONNÊTE OU PLAGIAT ?

Grâce à leur structure pratique, les anthologies ne perdent rien de leur popularité au XXI^e siècle, surtout si elles se consacrent aux poèmes, habituellement plus courts que les romans. La critique contemporaine les regarde pourtant avec réticence. Selon Jed Rasula (1992, 444–169) et Christopher M. Kuipers (2008, 127–128), il existe des anthologistes sans créativité qui ne font que s'entregloser, pour faire un clin d'œil à Montaigne. Au lieu de définir leurs propres critères, ils compilent des choix opérés par d'autres. Ils réimpriment des textes de piètre qualité, qui s'éloignent de leurs

versions originales (ou critiques) et qui sont remplis de leçons fautives. Ce problème dépasse, bien évidemment, le seuil du monde anglo-américain dont les deux chercheurs font partie. En Slovaquie socialiste, il était assez répandu. L'isolement culturel poussait les agents à s'inspirer des modèles étrangers, de préférence russes ou tchèques (Malinovská 2021, comm. pers.). Se pose alors la question suivante : à quel point *Danteho trubadúri* représente-t-il un projet éthique ?

Comme il ressort de l'introduction de cet article, Felix attachait beaucoup d'importance aux principes académiques. Sa traduction du *Testament* de Villon s'accompagne d'une longue bibliographie d'éditions critiques (Felix [1949] 1975). Il est donc surprenant de tomber dans l'anthologie de 1972 sur un achevé d'imprimer lacunaire. A-t-on affaire à un *remake* clandestin ? Pour obtenir une réponse pertinente, il faut se tourner d'abord vers le livre de Henry John Chaytor au titre très suspect : *The Troubadours of Dante*. Publié en 1902 avec introduction, glossaire et notes en anglais, il introduit huit troubadours explicitement cités par le grand poète italien : Peire d'Alvernhe, Bertrand de Born, Giraud de Bornelh, Arnaud Daniel, Folquet de Marselha, Aimeric de Belenoi, Aimeric de Peguilhan et Sordello.⁶ Y figurent aussi deux poèmes de Bernard de Ventadorn et le texte anonyme des « Penas dels Yferns ». Toutes les sources primaires sont réimprimées en langue d'oc, sans traduction, pour être plus utiles aux étudiants en littératures romanes (Chaytor 1902, V). Bien qu'il soit possible de dégager d'autres similitudes que celle des titres, cette chrestomathie ne saurait être le prototype de l'anthologie slovaque, et ceci pour trois raisons :

1) Le nombre de pièces en commun est faible (quatre au total).

2) Felix et Turčány s'intéressent assez vivement aux poètes absents du corpus dantesque et optent pour une conception moins « universitaire » : leurs paratextes réservent peu d'espace aux difficultés codicologiques ou linguistiques et sont moins factuels. À l'analyse des formes, si importantes pour le lyrisme des XII^e et XIII^e siècles (Guiette 1949), ils préfèrent un éloge « impressionniste » de la civilisation occitane, basé sur une interprétation conservatrice des vieilles *vidas* (Živčák 2021, 254–255).

3) Comme l'affirme Truhlářová (2008, 18), Felix ne dédaignait pas les travaux anglophones mais, probablement à cause d'un manque d'expertise, il ne s'y fiait que très rarement.

Force est donc d'explorer une autre voie. Entre 1816 et 1972, plusieurs sélections de poésies des troubadours ont vu le jour dans le monde (une liste partielle est à trouver chez Jeanroy 1916, 34–44). De longueur plus ou moins impressionnante, elles tâchaient d'offrir une expérience de lecture instructive, parfois avec un appareil critique solide. À l'époque où la traduction du duo slovaque était en pleins préparatifs, la plupart d'entre elles étaient facilement accessibles dans les bibliothèques occidentales. Leur examen peut-il fournir un éclairage en la matière ? Bien que Felix n'ait pas répertorié systématiquement ses références, il mentionne quelques médiévistes dans son épilogue. Tout naturellement, ce sont les scientifiques et les essayistes qui prédominent, mais les anthologistes, en l'occurrence André Berry, René Nelli, Giulio Bertoni et Alfred Jeanroy, ne sont pas omis non plus. Ont-ils pu influencer le projet de 1972, sa structure et son contenu ? On est en droit de le supposer, même si mon hypothèse est, pratiquement, invérifiable. Le problème est que ces patronymes ap-

paraissent de façon sporadique et sans contexte suffisant, ce qui abolit la possibilité d'un diagnostic « archéologique ». On pourrait argumenter que le nombre de pièces en commun avec Nelli et Lavaud (1966) et avec Berry (1930) est considérable (respectivement sept et neuf), mais les parallèles au niveau textuel sont, encore une fois, peu convaincants. En effet, aux pages 132–133 du livre, Felix et Turčány transcrivent les vers d'ouverture des morceaux choisis dans l'original, et les leçons qu'ils adoptent ne sont pleinement empruntées à aucun des auteurs nommés. Voici deux exemples symptomatiques :

Guilhem Montanhagol :

Ar ab lo coindre Pascor (Felix et Turčány 1972, 133)

Ar ab lo coindre pascor (Nelli et Lavaud 1966, 654)

Sordello :

Planher vuelh En Blacatz en aquest leugier so (Felix et Turčány 1972, 133)

Planher volh En Blacatz en aquest leugier so (Berry 1930, 412)

Il serait donc impropre de parler de piraterie, d'autant que les poèmes les plus célèbres (p. ex. « Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may » de Jaufré Rudel) ont connu d'innombrables éditions.

Pour ne pas laisser mon interrogation ouverte, il ne reste qu'un dernier point d'appui. Trois portraits de troubadours que Felix incorpore dans les paratextes contiennent aussi des noms d'éditeurs critiques. Il s'agit précisément de René Lavaud et Adolf Kolsen (pour Arnaud Daniel), Jules Coulet (pour Guilhem Montanhagol), Giulio Bertoni et Cesare De Lollis (pour Sordello).⁷ Dans les deux derniers cas, une explication plus détaillée fait défaut. On ne sait pas comment et sous quelles conditions la traduction définitive a été réalisée. Seule la présentation de « L'aur'amara fals bruoills brancutz » d'Arnaud Daniel est complète. Les agents slovaques ont, selon leurs propres dires, pris comme modèle le texte de Kolsen, publié dans le cadre de l'article « Dante und der Trobador Arnaut Daniel » en 1924 (Felix et Turčány 1972, 123). Ce choix est assez médiocre et, en France, il serait difficilement défendable dans les années 70, mais il est précieux comme preuve. Bien qu'il soit impossible de reconstruire intégralement la genèse de l'anthologie, ses sources étaient sans doute multiples, hétérogènes et étudiées avec soin. Elle ne représente ni un plagiat, ni une compilation hâtive qui mériterait les blâmes de Rasula. Même un chercheur sans dévouement envers Felix est prêt à croire que son éthique professionnelle était à la hauteur de ses collègues occidentaux, qui bénéficiaient pourtant de conditions de travail plus propices dans un champ académique et littéraire hautement autonomisé. À chaque instant, il cherchait à dialoguer avec le monde pour rendre ses positions plus cohérentes, comme le signale Truhlářová (2014a, 42–43).

UN ÉVENTAIL VISIONNAIRE

Après une première série d'analyses, il convient de laisser la perspective comparée de côté et de considérer le geste éditorial en lui-même. Le duo slovaque mise sur un design minimaliste et ne s'attache qu'à onze poètes, tous de grande notoriété. Les voici dans l'ordre d'apparition : Peire Vidal, Jaufré Rudel, Bernard de Ventadorn,

Bertrand de Born, Peire Cardenal, Arnaud Daniel, Giraud de Bornelh, Sordello, Thibaut de Champagne (qui, on le sait, écrivait en langue d'oïl ; malgré cela, Dante le connaissait), Guilhem Montanhagol et Guiraud Riquier. Dès le premier abord, il est clair que l'échantillon est assez équilibré du point de vue historique. S'y trouvent les représentants de plusieurs générations : un « pionnier » des années 1140, les classiques de la seconde moitié du XII^e siècle, mais aussi celui qu'on pourrait qualifier de « dernier chancre des châteaux du Midi », mort après 1292. L'anthologie fournit donc un aperçu intelligible des transformations successives du lyrisme occitan au Moyen Âge. Quant à son arrangement intérieur, la liste ci-dessus montre bien qu'il n'est pas chronologique. Peire Vidal et Guiraud Riquier ont tous deux atteint le faite de leur gloire au XIII^e siècle. Quel autre critère les traducteurs ont-ils privilégié ? La réponse n'est pas simple, mais ils semblent avoir tenu compte de la dialectique centre – périphérie : ils progressent d'une mise en mots « exemplaire » de *l'amor de lonh* chez Jaufrè Rudel vers la plainte funèbre de Sordello. Cette trajectoire n'est pas pour autant suivie constamment et il ne faut pas y accorder trop de poids. En effet, la souplesse du format permet au lecteur de réorganiser les feuillets selon son propre goût, voire de les dissocier. Il est intéressant qu'à cet égard, l'élitisme de Felix et Turčány rappelle l'idée de Hans Magnus Enzensberger, conçue à propos de son *Museum der modernen Poesie* : remplacer les recueils par des workshops interactifs et dynamiques (1980, 782 ; voir aussi Naaijken 2006, 511–512).

Le choix d'auteurs est un paramètre important, mais ce qui compte davantage, ce sont les poèmes. On sait que les anthologies, surtout celles qui paraissent dans des maisons de grande renommée, contribuent à la formation des canons (Naaijken 2006, 516). En favorisant une poétique donnée au détriment des autres, elles influencent le goût du public. Si elles n'ont pas assez de concurrence en raison d'une orientation trop spécifique (comme c'est le cas avec *Danteho trubadúri*), elles risquent de nourrir une image monologique et sclérosée de l'histoire littéraire. À en croire Lawrence Venuti, il n'y a qu'une solution à ce problème. Depuis plusieurs décennies, les canons occidentaux sont perçus comme un sujet à controverse, et les études postcoloniales ne cessent de les attaquer (p. ex. Anim-Addo, Osborne et Sesay 2021). Pourtant, personne ne saurait nier leur existence, véhiculée par les structures sociales. Au lieu de multiplier les efforts, il est donc plus stratégique de diriger l'évolution des canons dans une voie éthique. Quant aux traducteurs, un double choix s'offre à eux : soit ils encouragent l'ethnocentrisme en adaptant l'original aux besoins de la culture d'arrivée, soit ils respectent l'autre tel qu'il est (Venuti 1995, 117, 184, 309–310). Tandis que la seconde voie est celle que l'intellectuel américain recommande, les autorités slovaques cultivaient souvent la première pendant le socialisme (voir Bednárová 2015, 56–59). Dans leur attitude envers la littérature de la France médiévale, ils cherchaient plus à raffermir leurs propres valeurs qu'à les mettre en doute, comme l'attestent des analyses récentes (Živčák 2020, 74–76, 121). Deux questions se posent alors. Face à ce dilemme, quelle était l'approche de Felix et Turčány, qui ont pourtant réalisé leur projet aux confins du champ littéraire ? À quel point ont-ils adhéré à la vision « allo-gène » promue par les occitanistes français ? Pour y répondre, j'ai décidé de comparer leur sélection de pièces à celle des anthologistes les plus illustres de la seconde moitié

du XX^e et du début du XXI^e siècle. Bien entendu, l'enquête n'aspire pas à l'exhaustivité. Je n'ai retenu que quatre livres qui partagent avec celui de 1972 le même objectif : rendre les troubadours accessibles au grand public grâce aux traductions en langue contemporaine. Les résultats sont résumés dans le tableau ci-dessous.

Éditeur(s) et année de parution	Nombre de pièces en commun avec Felix et Turčány (sur 12)
Roubaud 1971	7
Bec 1979	7
Zuchetto et Gruber 1998	5
Fabre 2010	9

On voit qu'en moyenne, le taux de similitude se rapproche de 60%. Quelle conclusion en tirer ? Le chapitre précédent a démontré que les agents slovaques étaient suffisamment conscients d'eux-mêmes. Celui en cours permet d'ajouter qu'ils ont évité, avec succès, la tentation de manipuler le canon de la civilisation de départ. En témoigne aussi la nature de certains textes. Par exemple, les pages 60–62 sont consacrées aux variations hermétiques et presque « parnassiennes » d'Arnaud Daniel, qui sont en pleine contradiction avec les exigences du marxisme-léninisme. Mais rien n'empêche d'aller encore plus loin, en prêtant une attention particulière au recueil de Fabre. Établi très récemment par un linguiste reconnu, il est bien adapté au statu quo des études sur le Moyen Âge. Malgré cela, il n'est pas éloigné de l'acte éditorial de 1972. Qu'est-ce qui en découle pour ce dernier ? Apparemment, il se fait remarquer aussi par son côté « visionnaire » et atemporel. Dans la mesure du possible, il va au-delà de l'horizon pour convenir à plusieurs générations. Une fois de plus, je ne peux que donner raison à Truhlářová, qui attribue à Jozef Felix la vertu suivante :

[I] cherchait la « modernité » du classique et les affinités des tendances « modernes » avec leurs lointains ancêtres, ne voyant pas l'ancien et le moderne comme deux principes opposés, mais bien au contraire, comme liés – même si souvent d'une façon contradictoire – en une sorte d'harmonie universelle, d'équilibre (2008, 189).

Il ne faut pas pour autant être trop enthousiaste. Malgré ses codes relativement stricts et stéréotypés, la production des troubadours n'est pas un monolithe. Selon les érudits du début du XX^e siècle, ses phases initiales sont marquées par deux écoles opposées (voir Jeanroy 1934, 14–16, qui se réfère à Carl Appel et Ernest Hoepffner). Même si cette théorie est, à juste titre, repoussée comme artificielle par la critique contemporaine (Zink 2017, 100, 105–106, 132), elle m'aidera à illustrer mon propos. Les « idéalistes », représentés notamment par Jaufre Rudel et Bernard de Ventadorn, chantent la passion amoureuse sur un ton mélancolique, en se servant d'un vocabulaire discret et abstrait (Jeanroy 1934, 14). Les « réalistes », en revanche, évoquent ouvertement le bas corporel, souvent dans une perspective moralisatrice (14). Alors que les premiers abondent dans l'anthologie slovaque, les seconds en sont exclus. Pas un mot sur Alegret ou Marcabrun, dont l'esthétique agitée et non conformiste est pourtant digne d'admiration. Est-ce une forme d'autocensure ? Ou, en d'autres termes, Fe-

lix et Turčány, ont-ils dû payer un prix pour leur éthique éditoriale ? Il est bien connu, en effet, que le marché des biens symboliques en Slovaquie antérieurement à 1989 était assez pudique et servait aussi des objectifs didactiques (Bednářová 2015, 34 ; Bachledová 2018, 25). Je reviendrai sur ces interrogations après une dernière parenthèse.

EXISTE-T-IL DES TROUBADOURS SANS DANTE ?

Comme il ressort des chapitres précédents, l'anthologie slovaque est munie d'un prologue et d'un épilogue. Rédigés par Felix, ils s'étendent sur 26 pages et reposent sur des considérations d'ordre littéraire, philosophique et historique. À en croire Bachledová (2018, 61) et Truhlářová (2014a, 43), ce geste n'a rien de surprenant. Il reflète aussi bien les habitudes de l'érudit que celles de la maison d'édition Tatran, connue pour sa bienveillance envers le lectorat. On sait, cependant, qu'il ne faut pas le banaliser. En effet, le simulacre du socialisme a donné naissance à plusieurs phénomènes éditoriaux singuliers, dont le « camouflage paratextuel⁸ », conceptualisé par Igor Tyšš (2017, 77). Malgré les obstacles politiques, la Slovaquie n'a jamais complètement banni le dialogue avec l'Ouest. Si l'original risquait d'être problématique, les traducteurs se souciaient de manipuler sa structure sémantique en proposant une piste d'entrée en lecture restreinte (80). Ils accentuaient (en exagérant, bien sûr) les éléments convenables du point de vue idéologique et dissimulaient les autres (77). Felix et Turčány ont-ils participé à ce jeu ? J'avoue que leur décision d'omettre Marcabrun en est un indice. Il serait pourtant vain de poursuivre cette spéculation qui se heurte à deux obstacles de taille :

1) Les arguments qui peuvent l'appuyer sont trop subjectifs.

2) Les poèmes des troubadours ne sont pas pornographiques et choqueraient peu de gens au XX^e siècle.

Pour obtenir un éclairage valable, il vaut mieux se tourner vers un autre ennemi du champ du pouvoir, à savoir la religion.

Bien qu'en dehors des universités le lyrisme d'oc soit considéré comme partie de l'héritage culturel profane, la réalité est moins univoque. Michel Zink souligne que « la quasi-totalité des textes [médiévaux] s'inscrit d'une façon ou d'une autre sur l'horizon de la foi » (2003, 4), et son opinion est loin d'être isolée. Felix et Turčány qui, au début des années 70, avaient déjà l'expérience de la pensée de Dante, en étaient sans doute conscients. Du moins, c'est ce que laisse entendre leur ouvrage. Les pages 100–101 sont consacrées à « Ieu cujava soven d'amor chantar », pièce mariale de Guiraud Riquier, et les paratextes n'affichent aucune trace de camouflage. Bien au contraire : dans le portrait de Guilhem Montanhagol, Felix s'attaque aux philologues qui dénigrent l'orientation des phases ultérieures du *trobar*. Voici son argumentation :

Ces jugements préconçus [...] sont, bien entendu, complètement inacceptables. Ils reposent sur une thèse artificielle qui veut que l'ensemble du lyrisme en ancien provençal évolue d'un érotisme naïf vers un platonisme décadent, d'une conception de l'amour vigoureusement sensuelle, authentique et véritable, vers la conception esthétisante de Montanhagol, désensibilisée et déconnectée de la vie réelle. [...] [Et pourtant,] Charles Camproux [...] a démontré, avec l'appui d'une documentation abondante, à quel point [...] l'amour spiritualisé était présent chez les troubadours dès le début⁹ (Felix et Turčány 1972, 129).

S'il est vrai que ces idées ne sont pas révolutionnaires, elles coïncident avec un bon nombre de recherches récentes (p. ex. Saouma 2016), ce qui, de nouveau, confirme l'approche visionnaire des agents. Un exemple encore plus audacieux et surprenant se trouve dans le commentaire sur Guiraud Riquier. Sa conclusion est tissée autour d'une métaphore ornementale, basée sur des termes liturgiques :

Il est indubitable que le « dernier évangile » de la poésie des troubadours, proclamé, entre autres, par Riquier, est devenu l'introït du *dolce stil novo* italien et de Dante (Felix et Turčány 1972, 131).

Malgré quelques faiblesses méthodologiques soulevées par la critique (p. ex. l'influence du positivisme ; Živčák 2021, 254–255), l'anthologie slovaque semble échapper à l'athéisme sauvage promu par le régime. On pourrait même dire que l'historiographe se sent transporté dans un *illud tempus* où la doxa se dissipe comme la fumée. Bien sûr, cette résistance s'explique facilement par l'habitus de Felix (Jurovská 2014, 33–46), mais rien n'empêche qu'elle soit perçue comme un acte d'émancipation hors du commun. Son poids est d'autant plus grand qu'elle réapparaît dans les notes rattachées à l'*Inferno* de Dante, comme l'atteste Ján Zambor (2008, 38).

Cependant, ces observations ne reflètent qu'une partie du problème. Parmi les formes de la paratextualité, Gérard Genette (1987, 54–97) compte aussi le titre. Généralement court et discret, il contribue à la production de signification. Celui que les traducteurs ont choisi est factuel mais, nul besoin de le cacher, dérangeant. Les raisons qui m'amènent à ce constat ne se limitent évidemment pas à l'allusion non voulue à Henry John Chaytor, évoquée plus haut. Elles ne découlent pas non plus d'une volonté de relativiser les modèles dominants de l'histoire littéraire. Il est indéniable que Dante s'est inspiré du lyrisme d'oc (Barolini 1989). Faut-il pour autant insister avec force sur ces affinités si ses écrits n'ont pas déterminé de façon décisive la conception du recueil slovaque ? Ne serait-il pas préférable de reconnaître que Jaufré Rudel ou Bernard de Ventadorn ont une valeur en soi et méritent d'être présentés indépendamment ? En effet, telles sont les questions qui surgissent à la lecture de l'amorce du prologue. On y apprend, par exemple, que le projet est né « pour approfondir la connaissance de l'auteur de la *Divine comédie* » (Felix et Turčány 1972, 9) et pour célébrer le 650^e anniversaire de sa mort. Qu'est-ce qui a motivé cette attitude bizarre qui lance un défi à mes réflexions ? Deux explications sont envisageables.

La première se fonde vaguement sur les théories de Pierre Bourdieu (voir [1992] 1998). Selon Daniel Vojtek, « [t]oute traduction naît pour être lue » (2010, 211), ne serait-ce que par le traducteur lui-même. Pourtant, le champ de production culturelle en Slovaquie n'a jamais été fasciné par le Moyen Âge. Il a accordé beaucoup plus de faveur au folklore, à l'Antiquité, à la Renaissance, voire à la tragédie classique. Il est donc possible que pour surmonter cet obstacle, les agents aient misé sur le capital symbolique accumulé grâce à leur traduction de l'*Inferno*. S'ils ont renoncé à la manipulation idéologique, ils ont succombé (consciemment ou non) au désir du succès. Suis-je en train d'esquisser une stratégie de marketing invraisemblable ? Je l'ignore, mais les résultats qu'elle a apportés n'ont clairement pas été satisfaisants.

La seconde explication est empathique. Ces dernières années, les universitaires slovaques (Jurovská 2014, 46–47, Truhlářová 2014a, 47–48) ont démontré que Felix avait une vision à la fois complexe et nuancée du canon littéraire des pays romans. Bien qu'il n'ait jamais exposé cette vision en entier, il est facile de la reconstruire à partir de ses travaux. À mesure que le volume de ses traductions s'élargissait, il a peut-être eu l'idée d'en former une mosaïque harmonieuse. Chaque nouveau morceau devait s'y insérer. Quant à la « colle » à mettre sur les jointures, si les textes n'en contenaient pas assez, elle a été fabriquée dans les prologues. C'est exactement ce qui se passe dans celui de 1972. Malgré quelques formulations malheureuses, on y trouve des passages qui proposent de voir dans les accomplissements extraordinaires du *dolce stil novo* non pas la raison d'être, mais le mérite des troubadours.

Y a-t-il moyen de surmonter cette alternative et de dégager une conclusion moins ambiguë ? Un entretien avec le duo n'étant plus réalisable, il est difficile de le dire. Ce long détour n'a pas pour autant été futile. Aussi inattendu que cela paraisse, il jette plus de lumière sur l'omission de Marcabrun et des « réalistes », restée sans explication. Je n'arrive pas à nier son rapport avec les structures politiques et sociales, mais elle ne semble pas être illogique ou aléatoire. Pourquoi ? Cinq poètes qui figurent dans l'anthologie ont été cités par Dante, les autres non. Mais presque tous l'ont préfiguré sur le plan poétique et thématique. Sans basculer dans le cynisme ou la vulgarité, leurs chansons attribuent à l'amour une dimension cathartique et métaphysique. Le geste éditorial sort alors dignement de l'épreuve à laquelle je l'ai soumis. Au bout du compte, contrairement à ce que proclame parfois la traductologie contemporaine, l'intégrité de la pensée du traducteur est la meilleure garantie de son éthique.

CONCLUSION

Tout acte herméneutique se fonde sur un dialogue. La recontextualisation d'un geste éditorial ne fait pas exception. À plusieurs reprises, cet article s'est référé aux initiatives d'autres chercheurs. En quoi serait-il possible de les enrichir ? Quels enjeux un corpus à peine connu permet-il de dévoiler ? Chacun des chapitres précédents étant terminé par une synthèse, il convient de renouer avec l'introduction et de voir si les objectifs principaux ont été atteints.

Tout d'abord, pour vérifier les hypothèses de Truhlářová (2008, 17–76 ; 2014b), je me suis efforcé de réexaminer l'éthique de Jozef Felix et Viliam Turčány. Étonnement moderne, cette dernière se manifeste à deux niveaux :

1) L'attitude face à la civilisation source : malgré les gênes causées par le socialisme (p. ex. l'impossibilité d'effectuer régulièrement des voyages à l'étranger), la seule anthologie slovaque des troubadours offre un choix de poèmes original, représentatif et suffisamment « aliénant ». Felix s'est opposé à l'ethnocentrisme non seulement en théorie, mais aussi en pratique (voir 1991, 403).

2) L'attitude face au lectorat : les paratextes qui occupent les premières et les dernières pages rejettent la manipulation idéologique et sont très sensibles au sacré, notion sans laquelle le Moyen Âge occidental est inconcevable. Ils portent, certes, des marques du paternalisme¹⁰ (le titre renvoie à Dante qui, dans les années 70, était un classique à succès), mais ne violent pas l'histoire littéraire.

S'il est vrai que ces observations ne sont pas nouvelles, j'espère les avoir inscrites dans une perspective inédite : celle de la médiévistique, sous-développée en Slovaquie.

Or, cette étude s'ouvre aussi vers un autre horizon. Depuis plusieurs années, l'idée qu'on se fait du champ traductionnel slovaque d'avant 1989 n'est pas manichéenne. Pour dresser une « carte » de base, Bednárová (2015, 33–34) parle de deux pôles. Le premier, non officiel, est celui des samizdats et des auteurs exilés. Le second, officiel, correspond à l'activité des grandes maisons d'édition. Sa structure n'est pas pour autant homogène et demande, elle aussi, d'être parcellée. Tyšš (2017, 74, 76–78), Bachledová (2018, 70) et Bednárová (2015, 34) prêtent une attention particulière à trois catégories d'ouvrages :

- 1) ceux qui adhèrent aux règles du jeu politique et économique ;
- 2) ceux qui en donnent seulement l'apparence ;
- 3) ceux que la censure a retirés du marché après leur parution.

Tout cela a beau être légitime, le temps est peut-être venu d'établir le panorama d'une quatrième « zone ». Minuscule mais cruciale, elle embrasse les *antibestsellers* qui, grâce à leur position élitiste et périphérique, gardent leur autonomie sans se soucier des tumultes extérieurs. Souvent, il s'agit de la vieille poésie ou prose, trop éloignée dans le passé pour être suspecte (Tyšš et Gromová 2020, 37). En plus de l'anthologie de 1972, je citerai un autre exemple. En 1975, une traduction d'*Aucassin et Nicolette* est sortie de la plume de Mariana Pauliny-Danielisová et Gizela Slavkovská. Créative et philologiquement précise, elle est munie d'un épilogue qui résume les découvertes du médiéviste Jean Dufournet. Aujourd'hui encore, elle ne perd rien de son actualité (Živčák 2020, 71–73).

Si on envisage les lettres dans leurs rapports avec la société, l'élitisme a des points forts, mais aussi des faiblesses. Malgré la fortune des paradigmes qui valorisent la diversité culturelle, les Slovaques continuent à négliger l'héritage occitan, comme si ce dernier était trop « européen » pour mériter la protection. Et pourtant, leurs sensibilités doivent beaucoup à la *fin'amor*.

NOTES

- ¹ Un exposé systématique de la politique culturelle en Slovaquie avant 1989 dépasserait le cadre de cette étude. Ceux qui s'y intéressent se reporteront aux travaux de Katarína Bednárová (2015, voir surtout les pages 31–36, 55–61) ou Igor Tyšš (2017).
- ² Les renseignements qui suivent puisent dans le portrait biobibliographique de Jana Truhlářová (2008, 17–30).
- ³ J'emploie ce terme dans son acception culturelle car, en 1972, la Tchécoslovaquie n'était pas encore divisée.
- ⁴ Mon hypothèse a été revue par Anna Valcerová (2021, comm. pers.), ancienne élève de l'Académie slovaque des sciences. Elle l'a confirmée, en soulignant que Turčány, qui dirigeait sa thèse à la fin des années 70, avait également effectué ses propres recherches dans les bibliothèques du Midi. Pour résoudre les ambiguïtés au niveau de la langue, il s'est fié aux traductions en français moderne.
- ⁵ Il faut noter que cette publication contient aussi trois textes nouveaux (un de Guilhem de Peiteus et deux d'Arnaud Daniel), établis sans assistance de Felix.
- ⁶ Pour éviter les irrégularités, je transcris les noms selon l'orthographe occitane, mais sans accents (voir Fabre 2010, 689–690).

- ⁷ Les notices bibliographiques peuvent être consultées chez Alfred Jeanroy (1916, 46, 60, 75–76).
- ⁸ Toutes les traductions de l’anglais et du slovaque sont les miennes.
- ⁹ Pour rendre la traduction plus claire, j’ai éliminé l’italique et les guillemets qui abondent dans l’original.
- ¹⁰ J’emprunte ce terme à Katarína Bednárová (2021, débat).

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Vision or manipulation? The editorial problems of a Slovak anthology of troubadour poetry

Medieval literature. Troubadour studies. Slovakia. Anthology. Ethics of translation. Elitism.

Socialist Slovakia did not pay much attention to medieval Occitan poetry, of which only one translation was accessible in book format – the anthology *Danteho trubadúri* (The troubadours of Dante), published in 1972 by Jozef Felix and Viliam Turčány. This article seeks to reconstruct its ethical background, drawing mainly (but not exclusively) on contemporary approaches to the anthology as a concept. It responds to such questions as: Do the translators fall prey to cultural isolationism and plagiarize concrete foreign-language (especially French) sources? Does their selection of poems encourage ethnocentrism rather than a true exchange of literary values? Why is Dante's name included in the title? To what extent are the accompanying paratexts marked by ideological manipulation? Perhaps not surprisingly, the editorial gesture is not discredited by the ordeal, proving that aesthetic elitism can be a powerful antidote to totalitarian practices.

Mgr. Ján Živčák, PhD.
Institut d'études romanes
Faculté des Lettres
Université de Prešov
Ul. 17. novembra 1
080 01 Prešov
Slovaquie
janzivcak@gmail.com
ORCID : <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2373-9951>

Translation as an embodied practice: The case of dance notation

MARY WARDLE

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Following the emergence of skopos theory in the 1980s (Reiss and Vermeer [1984] 2013), the field of translation studies began to shift its focus away from the source text and questions of equivalence while, with the cultural turn in the 1990s, outlined in works such as those by Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere (1990, 1998), the figure of the translator moved more firmly center stage, emerging as a creative agent in their own right and not a mere interlingual scribe. Since these two significant refocusing phases, the discipline has become increasingly interested in the lives and works of individual authors and translators (cf. Chesterman 2009 for an early overview). Researchers have investigated the translator's immediate environment – libraries, contacts, working conditions –, the broader socio-historical context surrounding both source and target text as well as the paratextual elements accompanying the words themselves, analyzing the practices of the working translator and the genesis and evolution of the translated text through the study of manuscripts, drafts and other working documents (Munday 2013), with emphasis, for example, on the role played in these investigations by archives (Paloposki 2016, Wardle 2019).

Following a similar timescale, outside the sphere of translation studies, in fields as diverse as pedagogy and sport, there has been a parallel increase in interest in embodiment, defined here as “having, being in or being associated with a body” (Smith 2017, 1), and how it can contribute to mental phenomena. Moving away, therefore, from the traditionally peripheral importance attributed to the body in the western philosophical tradition, characterized by Cartesian dualism, where the mind is viewed as fundamentally separate from the body, a significant number of cognitive scientists are now theorizing “embodied cognition”, a position that emphasizes the role of sensory and motor functions in cognition itself (Foglia and Wilson 2013). In their view “there is no fracture between cognition, the agent's body, and real-life contexts”, and, therefore, “the body intrinsically constrains, regulates, and shapes the nature of mental activity” (319). While it is beyond the scope of this article to enter into the many applications and repercussions of these observations, it is crucial to stress the variety of fields implicated in this process. The suggestion that meaning is grounded in mental representations of perception, emotion and, crucially, movement is currently being investigated in disciplines including (second) language acquisition, philosophy and psychology, among others.

In the light of this, and moving beyond the individual agency of the translator, this article investigates the repercussions of observing the intersection of translation practice with the physical dimension, in line with current research on embodied cognition. It begins with a brief outline of cognitive embodiment outside the field of translation studies before moving on to examining some of the many areas where translation and physicality overlap. The example of dance notation will then be introduced, prompting a series of questions raised by such a practice, questions that will ultimately shed light on developing an embodied translation practice in general.

COGNITIVE EMBODIMENT OUTSIDE THE FIELD OF TRANSLATION STUDIES

Christopher Eccleston opens his study on embodiment with a strong statement, on behalf of himself and his fellow psychologists: “We take for granted the obvious truth that the objects of our study (personality, motivation, emotion, cognition, and behavior) are quite literally embodied. We are encased by flesh in a physical being that defines the limits of our ability to act upon the world, and provides the medium by which the world acts upon us” (2016, 1). Embodied theories postulate that the body, and more specifically bodily systems that have evolved for perception, action and emotion, are also implicated in “higher” cognitive processes. In a pedagogical context, there is, for example, a reassessment of the experiential framework offered by educational methods such as that developed by Maria Montessori, in view of studies in embodied cognition:

Montessori’s insistence on connecting doing and thinking, emotion and cognition, and body and mind is in line with emerging interdisciplinary perspectives on the embodied mind; and this convergence of perspectives may provide a useful alternative framework for thinking about preparing students for lifelong learning, rather than short-term performance on normative tests (Rathunde 2009, 206).

Again, within pedagogy, embodied approaches to areas as varied as reading skills and mathematics have shown encouraging results, incorporating physical manipulation of objects such as toy representations of characters for the reading tasks and Lego pieces for the mathematical problems. More intriguingly, “once children have had experience with physical manipulation, they can engage in imaginary manipulation and thereby apply the strategy on their own” with similar results (Glenberg 2008, 370). Indeed, as Foglia and Wilson comment, “much current research on embodiment emphasizes less the body’s direct role in cognition than its implied role in reenactments of experience in the brain’s modality-specific systems for perception and action” (2013, 319). In other words, even when we experience no direct physical sensation, our minds process the information by drawing on previously experienced sensorial events.

This same link between the sensorimotor domain and cognitive tasks underlies much of the work by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson: building on their seminal work on conceptual metaphors, the authors provide ample evidence for “hundreds of primary metaphors that pair subjective experience and judgement with sensorimotor experience” (1999, 49). One such example would be the metaphors that fall within the category of *DIFFICULTIES ARE BURDENS* whereby such expressions as “she’s

weighed down by responsibilities” rely on understanding the physical sensations related to “muscular exertion” in the context of “the discomfort or disabling effect of lifting or carrying heavy objects” (50). Although the specific concept drawn upon in the metaphor can change from one culture to another, there is a common reliance on physicality and spatialization that transcends all traditions (1980, 19).

Ongoing studies into online communication – and social media in particular – and how users create communal experiences through technological innovations (Osler 2020), highlight the physical dimension that has been integrated into written language: this “digital embodiment” is evident in the extensive reliance on emojis to fine-tune utterances and avoid misunderstanding. Evolving from the initial use of basic punctuation marks, through emoticons typified by the “smiley face”, emojis now variously replace features of prosody, indicating surprise, irony and humor but also communicate our emotional status with symbols for joy, anger, loss of patience and so on. Although the range of emojis appears almost boundless, studies show that, of all the symbols and images available, it is those representing facial features and hand gestures, mimicking real-life physical expression, that are consistently the most frequently used (McCulloch 2019, 158): this reliance on non-verbal communication mirrors conversational situations in real life where a significant percentage of input is provided by extra-linguistic factors (Lapakko 1997, 66).

A further example of a domain very much associated with the intersection between body and mind is that of embodied practices such as yoga, meditation and mindfulness, where poses, balanced positions and movements are used to achieve positive outcomes in both physical and mental dimensions. Within the context of martial arts and combat sports, Alex Channon and George Jennings report on studies into the embodiment of gender through physical activity: “these works suggest that women training in self-defence are able to reconstruct their gendered selves, rejecting notions of innate female weakness and violability, thereby coming to embody a ‘re-made’, ‘empowered’ sense of femininity” (2014, 6).

TRANSLATION AND THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION

Turning our attention to translation studies, there are obvious ways in which our bodies are implicated in the production, interpretation and reception of texts. As mentioned above, all forms of non-spoken language communicate semantic content that can, if necessary, be translated into a conventional written text; sign language is perhaps the most obvious example of this; stage translation for theater or opera has to take into account the physicality of the performers as well as their breathing patterns and voice projection; audio-visual translation mediates any culturally specific gestures observed on screen and, more specifically, dubbing has to parallel the timing of facial expressions and the morphology of lip movements while subtitling seeks to take into account the eye movements of the audience as they read the text and follow the images on screen; audio description has to decide what information, including that conveyed by gestures and movement, can be translated into words within the time constraints imposed by the audiovisual text; in her discussion of corporeal paratexts, Kathryn Batchelor concentrates on the parties within an interpreting context where the body language of one of the par-

ties can raise questions for the interpreter, in so far as they have to decide whether or how far they should go in attempting to translate any meaning communicated non-verbally (2018, 181); a further aspect discussed by Batchelor is the physical presence of the interpreter themselves and how certain features might influence the communication between the two main interlocutors: “These factors might include such things as the interpreter’s gender, his or her overall manner or mood, his or her positioning in the room, eye contact, gaze in the room, the dynamic that develops directly between the interpreter and one or both of the primary parties, and so on” (182).

Alongside these examples of translation practice that imply an embodied component, the physical dimension is also frequently referenced in the literature of the discipline. A number of metaphors associated with translation draw parallels with (parts of) the body, such as Haroldo de Campos’ metaphor of cannibalism, which in turn draws on Oswald de Andrade’s earlier *Anthropophagic Manifesto* ([1928] 1991). The text, now often quoted within the context of postcolonial translation studies, initially referred to the writing practice of Latin American authors such as Jorge Luis Borges, Octavio Paz and José Juan Tablada and was extended only later to translation strategies widely adopted in Latin America, whereby authors and translators do not seek to copy European literary models directly but rather “devour” them and incorporate them in their texts on their own terms. In this radical approach, “the bodies of both cannibal and cannibalized, through the sort of exchange of energies, transfusion, consumption and reincorporation, become indissolubly linked, so that one no longer can assert the independent existence of one another” (Cisneros 2012, 37). Another “bodily” metaphor representing a contrasting point of view, ventriloquism, describes the translator’s role as a conduit for the voice of the source author, imagining the translated text as emerging from inside the translator’s body: “The translator [...] has to ventriloquize and give voice to the literary, fictive characters created by the novelist. These characters reside in the belly of the translator and are made to speak through him” (Jarniewicz 2013, 331).

A more subjective position emerges from Primo Levi’s account of his experience of the translation of his works by others. Referring specifically to the translations of his memoirs recounting his imprisonment in Auschwitz and subsequent journey back to Italy, his interventions can be viewed as an antidote to the enforced passivity he perceives in his role as a “translatee” and it is arguably significant that he talks about the “writer who is translated” rather than “the writer whose works are translated”. The almost visceral relation between language and embodied self emerges and the description of the translation process is redolent with physicality and aggression, reminiscent of the link between violence and language described by Levi in his accounts of life in the concentration camp:

Being translated [is] a state of semi-passivity similar to that of a patient on a surgeon’s gurney or a psychoanalyst’s couch, and it abounds in violent and conflicting emotions. The author who finds before him a page of his own work translated into a language that he understands will, variously, or all at once, feel that he has been flattered, betrayed, ennobled, X-rayed, castrated, planed smooth, raped, embellished, or murdered. Rarely does he remain indifferent toward the translator [...] who has jammed his nose and his fingers into his viscera (2015, 2123).

DANCE NOTATION AS AN EMBODIED TRANSLATION PRACTICE

Having established some of the many ways in which physicality is embedded in translation practice and theory, the focus of this article will now move to one specific area of embodied practice, namely dance, and analyze how a number of notation systems have developed over time as a means of recording choreographies. In describing how the notation seeks to represent movement, position, interaction between dancers and their environment, the questions raised can be viewed as analogous to the questions posed by the interpretation of embodiment in general.

Unlike conventional interlinguistic translation, where the source text is transformed into the target text, dance notation is a practice that first “translates” movement into written symbols, to record the choreography but then, often after a considerable time gap, the same symbols become the source text, as it were, and are translated back into movement, facilitating a new staging of the dance. Once written down, and in the subsequent transition back from notation to physical movement and ultimately performance, just as in any other form of translation, there are varying degrees of possible interpretation. Dance notation, therefore, appears to be the ideal site for investigating the embodied quality of translatorial activity.

Like theatrical representations and musical performance, dance is, by its very nature, an ephemeral art, surviving through its instantiation, through being performed repeatedly. However, while drama and music have a long tradition of written documentation – namely the playscript and the musical score – dance has tended to fare less well in its means of recording the component parts of each work. Historically, classical ballets have been transmitted from one generation to the next through a combination of oral and gestural tradition. Before video recordings, and still today in many companies, the traditional way in which choreographies are handed down from one cohort of dancers to the next is through the figure of the *répétiteur* or *stager*, often former dancers themselves, whose role it is to pass on not only the steps but also their execution in the form judged to be the closest to the wishes of the original choreographer. One of the drawbacks with this method, however, can be the apparently idiosyncratic interpretation of some *répétiteurs* of what constitutes the “text” to be transmitted and, indeed, advocates of notation argue that transcription systems avoid what can be highly subjective interpretations. The task of passing on the dance is even more fraught when continuity of memory is lost and subsequent restagers are confronted with disparate source materials such as “newspaper reviews, collaborators’ correspondence, the choreographer’s drawings and plans, an annotated musical score, class notebooks, models of the scenography, and personal accounts by the original participants” (Pouillaude 2017, 235), without necessarily having witnessed the dance themselves.

There is a real need, therefore, to maintain some form of documented evidence of the sequence of steps, the bodily expression of the dancers and its unfolding in space and in relation to the music. In the context of classical ballet, the guiding principles for recording dance, identified by Kenneth Archer and Millicent Hodson, must address the following five concerns: the preservation of masterworks, determination of authenticity, clarification of authorship, identification of the original bal-

let and the provision of a base for any future intervention by scholars and artists (2000, 1). Although not commonly referred to and still, by and large, the preserve of a very limited number of experts, there is a long tradition of dance notation – indicative of its continued usefulness – including a wide variety of written systems, for recording at least some of the component parts. In the western tradition alone, Ann Hutchinson Guest identifies more than one hundred systems, although there is also evidence of Egyptian hieroglyphs depicting dance moves and sacred Indian texts dating back to the 2nd century BCE, setting down rules determining the gestures used to depict different themes and emotions (1984, xi).

One brief example, to illustrate the effectiveness of “dance scripts”, can be the intertextual network that sprang up around Stéphane Mallarmé’s poem *L’après-midi d’un faune*, first published in 1876. To accompany this publication, Édouard Manet, a personal friend of Mallarmé’s, produced a series of engravings to embellish the text, a first intersemiotic translation of the poem, to use Roman Jakobson’s terminology (1959). As well as interlingual translations, such as Roger Fry’s 1936 English version of the poem, “The Afternoon of the Faun”, Mallarmé’s verses spawned musical translations, the most famous of which is arguably Claude Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune*, which premiered in Paris in 1894. For all these works (the “source” poem, its English translation, the engravings, the musical score) we have surviving tangible records of how their creators intended their works to be enjoyed. However, when Vaslav Nijinsky came to choreograph his innovative ballet using Mallarmé’s original title and Debussy’s music, for Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes company (1912), the need to record his composition – and with it the need to set down his vision of how it should be staged – prompted him to devise his own system of notation, partly based on Stepanov notation, the system widely used at the time by St. Petersburg’s Mariinsky Theatre dancers (Hutchinson Guest 1998, 148). Apart from a small number of extant photographs, there are no other records of Nijinsky’s performances, due in no small measure to Diaghilev’s banning of film recording – he felt the quality of the jerky films of the time would not do justice to the virtuoso performance of his company. The only official document, therefore, for Nijinsky’s choreography of *Faune*, is his notated score, the final manuscript of which is held today by the British Library in London.

Following on from Nijinsky’s foray into dance notation, a number of other systems were devised during the first half of the 20th century, specifically in response to the new forms of expressive dance, going beyond the more highly conventionalized movements and steps of classical ballet. One such system is commonly known as Labanotation, presented for the first time by the Hungarian dancer, choreographer, and dance/movement theoretician, Rudolf von Laban in Vienna in 1928. While earlier systems relied on combinations of abbreviated terminology, tracings of the lines described by the dancers on the stage and anatomically “realistic” renditions of their bodies as stick figures, with Labanotation there is a distinctive move towards a system based on abstract symbols, what we might term a “language” of dance. In devising such a system, its creator must decide which elements to include, prioritizing those identified as essential from a functional point of view but also including the possibility of recording what constitutes the distinguishing features of each individual

choreography. In the case of Labanotation, perhaps the most widely used system still today, the notation develops vertically on the page, with a central line down the middle of the stave, separating the left side of the dancer's body from the right. Rather than representing disconnected poses or positions, the symbols are arranged to indicate unbroken continuity of movement (Hutchinson Guest 1984, 232). They can convey information about which body parts are moving – and their synchronicity with the musical score – as well as the height at which the movement develops, its directionality (forwards, backwards, left, right or diagonally), level (upwards, horizontally or downwards) and speed (from quick, sudden movements of brief duration to slow, sustained movement of long duration). Other features rendered by Labanotation include support (which parts are carrying the weight of the body), flexion (whether it be of the wrist, the knee, the whole leg, the spine), rotation (turns or twists, clockwise or counterclockwise, of the whole body or of a limb), placing of the feet, position of the dancer(s) across the stage and any potential interaction, such as in a pas de deux or the more choral movements of the corps de ballet.

This brief description can go some way towards indicating the highly complex nature of such notation systems and the degree of training required to achieve familiarity with the symbols, whether it be to produce them in transcribing a choreography or in reading them to visualize the movements. Indeed, one of the central issues faced by notators is the amount of information and degree of complexity required of their transcription. In this, the questions Hutchinson Guest suggests a notator should ask themselves, provide an enlightening parallel with those invoked by skopos theory in translation studies: “Who will read this score and for what purpose? To get a general impression of the work? To study it in depth? To reconstruct the sequences? To perform them?” (337). Another question that is often levelled at proponents of dance notation is why not record choreographies with cameras, especially given the technical advancements that guarantee high-definition filming as well as secure storage conditions. While some dance companies do make use of these instruments, many do not rely on them uniquely and prefer to integrate filmed recordings alongside their tradition of notation. There are two main reasons for not relying solely on video records: film, in most situations available to a dance company, cannot record a three-dimensional image and therefore cannot capture dancers (or parts of them) hidden by others or movements to the back of the body; most crucially, however, a filmed recording would necessarily be a document of one individual performance that might contain errors and would certainly be the recording of the idiosyncratic performance of those specific dancers, on that specific night, however praiseworthy that one performance might be. As one notator, Anna Trevien, puts it: “Would you ask an actor preparing Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, to learn the role, the words, the intention behind those words, from a DVD of Mel Gibson’s version of *Hamlet*? Or would you hand a recording of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* to a musician, expecting them to learn their part in the orchestra by listening to it?” (2018)

As with literary translation, therefore, the hermeneutic process underlying the transfer from one code to another cannot be reduced to a mechanical process whereby content A automatically corresponds to content B. As we have seen,

the notation represents only certain elements of the dance, those elements considered to be the essential characteristics or the core components of the piece, the defining features that distinguish it from other dances. The individual dancer or restager then has varying degrees of freedom to further characterize and customize the piece, just as a translator would with a literary text (Wardle 2022). Sarah Whatley's distinction between choreographic style and performance style is useful here – although it should be remembered that the choreographer is not always present when dancers are learning their steps: “Some dancers may be required to learn patterns of movement as set by the choreographer, with little opportunity for creative input during the construction stage. Alternatively, dancers may contribute much to the creation of the dance material, acting more as the ‘agents’ of the choreographer. In this case the choreographer may well be in more of a directorial role, editing and shaping the dancers’ material” (Duerden and Fisher 2007, 118). Also interesting here is the dialectic relationship between the originator of the dance and its performer, a two-way process that unfolds in the embodied transmission of the dance as choreographers frequently draw on dancers’ natural proclivities and abilities to shape their work.

Rachel Duerden and Neil Fisher elaborate on this point by explaining that, while autographic arts such as painting allow for only one original – even an excellent forgery of the *Mona Lisa* is just that: a forgery – the allographic arts such as music and dance have no direct equivalent whereby no single performance, not even the first performance, can ever be classed as definitive (130). They add: “As a performing art, however, dance has the potential for a dynamic existence: ever changing, but capable of living through those changes. New performers can re-invigorate the work and bring new insights to it, as has frequently been demonstrated, especially in theatre and in music.” (130) The notation, therefore, must be viewed as the structure around which each company of dancers can bring their interpretation to life: “Today we might speak in terms of wanting to encourage in students an ‘embodied understanding’, meaning the bodily intelligence that a translator learns to develop and that a knowledge of the conceptual frameworks of notation can facilitate” (128). Dancers, thus, are requested to develop this bodily intelligence and achieve an embodied understanding, in order to produce their own retranslation of the choreography for new audiences.

CONCLUSION

In the same way, translation in its broader sense can be seen as a performing art, with translators attempting to go beyond the words on the page to inhabit the text, capture the movement, emotion, sensation as suggested by the author and act it out through their own physical connection with the world. As described above, physical manipulation can open a pathway to imaginary manipulation: the translator, through this conceptual dimension, is given access to an embodied experience of the text and is thus able to produce an original creative performance. Concentrating attention on translation systems such as dance notation, can help focus attention on how bodies and movement become signifiers, conveying meaning in their own right and how

this physical presence can be integrated into translation practice in general. Within the field of translation and gender studies, for example, attention is focused on the intersection between language and our complex biological, sexual and gender identities (Simon 1996; von Flotow 2010). From the first works putting forward a feminist approach to translation – from choosing the source texts to translating and promoting the prominence of the role of women as authors, translators and publishers, to formulating strategies to facilitate the emergence of the feminine in the translated text – one of the prominent features has been that of foregrounding the physical presence of women. More recently, a similar approach is now directed at how the translator's agency can impact the discipline in the light of queer studies, recognizing and challenging the heteronormative paradigm of many cultures, both past and present (Epstein and Gillett 2017; Baer 2020). If translation is to be considered a privileged site for the negotiation of textual realities, then surely the translator has the opportunity – and, we might posit, the duty – to challenge the ongoing lack of diversity represented in the current cultural landscape.

Other areas of the discipline that stand to benefit from an embodied approach include a growing interest in translation and accessibility in contexts such as museums, sporting and other live events, subtitles that attempt to enhance the audience's experience of the audiovisual product with information about tone of voice, volume, provenance of off-screen noises or voices and so on. Major cinematic productions are also integrating some thought-provoking features, alongside more traditional reworkings of classic texts: films such as Armando Iannucci's inclusive color-blind casting for his cinematic remake of *David Copperfield* (2019) is an ideal example of how, in this case, skin color becomes one of the many features that allows the film to both respect and reinvent the novel from which it takes its lead, creating something new and relevant for modern audiences. Another similar example is Joe Wright's 2021 musical film *Cyrano*, based on Edmond Rostand's 1897 play *Cyrano de Bergerac*. In this case, the perceived physical inaesthetic characteristic shifts from being Cyrano's abnormally large nose in Rostand's original to his lack of physical stature in the film, where the part is played by Peter Dinklage, an actor with achondroplasia, a genetic disorder whose primary feature is dwarfism. This shift accentuates issues surrounding physical norms, conventions of beauty and the nature of love by presenting the viewer with a retranslated text that draws attention to itself and, in so doing, can initiate debate.

In conclusion, therefore, thinking about the issues involved in translating the body and movement within the relatively conventionalized context of dance, we can identify wider reaching implications for integrating the body and its movement in further contexts where language – the word – has often been the focus of the translator's attention: as discussed above, examples include the rendering of non-verbal communication within interpreting or conveying meaning communicated by the body in the context of audio description. The implications, however, can be far more wide-reaching: ideas of subjectivity, identity, mortality, and spirituality are often centered around the physical bodies we inhabit, while contemporary debates such as body shaming and transgender rights or socio-political movements such as Black

Lives Matter and Me Too are rooted, to varying degrees, in values inscribed in our physical identity. Questions of meaning, equivalence, interpretation, variation and translatability have long preoccupied the academic field of translation studies. Approaching these issues through the prism of an embodied practice such as the transfer from dance to notation and back, encoding movement, integrating the physical with the linguistic and cultural, provides a challenging and, hopefully, stimulating addition to the ongoing debate.

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Embodied cognition. Dance notation. Labanotation. Embodied translation.

This article investigates the repercussions of observing the intersection of translation practice with the physical dimension, in line with current research on embodied cognition. The paper begins with a brief outline of cognitive embodiment outside the field of translation studies before moving on to examining some of the many areas where translation and physicality overlap. The example of dance notation will then be introduced, prompting a series of questions raised by such a practice, questions that will ultimately shed light on an embodied translation practice in general.

Prof. Mary Wardle

Associate professor of English language and translation studies

Department of European, American and Intercultural Studies

Sapienza University of Rome

Circonvallazione Tiburtina, 4

00185 Rome

Italy

mary.wardle@uniroma1.it

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7225-7433>

Reception of literature generated by artificial neural networks

ZUZANA HUSÁROVÁ – KAREL PIORECKÝ

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The miracle of electronic literature is not that computers are current; the miracle is that it is so thoroughly anticipated, suggesting that the literary perspective is a viral, feral, primordial tendency of human consciousness.

David Heckman and James O'Sullivan (2018)

Literature written by neural networks can be considered a recent example of literature produced and presented by technology, which is broadly captured by the encompassing term “electronic literature”. Theoretical considerations of electronic literature offer several ways of contextualizing its historical background: either it is seen as a continuation of experimental tendencies in (print) literature, or its technical and multimodal nature is emphasized and it is seen as a distinct genre with its own history. As Chris Funkhouser stated: “Digital poetry always exploits elements of mathematics, computer science and art, but many other conceptual approaches are applicable. Combining files and presenting them via computer screens multiplies possibilities for poetry and, considering the sum or sums of the artistic equation used to distinguish meaning, requires work from the author and the viewer” (2012, 227).

Some theorists have approached this issue by creating their own terminology: the Norwegian theorist Espen Aarseth coined the term “cybertext” to include digital games and various media projects in addition to computer literature, thus drawing attention to the connections between these digital projects. Aarseth stressed the complexity of decision making within the reception process compared to the traditional literary text. He coined the term “ergodic literature” for the historical background of cybertexts and used it to refer to literature whose reading emphasizes both

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the reader/user's choice to progress through the text and the increased demands it places on the reader/user (1997). Aarseth used this term to refer to an array of different texts, ranging from inscriptions spread out over multiple walls of Egyptian temples, the *I Ching* (or *Book of Changes*), calligrams, and novels without binding, e.g. Marc Saporta's *Composition no. 1* (1962; Eng. trans. 1963), B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), and Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (1961; *A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems*, 1983), to experimental novels with various reader's instructions, such as Milorad Pavić's *Hazarski rečnik* (1984; *Dictionary of the Khazars*, 1988) and *Predeo slikan čajem* (1988; *Landscape Painted with Tea*, 1990), Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire* (1962), Julio Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963; *Hopscotch*, 1966), and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000).

The American theorist N. Katherine Hayles (2002) describes experimental works whose content and form/medium are inherently intertwined as “technotexts”, referring to medial as well as printed works. The term “protopertext” is used for older works that were printed but still navigated the reader's attention similarly to hypertext (using various instructions to find specific, non-sequential pages instead of clicking on a link).



Fig. 1: Georg Philipp Harsdörffer: *Fünffacher Denckring der Teütschen Sprache* (1651, 517)

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF GENERATED LITERATURE

Due to its technical background, the use of neural networks in literature has no direct historical antecedents. However, it is possible to find works that are to some degree similar to this approach through a combinatorial poetics.¹ One such example is *Fünffacher Denckring der Teutschen Sprache* (Five-fold thinking circle of the German language), a project by the German author Georg Philipp Harsdörffer from 1636 (printed in book form from 1651), which was intended to assist authors in poetic creation and to produce new words through combinatorial word formation. This “thinking circle” consisted of five differently sized circles attached to a single center, each circle containing specific morphemes: prefixes, letters, syllables, and suffixes. Word-formation thus consisted of a mechanical rotation of the circles, with words being formed by random combinations of individual word-forming elements.²

The permutation scheme of the sonnet genre was used by the French poet Raymond Queneau in the creation of his experimental book *A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems*. The book consists of ten sonnets, which are to be cut up, with the individual verses mutually combined. It would take longer than a human lifetime to read all 10^{14} sonnets, and so this poem defined the approach of the OuLiPo movement, which translates as the workshop of “potential literature”, a literature that fully exists only in its potential state. In the same year (1961) that Queneau published his book based on “ergodic” reading, the Italian poet Nanni Balestrini created *TAPE MARK 1*, a poem based on an algorithm that used a series of sequential processes to combine fragments from Michihiko Hachiyā’s *Hiroshima Diary* (1955), Paul Goldwin’s possibly apocryphal *The Mystery of the Elevator*, and Lao Tse’s *Tao Te Ching* from the fourth century BC, and published them on magnetic tape.

The first literary works created through computer generation are considered to be the *Love Letter Generator* by English computer scientist Christopher Strachey from 1952 and *Stochastische Texte* (*Stochastic Texts*, 2005) by German computer science student Theo Lutz from 1959 (Strachey’s generator is also regarded as the first work of digital art). While Strachey’s project had humorous overtones and the algorithm in the Mark 1 computer chose from overly sweet or humorous appellations and euphemistic words, always signing itself as M.U.C. (Manchester United Computer), Lutz’s generated text consisted of short sentences of purely informational value (e.g., “Ein Weg ist offen.”, “Nicht jedes Auge ist alt.”, which can be translated as “One road is open.”, “Not every eye is old.”³). This fact fits the context of its creation: it was a student project created for a specific assignment for a university course. Theo Lutz was a member of the Stuttgart Group at the Technical University of Stuttgart, whose members included the philosopher Max Bense (Lutz’s teacher) and Reinhard Döhl. Lutz’s *Stochastic Texts* are based on the appropriation of 16 nouns and adjectives from Kafka’s novel *Das Schloss* (1926, *The Castle*, 1930), to which articles, negative forms, or the verb “is” are added. These are then connected to the next generated sentence by the conjunctions “and”, “or”, “and so”. Strachey’s approach was more complex and can be seen as a remediation of love letters with a heavy dose of genre parody: “Duck Duck. You are my little affection:

my beautiful appetite: my eager hunger.” This intertwining of emotional and computational dynamics, according to David Link (“the software is based on a reductionist position vis à vis love and its expression”) results in love being “regarded as a recombinatory procedure with recurring elements” (Link 2016, 63–64).

As these very early examples show, the choice and development of a usable database is the most essential human intervention at the linguistic level. Or as the saying goes among computer scientists: “Show me your database, I’ll tell you how good your project will be.”

House of Dust (1967) by the US-based Alison Knowles, a performer linked to Fluxus, and the programmer James Tenney is often cited as a memorable piece of generative poetry because it was consciously created as a literary work by a computer. It was also published in several magazines, in book form, was the basis of an interactive sound installation, both as a physical sculpture and as a performance, and can thus be categorized as a transmedia work.⁴ Its scheme was very simple, each of the four lines consisting of the same basic structure: the first phrase in each line (“a house of”, “in a”, “using”, “inhabited by”) was followed by a specific, randomly generated continuation. While the basic words always repeated, the other parts of the verses changed generically. These stanzas were linked in series, printed on long paper, and published in the form of a concertina book. *House of Dust* is an example of how the author’s approach to the “inhuman” product and its professional contextualization sometimes plays a greater role than the artistic output itself.

EARLY CZECH AND SLOVAK GENERATIVE ATTEMPTS

In the Czech environment, three attempts at computer text generation are known from the 1960s. The authors were not primarily concerned with the creation of poetry. The generated poetry was seen rather as a by-product of their scientific intentions. In 1966–1967, the Brno-based literary theorist and versologist Jiří Levý and the linguist Karel Pala worked on a project called Generování veršů jako problém prozodický (The generation of verse as an issue of prosody), the aim of which was to more deeply explore the structural theory of text and to place it on a verifiable basis – which was to be represented by computer-generated poems, dubbed “artificial poetry”.⁵

Like Theo Lutz’s *Stochastic Texts*, excerpts of these poems were published as part of a scholarly article (Levý and Pala, 1968). The first poem was compiled by randomly selecting from 116 generated sentences; the second was also selected (this time from 220 sentences) but with a certain thematic intention, and thus authors admitted that this sample “has to some extent the character of a real poetic formation” (77). The most significant human intervention in the generated text is the selection itself, which in the latter case even assigns to the generated sentences the meaning of a love poem.

The second attempt to generate a poetic text is also connected to the scientific community in Brno. As suggested by its title, the article, “Některé principy strojové poetiky” (Some principles of machine poetics) by Karel Pala and the literary critic Oleg Sus consists primarily of a brief introduction outlining the possibilities of com-

puter-generated verse (in a more dense and comprehensible form than Levý and Pala's paper), followed by examples of generated poems. The fact that it was published in the literary magazine *Host do domu* in 1967 also led the writers of the article to polemically define the position of machine poetry and experimental or concrete poetry. Sus and Pala consistently insisted that computers do not produce true poetry but only parapoetic poems ("machine parapoetry"), that is to say, texts that are comparable to "natural"/non-machine poetry, but whose structure bears no trace of any authorial personality or intentionality, which they considered necessary in "real" poetry.

Oleg Sus published a generated text in the same journal, *Host do domu*, in the politically heated atmosphere of 1968. The text was generated using words taken from a speech by Jiří Hendrych, a member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia's Central Committee and an opponent of the ongoing reform efforts in society and culture. Sus did not hide his intention to mock the Communist leader's phrases in a neo-Dadaistic way, but at the same time he presented the parodic character of the generated text as the ideologically unbiased and objective result of computer algorithms, which merely created new combinations out of the provided linguistic material.

The first generated poems in Slovak started to appear in the 1980s. The series called *Obrazobásne* (Imagepoems) by the visual artist Daniel Fischer was created by means of generation on a CDC3000 computer and subsequent plotting, through which the written quotation gradually "disintegrates" into a cubist visual form. This was not an authorial text; Fischer used an appropriation reminiscent of conceptual work with text. Poems that can without hesitation be considered as generative poems were published by Rudolf Legel in 1982 in the article "Experiment s interakciou človek–počítač pri vytváraní básnického textu" (Experiment with human–computer interaction in the creation of a poetic text). For the first poem, "Analytická geometria v priestore mojej hlavy" (Analytic geometry in the space of my head), he selected keywords from the terminological field of analytic geometry; the words of the second poem "Laska" (Love, both titles intentionally without diacritics in Slovak), come from Dante's "Horská kanzóna" (originally "Canzone Montanina") in Viliam Turčány's translation. The poetic construction of both poems is based on sentences; the language of the first poem is enriched with mathematical signs and the language of the second poem brings a romantic expressivity. Legel edited the computer-generated text to make the declension work properly in the poem, arguing that "the advantage of using a machine in text construction is that the machine can select quickly from large data sets, and the distribution of selection is programmable" (1982, 39).⁶

All of the aforementioned projects were based on the combinatorial principle of computational access to data: a human created a database of words that were syntactically ordered and inserted a number of words into the category of the chosen syntactic member. Thus, the computer always just chose from the set of words, but did not change the default syntactic structure. The notion of randomness was thus relative because the author of the project had to create the database in such a way that the outputs were grammatical in different combinations and could thus be considered poetry.

DESCRIPTION OF TEXT-GENERATING NEURAL NETWORKS

Neural networks do not work on the same principle as the previous examples of generated literature. The author of the project does not supply the program with words that are subsequently rearranged by the machine into the final text, nor does he provide it with the rules of morphology and syntax. The machine learns the language structures itself.⁷ The basis of neural networks is that the program learns to recognize certain patterns on a large database and then tries to replicate or approximate them, thus generating its own data. However, neural networks do not understand the level of language, they function only on the level of numbers. First, all text is converted by the algorithm into strings of numbers in which the network then looks for sequences. Once the network has produced its own sequences, the algorithm converts them back into alphabetic characters. Therefore, a neural network does not know that it is forming text; for this program, text is still just a sequence of numbers. Neural networks generate by predicting the next sign to complete the sequence of numbers, so converted to characters this means that they complete the next characters in the sequence.

A neural network learns by gradually and repeatedly going through the entire volume of data, and its resulting outputs improve with respect to the number of cycles it has gone through. The first outputs are just clusters of letters, later they take the formal resemblance of words without any meaning, then it starts to produce words, and finally the combinations of words constitute verse. However, it is necessary to stop this learning at the right moment, otherwise overtraining occurs and the outputs start strikingly resembling the primary data.

In the use of neural networks for text generation, two types of language models have been used in the Czech and Slovak Republics: Recurrent Neural Networks (RNN) and Open AI's Generative Pre-trained Transformer 2 or 3 (GPT-2 or GPT-3). RNNs started to be more widely used for text generation when the Slovak-born American researcher Andrej Karpathy published his 2015 paper "The Unreasonable Effectiveness of Recurrent Neural Networks", in which he described how he trained his neural network on the works of Shakespeare. He used a character-by-character (rather than word-by-word) generation method to do this, and found that the network gradually began to learn to form words and even copy Shakespeare's style. When working with RNNs, programmers create their own database on which the networks learn, and so many such projects have worked with old texts that are no longer subject to copyright.

GPT-2 is a language model already pre-trained on a huge text database (8 million texts from Wikipedia and Reddit, amounting to about 40 GB), whose library consists of so-called tokens, which are numerical representations of subwords. GPT-2 tokenizes via the BPE algorithm, which means that it takes all the unique words present in the database and breaks them into smaller parts. In this way, the algorithm breaks the words to get tokens, in which it then looks for a sequence. By that sequence, it learns how a particular language works, what the sentence structure looks like, and so on. GPT was trained on English, but it can be fine-tuned to another language, that is, it can be trained to follow the linguistic rules of another language as a superstructure over English syntax.

After training the network, programmers can work with specifying parameters that determine such characteristics as the length of the output text (the number of tokens), how non-conventional it should be (referred to as the *temperature*), how many outputs to create per password, etc. Often the neural network is given an initialization text – a seed phrase it is trying to follow (a word, a paragraph, a chunk of text) – in order to correctly navigate to the desired output. However, the network can also generate without an initial text.

The GPT-3 model architecture works in the same way as GPT-2, but it is trained on a much larger dataset (it consists of five different Internet corpora), requires a much larger amount of RAM (reportedly around 11 home computers), and is therefore difficult to fine-tune on a different dataset. The first transformer in this series, GPT-1, on the other hand, was trained on the smallest database, called BooksCorpus, consisting of 7,000 unpublished books to the sum of 117 million parameters. In contrast, 1.5 billion parameters were entered into the training of GPT-2 and about 100 times more were entered into GPT-3.

TYPES OF TEXT GENERATION IN NEURAL NETWORKS

Considering the specifics of programming interventions in training neural networks, machine learning can be categorized as supervised, unsupervised, and semi-supervised learning. Most text generators use unsupervised learning. In the context of text corpus construction, we can divide authoring approaches into those that use task-specific models and those with generic models. With respect to task-specific models, we can talk about a learned model or a generic model that is later fine-tuned by the authors for their own specific needs. With a generic model, we talk about a direct use of, for example, the GPT model in the English language without any modification or fine-tuning of the model. The advantage of fine-tuning is that a language other than English can be used, and thus the model can learn to write in another language due to its corpus. When it comes to small languages, many authors usually only translate texts that have been generated by the English generic model and abstain from the time-consuming fine-tuning.

Even though the Czech and Slovak literary scene has not produced a large number of literary projects with the GPT model,⁸ we can say that with regard to the reception of digital literature, these have been the most media-reflected examples. Three contemporary projects have been implemented by the prominent duo of the new media theorist and philosopher Dita Malečková and the programmer Jan Tyl. Their collaboration initially resulted in the project *Digitální filosof* (Digital philosopher, 2019) in collaboration with students of new media studies at the Faculty of Arts, who built training corpora from the works of philosophers. The project enables the users to conduct a fictional interview with one of the following philosophers: Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Peter Singer, Václav Havel, or Tomáš Sedláček. A follow-up project, where one can listen to the results of the generated genre works translated from English and voiced by actors, is available on Czech Radio in a series of podcasts called *Digitální spisovatel* (Digital writer, 2020). In the sequel series, *Digitální spisovatel 2* (2021), Malečková and Tyl applied

a different strategy: it is a project based on the principle of so-called assisted creativity – selected literary authors were asked to write a short story with the assistance of a neural network.

The TheAItre theatre-programming project resulted in the writing and production of a theater play called *AI: Když robot píše hru* (AI: When a robot writes a play), which premiered on 26 February 2021 (as a tribute to the centenary of Karel Čapek's *R.U.R.*). Since the text of the play was created using the GPT-2 model in English and its final Czech form was based on machine translation (researchers from the Faculty of Mathematics and Physics at Charles University who co-authored the project and generated the text have been developing their own machine translation model⁹), they used a generic model.

In the year 2020, the author duo consisting of the programmer Lubomír Panák and the poet Zuzana Husárová collaborated on a GPT-2 project named *Liza Gennart*, whose Slovak poems were published in book format in 2020 as *Výsledky vzniku* (Outcomes of origin). Contrary to the previous examples, *Liza Gennart* was a task-specific model, as the original GPT-2 model was fine-tuned using a Slovak literary corpus (more than 2,000 works consisting of contemporary poetic books, feminist books, issues of contemporary journals, older poetry books available from online archives).

The Slovak artist Samuel Szabó's project *Umelá neinteligencia* (Artificial non-intelligence) was published in 2020 as a book called *Svet sa nám nestal* (The world has not happened to us). These texts also formed the basis of musical compositions published on a website. Szabó worked with the RNN model, which he subversively trained on folk texts, Facebook posts, geographical names, etc. to parody ideology and nationalism. This was, like *Liza Gennart*, also a case of a task-specific model.

RECEPTION OF TEXTS GENERATED BY NEURAL NETWORKS

The fundamental difference between the reception of generative and non-generative literature was formulated by Jean-Pierre Balpe in 2005, in his article “Principles and Processes of Generative Literature. Questions to Literature”. At the time he understandably perceived the notion of generative literature differently, lacking any experience with sophisticated and successful technologies such as GPT-2 or GPT-3. He was unable to confront his theoretical assumptions with concrete receptive metatexts, since computer-generated texts were still in an experimental phase at the time, not reflected by the wider literary community. Today, we have this opportunity, and so our considerations of the specific mode of reading of this kind of literature can start with an analysis of the metatexts.

In the receptive metatexts thematizing and evaluating the aforementioned Czech and Slovak generative projects, two basic strategies can be identified: 1. a description of the generation process and a generalizing reflection on the fate of literature in the era of artificial intelligence; 2. a reflection on the process of reading the generated text and an attempt to take an evaluative stance on its literary quality.

The first of these strategies clearly dominates quantitatively; often the whole text of the review is built on this principle, in fewer cases both strategies are combined on the surface of one metatext. A prominent rhetorical figure within this strategy is

the expression of concern that writers will be replaced by artificial intelligence. This creates a spectacular emotional arc, as it is regularly followed by reassurance – often backed up by statements from the writers themselves – that an artificial neural network is likely to be a tool to help writers rather than compete with them.¹⁰ This apocalyptic mode of reception is well evident, for example, in the title of a review describing the *Digitální spisovatel* project: “Konec spisovatelů v Čechách. Povídky už umí psát i umělá inteligence” (The end of writers in the Czech Republic. Even artificial intelligence can write short stories). The reviewer makes do with the mere fact that the originator of the texts in question is supposedly a machine, and makes no mention of the linguistic or literary quality of the stories (cf. ajez 2020). However, this emphasis on aspects of technology and values is not relegated solely to the domain of ordinary and relatively ill-informed journalism, but can also dominate theoretical texts. In these types of literary metatexts, poetry is not presented as an aesthetic object, but rather as a stimulus for extra-literary reflection. And in some cases, it is even fiercely critical, such as in an article published on the website of the journal *Science*, reporting on the play *AI: Když robot píše hru*, which questions the very notion of “artificial intelligence”, or rather its use in connection with the writing of the play. According to the quoted expert, contemporary text generation technology is not nearly good enough yet to receive such attribution: “Because the computer didn’t come up with the whole script itself, DeChant says he wouldn’t call the play ‘AI created’” (Moutinho 2021).

The latter strategy, based on a reflection of the reading process itself, is much more sensitive to the literariness of the texts under consideration, although it also acknowledges the technological context of their production. In the case of *AI: Když robot píše hru*, or rather its production, several of the published responses (especially in the foreign press) had the character of a classic theater review, and the only technological question that their authors asked was the basic one: whether a robot can write a play. The answers were negative. Jana Machalická’s theater review in *Lidové noviny* (2021) is also based on this reception strategy, focused primarily on the artistic, not technological, aspect of the generative work. The reviewer finds an “existential urgency” in the play and takes it as a stimulus for metatheatrical reflection on the development of “postdramatic theatre”. Thus, here too the reception tends to a more general reflection, but does not escape from the world of art. The reviewer clearly approaches the communication set-up and perceives the technical imperfections of the generated text as manifestations of the Theatre of the Absurd or as a specific form of humor.

This literary and artistically sensitive reception strategy is, however, mainly connected to the principle of the aforementioned communication game. Some reviewers even explicitly mention the notion of a game in their texts. For example, as Jan Škrob states in his review of *Výsledky vzniku*: “Where the robotic poet Liza Gennart, for example, encounters certain limits – in the occasional repetition or cycling of words and phrases, or perhaps in the alternation of first-person grammatical gender even within a single poem – this could be read as authorial intent and a distinctive authorial style. Personally, I am in favor of this interpretation in Liza Gennart’s work as well,

though of course somewhat within the framework of a game. [...] When reading, one misses to some extent the feeling that usually strikes one when reading good poetry – that one is somehow encountering the inner world of another person, even if distant in space and time. Personally, I believe that this is what gives poetry a significant part of its power, apart from the quality and themes of the texts themselves. In Liza Gennart's poetry, this is inherently lacking, unless one accepts her game. The whole project is necessarily a game" (2020).

Ivana Hostová, in her review of the same book, speaks of a "paranoid game": "To read Liza Gennart's speech is to appear in a paranoid game in which we ask ourselves to what extent reading any text is merely a projection of our own expectations of a sensory constant, and to what extent the text really is, operates, has contours, and inserts into us contents that were unknown, unknowable to us before we came into contact with it" (2021). This playful aspect of the reading (although the author does not explicitly mention it) is also evident in Daniel Hevier's review of the same collection, expressing his thought that this type of poetry cannot be read "neutrally": "And even if we consciously try to do so, in the background of what we (re)read, there will always be a noise of suspicion or knowledge that something is not right" (2020). Attesting to the fact that, as a reader, he had to somehow direct or model his reading, Hevier believes that this is due to the otherness of the generated texts, which are inherently subversive insofar as they disrupt "order", that is, our conventional idea of what lyric poetry should look like. In her article "Niekoľko poznámok k recepcii poézie umelých neurónových sietí" (Some remarks on the reception of poetry by artificial neural networks), Lubica Schmarcová writes about the placebo effect, which is actually a metaphorical expression of the aforementioned principle of playfulness: "we hold a poetry book in our hands, we assume that it is poetry, and the imagination interprets the meaning from what we read, constructs a poem. This can be seen as a metaphor for the homeopathic principle – the active substance we think of, which we believe to be the instrument of cure, is not found in the remedy given, yet it works – as contemporary neuroscience clearly confirms" (2020, 654). The principle of this reception strategy accepts insufficiency or imperfection of the generated text. In such a situation, the reader tends to make sense of this deficiency as an intentional aspect of the work or as a specific quality.

In many receptive metatexts of neural network literature, the two reading strategies mentioned are combined. These are, however, rarely found in a balanced state. One such example is Martin Makar's review of *Výsledky vzniku* (2021). Here the reviewer struggles with the in-between state of attempting to read Liza's verse as ordinary, existentially based poetry, and the tendency to measure her statements against the reality of machine origin – as if he were in a polemic with his own reading. He reflects on his reading with amazement at the machine's skill, and tries to suppress the knowledge of these metatextually based layers. Part of this reading strategy, then, involves a certain awareness of the stratified nature of reading, that is, the fact that reading has different layers, none of which can be completely suppressed or eliminated, although the dominance of attention can be shifted to give priority to a selected layer while not losing sight of the others. Reading thus appears here as a stratification process.

TYOLOGY OF READINGS OF NEURAL NETWORK LITERATURE

This finding moves us towards a certain schematization or typologization of reading associated with the reception of literature generated by artificial neural networks. From the above analytical probes, we can abstract two general types of reading applied to this kind of generative literature: reading of artificiality and literary metareading.

1. Reading of artificiality

The reader focuses only on the technical aspect of the generative process, she does not perceive the generated texts as literary texts, she only judges the success or failure of the deployed technology. She does not engage in the game of intra-textual subjects, but on the contrary perceives the texts in a desubjectivized way as mere technical products that can testify to man and human culture at most as a specific form of statistics.

2. Literary metareading

This type of reading represents a much more complex and intricate receptive activity (which is why there are disproportionately fewer reports on it than on the reading of artificiality). Its definition will thus be structured into several points that describe different aspects of the literary metareading of generative texts: stratification, intentionality, mimicry, metahability.

Stratification. We have already mentioned the tendency towards a stratified reading of generated texts. Basically, the idea is that the reading of a computer-generated text cannot simply be one-layered because its qualities are close to those of humanly produced texts (owing to the advanced state of artificial neural networks). Thus it is comparable to a normal human literary utterance. Seeing that the reception of a text is intrinsically and non-eliminably tied to an understanding of how it was produced, this reception also encompasses an oscillation of the reader's consciousness and concentration between several levels of the text. Specifically, these levels are: technological (which includes the acts leading to the creation of the text) and literary (which includes the poetic qualities of the text and its semantics).

Intentionality. More than elsewhere, generative texts depend on the reader's intentionality, which moves in the stratified space of the multilayered text (or textual formation, taking into account the influence of paratexts) and sometimes accentuates the sphere of genesis (technology), other times the literary sphere (poetics, semantics).

Mimicry. We use the term mimicry, in the meaning of simulation, pretense, or the feigning of another personality, as was proposed by the game theorist Roger Caillois in his book *Man, Play and Games*: "The spectator must lend himself to the illusion without first challenging the décor, mask, or artifice which for a given time he is asked to believe in as more real than reality itself" (1961, 23).¹¹ The reader chooses between the layers of the text based on her intention, but this does not mean that she completely suppresses the unchosen alternatives. On the contrary, she is aware of them and their technological context, she knows about the inanimate and non-empirical background of the generated text, yet (thanks to the linguistic and stylistic qualities of the text) can agree to play along with the mimicry. This allows her to perceive the generated text in the same mode as a text created by a living author. However, the awareness of the playful nature of such a reception never disappears. The accepta-

tion of mimicry within the reception of generated texts is clearly visible when seen through the lens of intratextual subjects. In this respect, the generated texts (primarily lyric poetry) do not differ fundamentally from ordinary texts: we can identify the lyrical subject (the speaker of the poem) and reconstruct the subject of the work (the image of the fictional originator of the text).¹² This is where information about the real origin of the generated work comes into play. The reader finds herself at a crossroads: she can accept the mimicry and pretend that the fictional identity of the program (e.g. Liza Gennart) is the actual originator of the texts, while still knowing that the real originator has a completely different character. She can therefore agree to the offered mode of reading, which, however, cannot ignore its play-like nature. In an ordinary work, quite naturally, there is a confusion between the subject of the work and the psychophysical authorial subject; the play becomes indistinct, or recedes from the reader's consideration. In the case of a generated work, the playful nature of the reading does not recede from view; it is always present and participates in the creation of meaning. That is why we speak here of metareading. A generated statement cannot be seen as a human statement, but can be read as a full-fledged mimicry. The dimension of real authenticity is absent here, but the dimension of a play on authenticity is not necessarily absent – which is, after all, the *modus operandi* of many non-generated texts (for which we usually cannot verify the fidelity of authenticity, but only assume it).

Metahability. Within the framework of play-based reception, it is possible to perceive the shortcomings and imperfections resulting from the automatic generation of the text as manifestations of artistic intentionality, even as manifestations (in Zdeněk Mathauser's words) of the highest level of artistic skill, or metahability. Metahability can be seen as the art of inability, that is, when the creative subject no longer strives for absolute virtuosity but abandons the quest for perfection in the interest of authentic expression, letting the work speak through its cracks and imperfections. Mathauser writes: "Metahability is a condition that transforms virtuosity from a state of finished, closed perfection into perfection in *statu nascendi*: the world now emerges in a state of birth!" (1994, 21) And this is exactly true for generated texts and their literary metareading. There are a number of mistakes in these texts that point to the process of birth/generation. In literary metareading, these imperfections can be made to carry an aesthetic function; in technical reading, on the contrary, such faults can completely annihilate the text in terms of meaning and literary quality. Thus, even a machine error can have a human dimension, even a humanizing one, if it is read as such – within the playful situation of literary metareading. If the generated texts of the future are indeed technically and linguistically perfect, they will be at risk of artistic failure, as the reception game will lack opportunities for identifying elements of metahability.

Mathauser's notion of metahability, or rather his whole triad of notions affecting levels and forms of artistic skill, that is, *hability* – *superhability* – *metahability*, brings us to another level of the reception of neural network literature, namely the reception aimed at their functioning within the system of contemporary literature. Regardless of whether these generative projects are associated with the pursuit of a perfect imi-

tation of human literary expression, or whether they deliberately work with the imperfections generated by the generative process, the result always acts as a subversive agent within the literary system.

This subversive strategy uses appropriative techniques to connect neural network texts with various literary texts. Intentionality, mimicry and metahability could also be applied to a certain degree to some literary works that use appropriative techniques. However, owing to the variety of approaches used by the authors of appropriative techniques, these reading strategies cannot be as uniformly applied as in the process of reading neural network literature.

Projects that strive to achieve a linguistic and stylistic quality comparable to human literary results (hability), or even pursue a vision of future outcomes that surpass the normal level of such results (superhability) – as exemplified by *Digitální spisovatel* – act as a challenge to contemporary literature as a whole. If a machine-produced text easily achieves the average literary quality of commonly published texts, or even aspires to master challenging genre forms at a virtuoso level, its presence undermines these spheres of mediocrity or formal perfectionism and at the same time acts as an appeal to the otherness of human literary production that authors should achieve in the context of machine-produced texts.

No less subversive is the effect of the results of projects that, on the contrary, deliberately and systematically work with the imperfections created during the generation of the text (here, in particular, *Umelá neinteligencia* and *Výsledky vzniku*). Samuel Szabó exploited this subversive potential to the maximum in his project, showing how the infiltration of imperfectly generated text into ordinary literary and non-literary textual practice can be artistically effective. This form of subversion is essentially parodic in nature and subverts established notions of literary norms in a neo-Dadaist manner. The fluctuation of gender in Liza Gennart's texts has a similar effect, with its gender-subversive significance further reinforced by its human authors, who label Liza as a feminist in the blurb of the book.

CONCLUSION

The presence of machine poems turns the attention anew to other issues of art, in particular to the ability to understand.
Ján Gavura (2021, 17)

When David (Jhave) Johnston finished his one-year project of generating RNN poems every day and publishing them monthly as books, from May 2017 to May 2018, or, as he called it the “human + A.I. creative symbiosis” named *ReRites*, he asked his eight fellow artists/researchers in the field of digital literature to write short responses to the project. This process of “symbolic agriculture” (Booten 2019, 107), “carving, cooking, massaging, arranging outputs” (Strickland 2019, 99), “tending that which grows from a pseudorandom seed on a rigid trellis” (Montfort 2019, 139), “combing through, growing the form” (Byrne 2019, 126), a project that “magisterially co-cultivates processed poems” (Funkhouser 2019, 131), using a computer that “digests patterns in language” (Johnston 2019, 173) seemed to have provoked a fruitful mixture of contextualizations that reached beyond and above

the “soil” of the presented piece of work: they cultivated it. As with every literary work, the communicative situation resonates in the readers and their ability to grasp and understand the text.

Regarding our aforementioned typology of “reading of artificiality” and “literary metareading”, we would like to conclude by proposing the combined term of “literary metareading of artificiality” to describe a situation in which the reader heeds the artificial nature of the text and its contexts (both historical and theoretical) but is still able to understand and appreciate multiple textual layers, authorial intentionality, mimicry, and metahability. Jhave writes that the combination of human creativity and neural networks “empowers and nourishes” (2019, 171). We believe that this can “grow” beyond the creational aspect to also encompass the level of reception.

NOTES

- ¹ For more on the concepts and examples of poetry as machines (in a metaphorical as well as in a formal sense) in Modernism and Postmodernism, see McHale 2000.
- ² The medieval Catalan author Ramon Llull also used combinatorial circles with words (e.g., *Ars Brevis, Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem*), but these fall into the scope of oracles, philosophy or numerology rather than literature.
- ³ Unless stated otherwise, all translations from German, Slovak and Czech are by Zuzana Husárová.
- ⁴ For more on the philosophical conceptualization of transmediality, see Tomašovičová 2016, 29–39.
- ⁵ For more on Czech generated poetry, see Piorecký 2017, 66–78.
- ⁶ For more on Slovak generated poetry, see Husárová 2016, 57–77.
- ⁷ We use anthropomorphising expressions (e.g., learning) since they are widely established terms in the contemporary technological discourse. For example, machine learning is a term in the technological discourse of machine learning and natural language processing.
- ⁸ Regarding the examples of RNN-based literary production on the Czech and Slovak cultural scene, see Piorecký and Husárová 2019.
- ⁹ Regarding the concept of translation as “an opportunity to explore the inherent and adherent homeorhetic character of texts”, see Hostová 2016; for the object-oriented translation of historical digital literature, see Pisarski 2020.
- ¹⁰ For example, see the answer to this question posed to the dramaturg of *AI: When a Robot Writes a Play*, David Košťák: “It doesn’t look like it yet, but in the future maybe it could work as one of the tools at the author’s disposal” (Anonymous 2021).
- ¹¹ Caillois uses the term mimicry also in reference to the reader’s identification with a novel character (1961, 22).
- ¹² The terms “lyrical subject” and “subject of the work” are used here in the way proposed by Miroslav Červenka (2003).

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Reception of literature generated by artificial neural networks

Literature by neural networks. Neural networks. GPT-2 model. Generative literature. Artificial poetry. Literary metareading of artificiality.

This article introduces the phenomenon of literature generated by artificial neural networks, with specific examples of texts created in the Czech and Slovak cultural environment. It follows the historical background connected with generative and combinatory poetics and later describes the principles of data processing used by neural networks work; it also presents the parameters of their machine learning. The focus lies on the reception of these artificial texts in the media and in literary studies, leading to the proposition of two reading types specialized for these works: "reading of artificiality" and "literary metareading", while rehabilitating Mathauser's term of "metahability". The study concludes by suggesting "literary metareading of artificiality" as a term that would combine the aforementioned approaches into a new reception of neural network literature.

Mgr. Zuzana Husárová, Ph.D.
Department of English Language and Literature
Faculty of Education
Comenius University
Šoltésovej 4
811 08 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
zuz.husarova@gmail.com
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0022-3322>

PhDr. Karel Piorecký, Ph.D.
Institute of Czech Literature
Czech Academy of Sciences
Na Florenci 3
110 00 Prague
Czech Republic
piorecky@ucl.cas.cz
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5727-289X>

Queer perspectives in translation studies: Notes on two recent publications

IVANA HOSTOVÁ

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Dethroning truths taken for granted,
Burning the proponents of traditional taste,
We tossed formalities to the galleys.

Our friendship was suspicious,
We were taken for homosexuals, but
They wouldn't understand that a friend
was the only thing worth living for.¹

Štefan Žáry (1967, 20)

The lines in the epigraph come from the collection of poems *Múza oblieha Tróju* (The muse besieges Troy, 1967) by the Slovak author and translator from French, Italian and Spanish Štefan Žáry (1918–2007). It was published during the period of political thaw, a year before the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the forces of the Warsaw Pact. The 1960s saw various and variously conflicting endeavors – a revival of avant-garde and experimental poetics among others – both in Slovak literature and in translations into Slovak. Some of the poetry published during this period is still highly regarded for both its aesthetic and ethical qualities, while some of it serves more as a period document. The writing of Štefan Žáry, who in this book returned to the poetics he and a group of a few other poets modelled on surrealism in the 1930s and 1940s (*nadrealizmus*, lit. “over-realism”), belongs to the latter group.² Perhaps more interestingly, in these lyric memoirs of Bratislava during World War II, Žáry describes the intimate bond between the *nadrealisti* being referred to (presumably derogatorily) as “homosexual” by their “others” (presumably the bourgeoisie). In the complex temporal and spatial layering of the collection, the aging poet’s memories of the 1940s are projected over the socialist 1960s, and the emotional sketch of Bratislava, its nightlife, and its bohemia is layered over the much more sober city almost 30 years later. This makes an interpretation of the male bonding, one of the

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central motifs of the book, difficult to temporalize and localize. Was the perceived homosexual nature of the relations between the bohemian poets, critics and painters felt in the 1940s, or was it an interpretive frame that would (also) be actualized during the state socialism? Did this attitude have anything to do with the fact that *nadrealizmus* was inspired by French literature and homosexuality has often been characterized as foreign? (Baer 2020, 3) How should we read the references to the Greek culture in the collection; did translations from Greek for the Slovaks offer “discursive opportunities to reevaluate homosexuality” (67) like they did for other locales? How does our reading of *The muse besieges Troy* change if we know that just two years before the publication of the collection, Štefan Žárý translated a selection of poetry by Pier Paolo Pasolini? Or how is one to read the numerous homoerotic elements such as the mention of a boy who “moistened” the speaker-poet’s “first book with spermatic tears” (Žárý 1967, 44)?³ Answering such questions would require in-depth research that also takes into account the complicated ideological background and addresses the complex positions that the layering of three wars – the *nadrealisti*’s attack on the city, the Trojan War and World War II – construes in the collection.⁴ However, the fact that the poem was published in 1967 made it a part of the public communication space in socialist Czechoslovakia. This calls into question generalizing statements like Eva Spišiaková’s claim, in applying queer theory to the analysis of Czech and Slovak translations of Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*, that “stories and depictions of male love and devotion [in socialist Czechoslovakia] were not seen as in any way connected to sexual desire” (2021, 20).

The application of queer theory to translation studies has recently brought a number of highly stimulating works, overviews of which can be found in other publications, including Baer (2020) and Spišiaková (2021). In what follows, I will provide a very brief summary of Brian James Baer’s *Queer Theory and Translation Studies* (2020) – indeed an “essential reading of queer translation studies” (Zhengtang Ma 2022) – and then move on to a more detailed analysis of Eva Spišiaková’s *Queering Translation History* (2021) that deals with the cultural space in which I have been active and which I have also been studying for some time.

OUTLINING A LANDSCAPE OF A QUEER TRANSLATION STUDIES

Drawing on his own observations and on a rich list of publications in gender theory, translation studies, philosophy, (global) sexuality studies, comparative literature and other fields, Baer traces the relationships between queer textuality and queer sexuality and the “transnational circulation of queer texts” (2020, i). He addresses such issues as the construal of modern nation-states as monolingual and heterosexual (4), a narrative which relegated both translation and non-heteronormative identifications to an axiologically secondary position “foreign to the body politic” (53). Baer’s book pays close attention to the politics of framing, arguing for a constant and repeated resistance to any totalizing narratives and an ethical imperative to allow for complexity, shortcomings and failures pertaining to all spheres connected with the topic. Baer calls for the deidealization of queer subjects, translations or the pursuit of academic topics by metropolitan scholars studying sexuality outside the West (166). With re-

gards to the proposal of a queer translation studies, he asserts that not all scholarship addressing same-sex desire is queer in the sense of being “deeply informed by the insights of queer theory” (14). Queer scholarly gazes should not only deal with queer sexuality, but should also challenge existing interpretative structures and provincialize and historicize any claims at universality (18). Baer argues that queer perspectives can be brought into Western academic research if these scholars problematize their own translations which would help them “resist the imperialist dichotomy that associates the subaltern with translation and the metropolitan scholar with original writing” – a move that would result in a recommitting to the “somatics of language and to the linguistic embodiment of ideas and desire” (65).

The intimate way in which research, translation, sexuality and theory mutually inform one another in the volume shows the exciting potential offered by adopting a queer translation studies prism: one might even catch oneself applying it instantaneously while reading the volume. When Baer discusses the failure that haunts the translator’s task (74), he evokes, among others, Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1975, 106) work in which the Russian scholar asserts that each word *pakhnet* (smells) of its previous contexts. The quoted English translation by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (“taste”), however, activates the gustatory sensory experience instead of the olfactory one evoked in the Russian and, unlike the Russian text, also explicitly marks the metaphor as such by wrapping it in quotation marks. Somatic embodiment as a resistance to the subordination of our experience of the world to the logos is another nucleus in which sexuality and text meet, in translation, poetry, research, etc.

Queer attitude encourages both translators and researchers to embrace creativity and make it into an empowering site of resistance. In this respect, Baer invokes Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s “middle ranges of agency” (2003, 13), a position that enables one to escape the seeming polarity of compulsion and voluntariness that are both ultimately only manifestations of consumer attitude. Middle ranges of agency, on the other hand, “offer space for creativity and change” (13). Baer advocates for a queer translation practice that “would counter any association of translation with the easy transposability of global capital by firmly grounding it in the materiality and historicity of language, underscoring the contingent and affective dimensions of knowledge production” (2020, 76).

Further issues addressed in the volume include discussions of such topics as metonymy and metaphor, gay anthologies, homosexuality and homosociality, Bildung, subjecthood, class differences, epistemology of the closet, (dis)interest-ness of scholarship, glossodiversity and semiodiversity, mimesis, ethnographic studies or pleasure. At the very end of the chapter preceding the conclusion, Baer invokes Paul B. Preciado’s *Counter-Sexual Manifesto* (2018) and joins the author in the call for “a *planetary somatic communism*, a communism of (all) living bodies with and together with the earth” (qtd. in Baer 2020, 184; italics in the original). All in all, the volume makes an excellent case for a queer translation studies and models it as a field and prism that is capable of critically addressing all spheres of being in the world and activating a radical and subversive potential of translation and research.

QUEER THEORY LOOKING INTO TRANSLATIONS INTO SLOVAK

Queer theory has been employed by a number of scholars in studies of Central and Eastern European cultures and in research by academics in the countries of the region. However, theoretically well-informed and nuanced scholarship with an in-depth focus on Slovak literature (translated or not) in particular is still extremely rare.⁵ The character of the Slovak academic space rarely allows for a high degree of specialization and encourages multi-tasking instead; the situation is to a great degree similar in other areas of professional life, such as specialization in translation. The fact that excellence in research is generally not supported by the existing academic infrastructure has also been observed by Karen Henderson (2019), a British political scientist based at a Slovak university since 2013, who ascribes this among other factors to the low salaries offered by academic institutions. In response to this, researchers often join conceptual domains into larger clusters (with regards to the topic discussed here, this would include feminisms, gender studies, queer studies, sexuality studies etc.) and combine multiple roles – activist, researcher, curator, educator, writer, translator etc. Research that might be conducted by scholars positioned outside of the culture is, on the other hand, hindered by the fragmentary nature of cultural artefacts, complexity and multilingual nature of information flows (Slovak culture is mainly a receiving, import-based one, and as such also incorporates impulses from non-translated texts historically and currently circulating in Hungarian, German, Czech, Russian, English and other languages) and the low accessibility of Slovak resources outside of Slovakia. The last of the abovementioned factors is given by the fact that Slovak is a language with limited diffusion and by the low degree of digitalization as an area that has become more usually than not an opportunity for profiteering from the digital divide rather than a disadvantage to be mitigated. The first concentrated effort to overcome these obstacles and put queer theory into a dialogue with the Slovak – and Czech – translational landscape is Eva Spišiaková's recently-published volume *Queering Translation History. Shakespeare's Sonnets in Czech and Slovak Transformations* (2021). The author grew up in Slovakia, but received her degree at the University of Edinburgh which positions her between contexts. *Queering Translation History* sets out, as the book's paratext asserts, to challenge “normative binaries in contemporary translation studies” by applying “frameworks from queer historiography to the discipline in order to explore shifting perceptions of same-sex love and desire in translations and retranslations of William Shakespeare's *Sonnets*” (i).

The basic argument of the monograph is that (a) counter to expectations (since non-heterosexuality was a taboo topic in socialist Czechoslovakia), translations published before the fall of state socialism contain a higher proportion of male-addressed sonnets than those published in the subsequent decades; (b) this is due to the fact that in the pre-1989 public discourse, non-heterosexuality practically did not exist outside of the medical sphere; (c) after the fall of the Iron Curtain, homosexuality entered the public discourse in Czechoslovakia and the translators of the *Sonnets* took various stances towards the newly-emerged reading frame of male-to-male erotic love. This doubtless is a useful and well-formed interpretative

arc supported by the time-consuming quantitative research Spišiaková conducted, but it is hardly surprising. Many readers will surely be familiar with the expressions of comradeship between men in power during the communist era, best expressed in public kissing (including on the mouth). Similar non-acknowledgement of homoerotic undertones can be noticed in the Slovak translations of Walt Whitman's poetry by Ján Boor, published in 1956 and 1974. Moreover, as the fragment of the poem cited in the epigraph suggests, the matter might be more complex and might require a more nuanced research into period documents (newspapers, literature, imagery) and personal histories (diaries, correspondence, published memoirs, oral histories) that would help identify and explain various conflicting spaces. In her outline of the historical treatment of the non-heterosexual population in Czechoslovakia, Spišiaková (17–18) does hint at these parallel lives (public and private), but in the following chapters of her work, she unfortunately does not consider these and in result fails in building adequately complex analyses. Moreover, it is not only the organization of socialist societies along homosocial lines that Spišiaková mentions that matters in this regard – the extremely high cultural capital of both Shakespeare and Whitman needs to be considered as well. The canonical status of the works (used by the culture to accumulate cultural capital) played a crucial role in the period framing of the texts and bore significant consequences for both publicly allowed scopes of interpretation and for what the actual text might contain.⁶ In her discussions, Spišiaková does touch on some of these issues, but not with sufficient clarity. Considering the number of methodological problems, it is difficult to properly assess the author's degree of success at applying queer theory in her research. However, since the book's basic argument is more or less the confirmation of an existing narrative, the research seems to fail in being “queer” in the sense of radical subversion of dominant knowledge structures.

What the volume does provide regarding queer histories, however, is an overview of published oral histories of people identifying as queer and a chronology of legal issues pertaining to the rights of non-heterosexual minorities in Czechoslovakia since 1918, and the Czech and Slovak republics since 1993 (13–27). After World War II, Czechoslovakia had a dual legislation inherited from Austrian and Hungarian law with both systems deeming same-sex sexual acts illegal. Interwar liberatory efforts aiming at the decriminalization of homosexuality were cut short by the rise of fascism and were only briefly renewed after World War II. Homosexuality was decriminalized in Czechoslovakia in 1961, which was earlier than in many other countries, but which was not followed by a public acceptance of displays of affection with possible sexual undertone between same-sex couples or by allowing discussions of sexuality in general to become part of public discourse. After the fall of state socialism, a number of civic organizations and other bodies have been fighting for LGBTQ rights with different results in the two countries. While in the Czech Republic, legal recognition was granted to same-sex unions (although not marriages, and not allowing the couples to adopt children or undergo in-vitro fertilization) in 2006, the Slovak Republic has not adopted any similar measure, but instead amended the constitution to explicitly define marriage as a bond between one man and one woman. In both countries,

civic organizations continue their striving for LGBTQ rights and for a wider societal acceptance of sexual difference with these efforts being more successful in the more secular Czech Republic.

What follows is a discursive reading of *Queering Translation History* addressing such issues as the selection of the corpus, translation history, methodology, linguistics and prosody. In the discussion, I propose an alternative reading of the data gathered by the volume's author.

The corpus

From the methodological point of view, looking into a translation series as Eva Spišiaková's *Queering Translation History* does, can provide an exciting, multi-faceted ground for investigations into the history of a given linguistic and cultural space. To history, both with a qualifier ("translation", "queer" or other) and without it – since, as Jeffrey Nealon argues, the urgency of a (postdisciplinary) joining of powers across academic fields in order for the humanities to be able to "offer a hermeneutics of (the) situation, tools for producing a kind of cartography that can diagnose and respond" (2012, 194) to the present has become increasingly pressing.

It is a frequent fact pertaining to the character of cultures using a language with limited diffusion that their corpus of translated texts is discontinuous, fragmentary and temporally out of joint – as is the case of the Slovak context (Bednárová 2013, 42; Vajdová 2009, 134).⁷ A search for a translation series in a culture like this is not an easy task, and one such example would indeed be one of Shakespeare's works – fragmentary or full Slovak translations of his *Hamlet* span more than two hundred years. Looking at both Czech *and* Slovak translations – a step substantiated by the closeness of the languages and a long stretch of shared history – through a single methodological prism in one volume is one way of alleviating the disadvantage of a culture using a peripheral language (Sapiro 2010) which enables the researcher to speak about its translations in any wider context at all. And, since Eva Spišiaková has ties with the Slovak culture, it appears that this was one of the underlying reasons behind the selection of her corpus, because Czech culture rarely requires a replenishment by Slovak translations; Slovak translations are hardly ever read by Czech readers at all. However, any such endeavor – if it is to be regarded as rigorous – needs to take into account the cultural, linguistic and economic specifics of all cultural spaces under discussion. These might not be big, but disregarding them amounts to not addressing the research topic with sufficient complexity. Knowledge sufficient for ambitious research like Spišiaková's also encompasses other fields, ranging from Shakespearean studies and queer theory through reception studies, Slavic studies, linguistics and literary theory to translation and interpreting studies – to mention just the most pertinent ones.

The history

A reader familiar with the areas of research outlined above will become suspicious about *Queering Translation History* very early in the book, perhaps on its third page where the author claims that the iambic foot is "ill-suited for being replicated

in a Slavic language” (3). It is true that Czech and Slovak natural speech patterns are not suited for a perfect iambic meter, but this can hardly be said about Russian or other Slavic languages, which do not have a fixed stress on the first syllable.⁸ This might seem like a marginal problem, springing perhaps from a reformulation done at the last moment. However, a few pages later, the author states that she had significant problems gathering sufficient background on some of the translators – including two of the three Slovak ones – in her corpus. Since, following Pym (1998) and others, current translation historiography research puts great emphasis on the translator as the agent active in the cultural field, the inability to locate resources on translators Spišiaková mentions creates a serious problem for research like this. However, when scrutinizing her resources, one finds out that these are surprisingly limited: with regards to the Czech translators, she mainly mentions an online database and complains that no such database is accessible for the Slovak translators (8). It is unfortunately true that there is no comprehensive online database of Slovak literary translators, but it is equally true that the Institute of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, in cooperation with the publishing house of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, has recently published the two-volume *Slovník slovenských prekladateľov umeleckej literatúry: 20. storočie* (Dictionary of Slovak literary translators of the 20th century; Kovačičová and Kusá 2015, 2017) which provides the profiles of two of the three Slovak translators of the *Sonnets*: Stanislav Blaho (Bubnášová 2015) and Ľubomír Feldek (Zambor 2015). Surely, such omissions do happen, but the ignorance of the research especially aimed at the Slovak context seems to be almost systematic in Spišiaková’s book. It ranges from the lack of knowledge of basic dictionaries of the Slovak language (this also seems to apply to the Czech ones) through the ignorance of such areas necessary for the topic under discussion as prosody (Sabol and Zimmerman 1994; Štraus 2003), resources pertaining to the oral history of translation (Passia and Magová 2015), research on the Slovak translations of the *Sonnets* (Andričík 2013), feminist-inspired research on the translations of Shakespeare’s work (Bžochová-Wild 1998), specifics of the history of gender discourse in Slovakia (Cviková 2014), censorship in Slovak literature (Marušiak 2001; Matejovič 2015) and the 20th-century history of translation in the Slovak cultural space (Bednárová 2013, 2015a, 2015b).⁹

For the sphere of translation during the socialist period in Czechoslovakia, the author mainly relies on oral histories – the interviews with Czech translators collected in Rubáš (2012). Fragmentariness of resources is typical for the historiography of translation in Czech and Slovak cultural spaces during state socialism and reliance on memories and personal accounts understandably has its shortcomings. These can be somewhat amended by comparing as many sources as possible, but this is not the case in *Queering Translation History*. Consequently, a reader with a more in-depth understanding of the context cannot help but see the imprecisions. For example, Spišiaková informs the reader that Czech translators remember the “relatively high pay for literary translations, especially compared to present-day standards” (2021, 41), but does not make further effort to check if the Slovak translators mention similar working conditions. In Djovčoš, Hostová, Perez and Šveda

(2020), Slovak translators specializing in poetry provide mixed information regarding financial remuneration, with one of the interviewees explaining that even though the calculation of the fee before 1989 was based on the number of lines and the number of printed copies and thus virtually fixed, “the final sum varied depending on the position the translator occupied with respect to the state power” (52). At another point, while discussing the print runs in the 1950s and 1970s, the author asserts that the regime opposed magical realism (Spišiaková 2021, 41). While that was officially true in the Slovak cultural space, during the 1960s and the following period of normalization (1970–1989), magical realism (and writing falling under a wider local understanding of the term) was highly popular among Slovak publishers (Barborík 2016; Palkovičová 2017, 59–78).

The superficial knowledge of historical circumstances becomes evident in imprecise formulations, for example: “as the [Czech and Slovak] languages are so closely related and mutually understandable by the majority of the population, it was often decided that it is enough to translate a work into only one of them, and this was in most cases the Czech language” (Spišiaková 2021, 12). Although this to some degree applied for the period of state socialism, the question of the greater volume and popularity of Czech translations over the Slovak ones is a very complex one and the statement certainly does not apply to the post-1993 economic and political situation (see Bednářová 2013, 59–69). If such decisions have been made in the past three decades (and they have), they were based on individual choices made by press owners or translators rather than by any official authority. The complexity of the matter becomes even more apparent when it comes to works no longer under copyright, such as Shakespeare’s *Sonnets*. As Eva Spišiaková’s list of translations shows, during the period of state socialism in Czechoslovakia, when the state determined what got translated and published and what did not, two of the six full-length translations of the *Sonnets* were Slovak, while only one such translation can be found in the post-1993 corpus which includes seven versions.

Methods

One of the methods Eva Spišiaková used for gathering data was conducting interviews, but she states that she was unable to reach all the living translators who had translated Shakespeare’s *Sonnets* in the past century, even the still prolific Lubomír Feldek. Yet he replied to my enquiry about his translations of Shakespeare almost immediately, saying that he has recently returned to Shakespeare and is currently considering whether the characters of Antonio and Bassanio from *The Merchant of Venice* (1600) should be addressing each other formally or informally (Feldek 2022, email).

The first analytical chapter of Eva Spišiaková’s volume describes the quantitative method applied to the corpus and subsequently moves to a textual analysis of the translations. The chapter “The Master Mistress of My Passion” seeks the answer to the question of how individual translators over the past century handled the linguistic necessity – Czech and Slovak both being inflected languages – of increasing the number of sonnets explicitly expressing the genders of the ad-

dressees. Spišiaková, in hopes of achieving quantifiable and undisputable results, embarked on the time-consuming process of answering the question “Would this poem be equally logically coherent if the reader imagined either a male or a female recipient?” (2021, 54) for all the poems in her corpus and marked them as “male”, “female”, “neutral” and “various” depending on the identifiable gender of the addressee. When it comes to translations, she mostly relied on grammatical gender (reflected in the endings of nouns, adjectives and past tense verbs) in this process. Formally explicit morphological elements provide a useful tool for a sorting of this kind. My random check did not reveal many erroneous categorizations, even though the results do not seem to be exhaustively accurate: Spišiaková marks “Sonnet 143” in Lubomír Feldek’s translation as neutral, but it is in fact addressed to a woman as becomes clear in the penultimate line that – unlike the previous ones – addresses the “you” directly in “Bodaj si to, čo stíhaš, ulovila” (Shakespeare 2014), literally “May you catch [feminine] whatever you are chasing”.

Sorting the English originals, on the other hand, is not that easy a matter and the procedure utilized has inevitably severed individual poems from their contexts to a great extent. Shortcomings of quantitative methods are usually put into perspective by qualitative research employing close reading that follows the discussion of the data. While it is understandable that in order to be able to reach quantifiable results, a clear – and necessarily reductionist – method of one or other kind was necessary, the reasoning and justification behind the one used in the volume does not seem to be convincing enough. The author does provide a discussion of individual sonnets, combining close reading with information provided by the translators in interviews and with other sources, but she does not reevaluate her gendering of the English poems in doing so. This might perhaps not be that problematic in itself – some readings of the *Sonnets* argue that the poems do not necessarily need to form a coherent collection (cf. Traub 2016, 240) –, was it not for the fact that Spišiaková bases the very argumentation behind the selection of the corpus (limiting the texts to encompass complete translations only) on insisting that the *Sonnets* be viewed as a collection (35). Another contradiction in the argumentation pertains to objectivity versus subjectivity of the method. On the one hand, the author rejects various complex interpretations of the addressees’ genders as relying “on subjective interpretation” (54) and therefore not suitable for her use, but in a few lines, she acknowledges the “necessary subjectivity” of her own approach.

The language

Although translation and interpreting studies has undoubtedly been less concerned with linguistics in the past few decades, attention to language, its forms, variants, materiality etc. doubtless remains a basic predisposition for most research. As it appears, the depth of familiarity with the Czech and Slovak language and linguistics demonstrated in *Queering Translation History* does not seem to be adequate with regards to the aims it wishes to achieve. Some of the minor problems might have occurred as a result of (most probably) not seeking cooperation with a proofreader with the knowledge of Czech and/or Slovak, others run deeper and

have a bearing on the conclusions the author reaches and point to a general lack of adequate guidance in this matter during the various stages of the preparation of the volume. At one point, the text erroneously ascribes grammatical case to one of the nouns in the corpus, asserting that “lásce” is the vocative case (76) while this form in fact is the locative singular of the Czech “láska” [love]. This might be a typographical error – there are more such in the non-English parts of the text (e.g. “ju” instead of “ji” [her] on page 86), but similarly erroneous is saying that the Czech “pychu [sic.]” is in the genitive case (84) – “pýchu” is the accusative form of “pýcha” [pride]. Further minor linguistic imprecisions concern such matters as the semantics of the morphological category of gender, where the author states that the use of the neuter in Czech and Slovak “is considered inappropriate” for adult human beings (51), while it is rather stylistically marked (infantilizing, derogatory, augmentative etc.). Such issues concerning the formulation or an isolated linguistic item should have been pointed out by a consultant or editor and amended before the publication. However, the matter of careless handling of linguistic information becomes more serious when it comes to the interpretation of the corpus on which the author bases her conclusions.

In the second of the two chapters aimed at discussing the particulars of the corpus, “I Love Thee in Such Sort”, Spišiaková looks into translators’ lexical choices concerning the addressees of individual sonnets with the aim to specify the character of love expressed in the poems (erotic, filial, fraternal etc.). This is done to help determine the “two main translation strategies; those that support the reading of the collection as romantic poetry, particularly in those sonnets that are by textual evidence or implication considered as male-addressed, and those that reinforce a non-romantic reading based on friendship and familial bonds, or that suggest that the collection should be read as an abstract metaphor” (2021, 75–76). Frequently used lexemes, as Spišiaková noticed, include “milý”/“milá” – the male and female form of the substantivized adjective most readily translated into English as “dear” in the sense of “a loved one”.¹⁰ While it is true that, as the author states, the primary meaning the dictionaries of the Slovak language give can be summed up as “a person with whom one is in a romantic, semi-formal relationship preceding an official engagement” (77), the relationship between the speaker who addresses the conversation partner as “milý”/“milá” need not in fact be erotic at all. Dictionaries of the Slovak and Czech languages provide a second meaning in which these words are used – a close person or persons in a direct address and someone emotionally close to us or belonging to our familial or close friend circle.¹¹ This, however, is not just a matter of dictionary definitions – one can notice this ambivalence in the translations themselves, such as in Lubomír Feldek’s translation of “Sonnet 82”. Where the English original addresses the recipient as “love” (Shakespeare 1998, 275), the translator chooses to use the masculine substantivized adjective “milý” (Shakespeare 2014). In the given context, however, the address resonates more with a formal, semiformal, or slightly literary form of address, which is still frequently used in Slovak correspondence, than with addressing an erotic partner – especially since both source and target texts later specify the speaker as a friend. In other words,

the address “milý” in Feldek’s translation of “Sonnet 82” bears with it a memory of an elided noun (since poetry has a tendency towards a condensed expression) – “priateľ” (friend), for example.

However, I do not think that Feldek tried to hide or downplay any possibility of homoerotic reading of the *Sonnets*. In his preface (2014), he mentions the debates concerning the topic and does not comment on these much – he seems to be taking the homoerotic element as just one of the number of scandals (alongside the boot-legging of the first edition, a potential promiscuous love affair, and controversies regarding the status of “A Lover’s Complaint” in the collection) that might intrigue the reader and keep them interested in reading the *Sonnets*.

The reductive understanding of the lexemes “milý” and “milá” in Spišiaková’s discussions is only supported by the puzzlement of the author regarding some of the translations. In Anna Sedlačková’s version, Spišiaková sees a “curious dissonance between the committed, romantic relationship supported by the term *milý* on the one hand, and her frequent emphasis on the non-romantic part of this relationship through the use of *priateľ*” (2021, 82; italics in the original); however, a speaker immersed in the daily use of the Slovak language perceives no such controversy in the text. This critique in no way undermines the possibility of reading the translations as expressions of erotic love. The *Sonnets* in Slovak translation can indeed be, and most possibly also were read in that way. The reservation outlined here concerns the unsubstantiated reliance on false facts only.

The verse

When talking about poetry in translation – even in more sociologically-leaning research as Spišiaková’s is – the fact that the form can greatly impact the semantics and subsequently any further analysis of translators’ decisions needs to be taken into account.¹² And, undeniably, the author of *Queering Translation History* does try to do so. However, in so doing, she also reveals a lack of any deeper understanding of the matter. At one point, she explains that creating an iambic meter in Czech and Slovak goes against the natural cadence of the speech and forces “translators who aim to retain this foot to use creative choices such as starting the verse with a preposition or a pronoun” (53). Aiming at an iamb in Slovak (and Czech) poetry surely does involve artifice – a perfect iamb, in which the foot break would coincide with the division of the flow of speech or a line into words, would involve using solely one-syllable lexemes. However, a lot of Slovak poetry that does aim at a meter of any kind perhaps paradoxically attempts at creating an iambic “rhythmic impulse” – an expectation that a group of rhythmic items organized in a certain way will be followed by a similar pattern (Žilka 1984, 124). In the case of the iamb, this most commonly amounts to putting the stress on the fourth (and usually also on the sixth) syllable in the line (Štraus 2003, 140). This does not, nevertheless, equal to using a preposition in the first syllable: a monosyllabic preposition preceding a one-syllable noun results in a trochee. When it is used before a two-syllable noun, it is often stressed and creates a dactyl which in turn allows for the fourth syllable in the line to be stressed (cf. Sabol 1972, 131–132; Sabol and Zimmerman 1994). A dactylic foot can be equal-

ly well achieved by other devices – a three-syllable lexeme for example. Using an unequivocally unstressed proclitic (such as a pronoun or conjunction) at the beginning of the line, on the other hand, creates a different effect since it puts the stress already on the second syllable in the line. These details concerning prosody and meter might sound unnecessarily nuanced, but they do have a significant bearing on the level of difficulty with which an iambic-sounding poem can be composed in Slovak. In other words, what most often happens is that Slovak translators use a dactylic beginning of the line (a perfectly natural foot in Slovak) and then continue with trochees (also natural in Slovak speech), occasionally including a line with the second syllable stressed to make the rhythm more distinct. This was one of the ways Lubomír Feldek dealt with the meter in his translations of the *Sonnets* (cf. Andričík 2013, 31).

Metrical and rhythmical characteristics also often lie behind Czech and Slovak translators' decisions to revise their older renditions – systematic theory and criticism of translation in these countries has, after all, largely been founded on theorists addressing the translation of poetry, such as the emblematic *The Art of Translation* by the Czech theorist Jiří Levý (1963, Eng. trans. 2011). Formal poetic attributes play an important role in how the renditions are received (the degree of importance, of course, depends on the current situation in the literary field) and since translators do aspire to be respected in their field, they take these quite seriously. Revisions they make to their translations therefore often concern the meter and rhyme. Eva Spišiaková's discussion almost exclusively concentrates on lexical semantics and disregards other goals translators might have been striving for. An example of this is the author's discussion of the two versions of Jarmila Urbánková's translation of "Sonnet 105" (86–87). Spišiaková mainly looks at the lexis, which, in some of the quoted fragments indeed does remove a clear hint at an undeniably erotic male-to-male relationship ("můj milý" when not used in address, but in third person can hardly be interpreted different than "my lover [masculine]"). In other places, though, one might rather think that the translator was attempting at strengthening the rhythmic impulse by inserting in the line a word that would without hesitation put the stress on the 8th syllable and support the iambic flow of the poem: Urbánková's first translation of the second line in "Sonnet 105" filled syllables eight and nine with "pro mne" [for me] – a preposition followed by a pronoun – which would put the stress on syllable eight, but with much lesser certainty than the two-syllable noun "přítel" [friend] she used in the newer version.

DISCUSSION

In the light of shortcomings that can be found in the methodology employed in *Queering Translation History* and in the discussions of individual translators' choices, the main argumentative line of the volume – that the variations in the portrayal of the *Sonnets*' addressees observed in the 15 translations in the corpus spring from the emergence of the public discourse concerning queer desire – somewhat crumbles and urges the reader to ponder alternative interpretations of the data, especially when it comes to translations into Slovak. One of these would be the suggestion to look for reasons specific to the sociology of translation. Two observations spring to mind

in this respect: (1) under stable conditions, a translator's transgression of expectancy norms (Chesterman 1993) may threaten his or her position in the field, and (2) the perceived status of the source text in the target culture to a great degree determines strategies of translation.

Translating Shakespeare during state socialism in Czechoslovakia was a representative act, a bringing over to the culture a highly-regarded classic. The translation of this kind of text required treating the original with a certain reverence. At the same time, the lack of freedom in the public sphere in 1948–1989 Czechoslovakia discouraged non-normative behavior and experimentation (with the exception of the 1960s and late 1980s) – and this to a great extent applied to the sphere of translation as well. With respect to the translations of Shakespeare's *Sonnets* and the genders of the lyric personas outlined in them, the norms, it seems, were laid out by the first few Czech renditions. The transgressive translational choices identified by Spišiaková's quantitative research in post-1989 translations therefore might have just as much to do with the dynamics of the translational field – which in the past thirty years not only allows for novelty and transgression, but under neoliberal capitalist conditions encourages it – as with the discussions pertaining to non-heterosexual erotic relationships. Lubomír Feldek's Slovak post-1989 translation – with regards to the gender of the addressees – to a great degree follows the traditional approaches towards translating Shakespeare. Translated poetry in Slovakia in the past decades has been an extremely marginal and unprofitable genre attracting very few young translator-poets and very slim audiences. While no less than six Czech translators published their attempts at the *Sonnets* after the Velvet Revolution, there was just one such in Slovakia. After the aesthetically deficient and (already at the time of their publication) dated Slovak translations by Stanislav Blaho and Anna Sedlačková, Lubomír Feldek (born in 1936 and working half of his professional life under the conditions of state socialism) most probably aimed at providing the Slovak culture with a translation that would last a few decades and a translation that would satisfy both the specialized and general readership.

CONCLUSIONS

Every research methodology has its shortcomings and an overly-ambitious topic can sometimes overwhelm the author. This has happened to many of us during the writing of our doctoral dissertations – and Eva Spišiaková's *Queering Translation History* is no exception. However, the painful discovery of the vastness of the unknown that is revealed in research should not result in resignation that leads to getting basic facts wrong, neglecting a thorough research of the literature, making inadequate generalizations, and choosing to consider only part of the phenomena in order to make the object fit the hypothesis. If that happens, making the research public does more harm than good. All this said, it is obvious that the author has tried hard to unite various contexts and did conduct extensive research into many of the areas pertaining to her topic. Also, on comparing her doctoral thesis (2018) with the published volume, it is obvious that Spišiaková revised the text extensively before she allowed it to enter wider discussions. However, it is not only – or perhaps not even primarily – the author that is to blame. The problem seems to have started

with the tutors and reviewers of the thesis who did not consider consulting areas of research with which they were not sufficiently familiar, and continued with inadequate support and guidance from the series editors and other actors affiliated with the publishing house – a publisher which enjoys international acclaim, and as such lends considerable symbolic capital to its authors and products.

In her concluding remarks, Eva Spišiaková asserts that her “results also further emphasise the need to recognise the singular position of Central European countries of the former Eastern Bloc and challenge a simplified binary categorisation of power relations along the lines of the colonial and the colonised” (2021, 103) and expresses the hope that her work will “contribute to a heightened visibility of this frequently neglected area of translation studies and fill some of the blank spaces in Czechoslovakia’s literary history” (103). Unfortunately, due to its neglect of relevant sources, lack of erudition regarding the linguistic, literary, historical and sociological contexts, and only superficial knowledge of phenomena pertaining to theories provided by translation and interpreting studies during the past half century, *Queering Translation History* perpetuates the divide rather than fills the gaps. All in all, while with the growing quantity of academic publications, a considerable amount of current research is dull, uninspired, and/or capitalizing on superficial passing trends, there also seems to be a lack of care when it comes to respecting basic research procedures.

A queer perspective, as can be very well seen in works like Brian James Baer’s (2020), is a deeply ethical perspective that argues for a high degree of self-reflexivity, honesty and a dismissal of what Flaubert would call *idées reçues* – received ideas. An application of queer theory to the study of information flows and power structures, pertaining to such spaces as the Slovak one, requires accessing the culture and its knowledge with sufficient complexity and nuance, but also shedding the protective, paternalistic, and patronizing lens through which the artefacts, events and texts are viewed. This in turn presupposes a reciprocal rejection of the perpetuated role of the (international) victim on the part of the agents positioned within the culture, which should instead strive for a more concentrated, open and critical mobilization of internal resources based on collaborations grounded in mutual respect and a wish to learn – not on existing informal ties. Only in this way a culture like the Slovak one can create conditions for producing more high-quality research – which is often done *in spite of* the existing infrastructure, not thanks to it – that would also be beneficial for international researchers. Inspiring and rigorous work in translation studies and other fields in Slovakia does exist. Nevertheless, as volumes like *Queering Translation History* show, it is largely ignored even by actors that do have a certain degree of background in the Slovak culture, but who are institutionally (and education-wise) based outside of it. What seems to be happening is that both the international Anglophone academic sphere and agents active mainly within individual locales rely on these inter- or transnational actors to help facilitate an ethical informational exchange. However, as numerous cases show (and the book I discussed here is just an example), if we are to achieve that, a significantly more active engagement of all actors – national, international and transnational – is necessary.

NOTES

- ¹ In the original: “Detronizovali sme uznávané pravdy, / upaľovali prívržencov zaužívaného vkusu, / oficiálnosť sme vyhostili na galeje. // Naše priateľstvo bolo podozrivé, / pokladali nás za homosexuálov, nevediac, / že priateľ je jediná hodnota, pre ktorú / sa vtedy oplátilo žiť.” Unless stated otherwise, all translations from the Slovak are by the present author.
- ² With regards to the use of pronouns, I adopted those used by authors themselves and/or those that have been used in paratextual materials in books they authored.
- ³ In the original “zvlažil [...] prvú knihu spermatickými slzami”.
- ⁴ After the Communist Party assumed power over Czechoslovakia in 1948, *nadrealisti* were very quick to discursively translate their previous subversive attitude so that it would fit with the ideology of the new regime.
- ⁵ A few scholars based in Slovakia have employed queer theory in their research of literature (cf. Csehy 2016, Demčíšák 2015, 2017), but, to my knowledge, not in research of translations into Slovak.
- ⁶ As has been shown by a number of studies, translations published in totalitarian regimes often allow for greater freedom with regards to poetics, imagery and topics of works than original writing.
- ⁷ Although Slovak culture is an import-based one, the public also reads non-translated books in other languages and translations into other languages than Slovak (currently mainly in Czech and English) and most translations that come out are aimed at consumers looking for leisure reading (cf. Pliešovská and Popovcová Glowacký 2020). Translations of aesthetically more demanding books – especially when it comes to contemporary authors – depend on small or middle-sized presses which besides competing with the Czech translations, also have various agendas. However, the picture is not as bad as one might get from some of the English-language overviews of the situation. For example, Stephen Romer (2016, 551–552) in his chapter in *The Oxford Handbook of Contemporary British and Irish Poetry*, relying probably solely on information provided by a Scottish translator based in Slovakia, asserts that while “Sutherland-Smith (with his wife Viera) has translated some ninety Slovak poets into English (including seven book-length selections) and his own work has been published [...], aside from Matthew Sweeney, whom Sutherland-Smith invited out, and whose anecdotal, surreally tinged work appealed [...], there has been little by way of reciprocal ‘uptake.’” However, as shown in an analysis of bibliographies, there have been many more translations and – when considering only translations published in the respective target countries – the number of volumes per capita is comparable (Hostová 2018, 46). However, considering the vast difference between the percentage of translations entering the market in a country like United Kingdom and in Slovakia, that points to the peculiar position which poetry as a cultural product “[r]eleased from the constraint to turn a profit” (Venuti 2011, 127) occupies within individual book markets.
- ⁸ For further discussion of iamb in Slovak see the section “The verse” in this article.
- ⁹ I only list a few recent sources on the topic here – the pages of Slovak periodicals in the latter half of the 20th century have seen numerous intense, fruitful and theoretically well-grounded debates on translation, including the translation of Shakespeare. It is, however, to be appreciated that the author of *Queering Translation History* does work with a monograph on Slovak translations of Shakespeare written by Ján Vilikovský (2014), a frequent participant of these debates, translation studies scholar and a prolific practicing literary translator active in the field since the late 1950s.
- ¹⁰ *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/dear>. Accessed 20 Jan 2022.
- ¹¹ *Krátky slovník slovenského jazyka* (Short dictionary of the Slovak language; Kačala, Pisárčiková and Považaj 2003), *Slovník súčasného slovenského jazyka M – N* (Dictionary of contemporary Slovak language M–N; Jarošová 2015; see slovník.juls.savba.sk), *Slovník spisovného jazyka českého* (The dictionary of the literary Czech language; Havránek 1989).
- ¹² In order not to diverge from my argumentative line, I abstain from any deeper discussion of the matter of form and content in poetry and from providing an overview of the rich research done with regards to these questions in Slovak translation studies in the past six or seven decades.

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Queer perspectives in translation studies: Notes on two recent publications

Queer theory. Translation studies. Peripheral knowledges. William Shakespeare.
Translation into Slovak.

After outlining the opportunities offered by closely bringing together queer theory and translation studies for an engaged application of trans- or postdisciplinary research, as presented in Brian James Baer's *Queer Theory and Translation Studies* (2020), the article briefly discusses the structural reasons why queer theory has not been much applied to the study of Slovak translated or non-translated literature before the publication of Eva Spišiaková's *Queering Translation History. Shakespeare's Sonnets in Czech and Slovak Transformations* (2021). Subsequently, it provides a critical reading of Spišiaková's volume. The concluding remarks argue that a greater degree of cooperation between agents situated in various locales is necessary.

Mgr. Ivana Hostová, PhD.
Institute of Slovak Literature
Slovak Academy of Sciences
Dúbravská cesta 9
841 04 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
ivana.hostova@savba.sk
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0901-3759>

Hovoriť striebro: Konverzačná kultúra v nizozemskom „Zlatom veku“

ADAM BŽOCH

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Napriek Osemdesiatročnej vojne Republiky siedmich zjednotených provincií so Španielskom (1568 – 1648), ktorá sa spolu s Tridsaťročnou vojnou skončila v roku 1648 Vestfálskym mierom, sa 17. storočie považuje za obdobie rozkvetu nizozemskej kultúry. Holandská národná historiografia 19. storočia označovala toto obdobie ako „Zlatý vek“, jestvuje však mnoho dôvodov, prečo sa vyhýbať tomuto označeniu ako neadekvátnemu. Ako v roku 1941 napísal kultúrny historik Johan Huizinga, malo by sa obdobie rozkvetu jeho vlasti skôr označovať podľa „dreva a ocele, smoly a dechtu, farby a atramentu, odvahy a zbožnosti, ducha a fantázie“ (2011, 94), keďže nizozemská republika bola v 17. storočí opakom ovídiovskej mytologickej krajiny záhaľčivosti: bola to kolíska priemyslu, medzinárodného obchodu a koloniálnej expanzie, hospodárskej a kultúrnej činnosti; preslávila sa vďaka náboženskej tolerancii a rozmáhajúcemu sa filozofickému a vedeckému racionalizmu. Krajina bola heraldom liberálneho kapitalizmu, ako ho poznáme a zažívame v súčasnosti a ktorého duch, ak máme veriť Maxovi Weberovi, vznikol z etiky kalvínskeho protestantizmu. Obraz „Zlatého veku“ sa však používa často dodnes pre obdobie zhruba od roku 1581 do konca 17. storočia ako nálepka, ktorá sa nedá zmyť, a v niektorých novších kultúrnych a sociálnych dejinách Nizozemska a v dejinách nizozemského umenia alternuje so skromnejším a časovo rozsiahlejším označením „republika“.¹ Obraz zlata sa ale objavoval v nizozemskej rétorike tohto obdobia hojne a ako metafora bol viacznačný. Nevyjadroval len bohatstvo a lesk; v neskorohumanistickej tradícii bolo zlato takisto atribútom strednej cesty a v kalvínskych kázňach s odkazom najmä na dve obľúbené pasáže zo Starého zákona (Exodus 32 a Daniel 5) aj symbolom modloslužobníctva (por. Schama 2006, 133). Danú metalurgickú metaforu možno použiť aj ako leitmotív pri predstavení konverzačnej kultúry 17. storočia v tejto časti Európy.

POJEM KONVERZÁCIE A JEHO HISTORICKÁ KONCEPTUALIZÁCIA

Konverzačná kultúra je kultúra styku; pôvod slova „konverzácia“ siaha síce do latinskej antiky, *pojmem* konverzácie v zmysle vzájomného obcovania sa však vytvoril až v ranom stredoveku a vtedy sa používal spočiatku v zmysle akéhokoľ-

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vek sociálneho, nie výlučne verbálneho kontaktu (Plotke 2008, 31 – 120). V ranom novoveku sa postupne presunul dôraz na *verbálny* styk ako na systém pravidiel civilizovaného a *estetizovaného* styku, pochádzajúci z neskorostredovekých šľachtických dvorov. Novší (súčasný) výskum historických foriem konverzácie je inšpirovaný teóriou procesu civilizácie Norberta Eliasa (1988); zjednodušene povedané, vychádza sa pri ňom z toho, že úroveň civilizácie nezávisí natoľko od technickej vyvinutosti spoločnosti alebo od výšky hrubého domáceho produktu danej krajiny, ale od miery mravného správania a civilizovaného spoločenského styku. Pod konverzáciou sa chápe verbálne vyjadrenie *zdvorilosti*, ktorá je podľa klasického sociológa Georga Simmela „hrovou formou socializácie“² (2008, 159) a svoj európsky vrchol dosiahla vo francúzskej salónnej kultúre 17. storočia. V tomto modernom chápaní osciluje konverzácia ako nenútený, neformálny rozhovor dvoch či viacerých osôb medzi fatickou, teda kontaktovej funkciou jazyka/reči a potešením zo samotného javu. Rôzne aspekty vysoko komplexného fenoménu konverzácie možno osvetliť prostredníctvom historických prameňov rozličného typu. *Prax* konverzácie v zmysle konkrétnych historických manifestácií sa dá rekonštruovať napríklad na základe denníkov, autobiografií, memoárov, cestopisov, korešpondencií a podobne, ktoré bývajú užitočné aj pri archeológii dobových sociálnych sietí; k dobovým príručkám slušného správania a k sociálno-pedagogickej literatúre sa vraciame vtedy, keď skúmame konverzačné normy nejakej epochy a kultúry; tie je však možné študovať aj na základe dialógov v divadelných hrách danej doby a ďalšej dialogickej literatúry, pretože hoci sa tieto literárne dialógy väčšinou reálne neodohrali, reprodujú *možné* rozhovory, ktoré boli ako také rozpoznané súčasníkmi. Pri performatívoch, ako sú uvádzacie floskuly rozhovoru alebo záverečné formuly, takisto pri ukončovacích rituáloch, ale aj pri výbere slov a štruktúre rečových aktov, teda pri otázkach, *ako* sa niekto pýta a *ako* niekto odpovedá, *ako* sa nadväzuje rozhovor a *ako* ho niekto vedie ďalej, sa dá v prípade literárnych dialógov vychádzať z pomerne vysokej miery realizmu. A ďalej, v dnešnom historickom výskume konverzácie zohrávajú čoraz významnejšiu úlohu obrazy, resp. diela výtvarného umenia. To súvisí v prvom rade s tým, že sa dnešná historiografia každodennosti silne orientuje na vizuálne pramene, ktoré je možné vďaka ich názornosti sprostredkovať globálnemu publiku ľahšie ako texty. V našom prípade bude ale legitímne siahnuť po obrazoch aj z dvoch ďalších dôvodov; po prvé preto, lebo v severnom i južnom Nizozemsku 17. storočia ich vznikla záľaha (v rokoch 1580 až 1680 to bolo päť až desať miliónov obrazov³). A po druhé, v nizozemskom 17. storočí jestvovalo skutočne len málo oblastí každodennej kultúry, ktoré by nezachytili dobové žánrové maliarstvo či grafika. Konverzačnú kultúru jazykového priestoru v danej epoche možno skúmať na základe týchto prameňov z rôznych hľadísk; je možné rekonštruovať dobové komunikačné normy a ideály, ak to ale umožňujú zlomky zachovaného lingvistického materiálu dobovej živej reči, dá sa čiastočne rekonštruovať aj historická podoba *praxe* neformálnych rozhovorov. Na základe spomínaných prameňov sa pokúsím ukázať kontúry a súradnice a niekedy aj konkrétne prvky nizozemskej konverzačnej kultúry spred štyroch storočí.

DRUŽNOSŤ V NIZOZEMSKOM MALIARSTVE 17. STOROČIA

Najprv poznámka k obrazom. Nizozemskí umelci viacerých generácií 17. storočia zachytili nespočetnekrát družnosť všetkých stavov svojej krajiny v žánrovej malbe.⁴ Žánrová malba ako pojem vytvorený v 19. storočí zahŕňa zobrazenia, ktoré sa okolo roku 1650 vo vernakulárnom jazyku asi troch štvrtín z vtedajšieho celkového počtu 1,5 milióna obyvateľov nizozemskej republiky označovali ako *vrolyk gezelschapje* (veselá spoločnosť), *buitenpartij* (záhradná oslava), *boeren maelyt* (sedliacke hodovanie), *soldaets kroeghje* (vojenská krčmička), *bordeeltghen* (bordelček), *conversatie*, *musyk* atď. (de Jongh 1976, 14). Žánrová malba nie je ale neproblematický zdroj sociálnohistorického skúmania družnosti; spor medzi ikonológmi a diskurzivistami v druhej polovici 20. storočia ukázal, že to, čo na týchto obrazoch niekedy považujeme za realistické stvárnenia uvoľneného sociálneho styku, sú neraz alegórie spočívajúce na hre ikonografických konvencií, napríklad zobrazenie piatich zmyslov (obraz Isacka Elyasa *Feestvierend gezelschap* [Oslavujúca spoločnosť], 1629; de Jongh 1976, 112 – 113), alebo ide o technické experimenty a stváranie družnosti bolo len zámienkou, ako ich predviesť (na Vermeerovom obraze *De soldaat en het lachende meisje* [Vojak a smejúca sa/usmievajúca sa dievčina], 1655 – 1660, bolo azda zvrútenie pohľadu camery obscury dôležitejšie než zobrazenie družnej nálady pri stole). Iluzórny realizmus (de Jongh 1971) žánrového maliarstva však nikdy nie je úplne bez reality. Okrem „settingov“ ako banket, muzicírujúca spoločnosť, záhrada, hostina, ulica, jarmok, krčma, bordel, v ktorých sa vtedajší recipienti umenia spoznávali ako družní súčasníci a spolubesedníci, prezrádza toto umenie často aj niečo o dobovom *verbálnom* styku. Po zásadnom „piktoriálnom obrate“⁵, ktorý so sebou prinieslo obrazoborecké hnutie z roku 1566, sa v severnom Nizozemsku vytvoril v mnohých oblastiach kultúrnej reprezentácie špecifický vzťah medzi obrazom a slovom, v ktorom obraz *slúžil* slovu, bol mu podriadený. Tento nový vzťah mohol byť v kalvínskom Nizozemsku 17. storočia podľa všetkého buď 1) striktnie racionálny a založený na analógii slova a obrazu (v učebniciach, napr. v Komenského *Orbis sensualium pictus*), alebo 2) bol voľnejší a imaginatívnejší (napr. v oblasti obľúbenej emblematiky ako umenia vzájomne sa osvetľujúceho obrazu, výroku a komentára); alebo 3) išlo o text v obraze ako sémantickú enklávu (Wallis 1983, 191 – 225), teda o techniku, ktorá má v západnom umení dlhú tradíciu, alebo 4) sa jazyk a reč natískali obrazom v podobe akýchsi implicitných tituliek (Alpers 1985, 358), to znamená, že obrazy sugerovali verbálny prejav. Čo myslím tým posledným?

PIKTORIÁLNE ZOBRAZENIA KONVERZÁCIE – DISKURZÍVNE KONTEXTY

Na obraze Pietera Coddeho *Galant gezelschap* (Galantná spoločnosť, 1635; obr. 1) vidíme v interiéri štyri ženy a dvoch mužov, oblečených podľa najnovšej módy. Muži sa chvália ulovenou korisťou: zajacom a prepelicou. Žena, ktorá je k nám obrátená chrbtom, siaha po zajacovi, muž jej kladie na plece ruku. Na ženy vľavo nerobí výjav nijaký zvláštny dojem, súdiac aspoň podľa výrazu ich tváří; jedna hrá na teorbu, druhá teorba leží vedľa nej; druhá žena si kladie pravú dľaň na srdce alebo ukazuje prstom na skupinu vpravo, tretia sa prstami dotýka ľavého ušného lalôčika alebo ná-

ušnice. Na stole je neporiadok. Nad tromi ženami zíva holá stena, zatiaľ čo pravú stranu obrazu zdobí portrét; pod ním je portálový vstup do miestnosti a baldachýn postele s nebesami, ktorá sa zázračne zmestí do príliš úzkeho kúta. Vpravo dolu vidíme pri posteli violu da gamba, poľovnícku pušku a jednoduchý svietnik, zatiaľ čo v popredí opúšťa spoločnosť poľovnícky chrt. Farebné odtiene obrazu sú prevažne zlaté a strieborné.



Obr. 1: Pieter Codde *Galant gezelschap* (1635), 540 x 680 mm, olej.
Zdroj: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

Tzv. iluzórny realizmus tohto obrazu tkvie v tom, že muži na obraze nemôžu byť podľa oblečenia v žiadnom prípade poľovníkmi vracajúcimi sa z poľovačky. Obraz zobrazuje lascívne žartovanie mužov, ich hru s eufemizmami; zajac tu vyjadruje dobový výraz *haas jagen* („naháňať zajaca“, čo znamenalo súložiť), prepelica zas sloveso *vogelen*, čo je skrytý význam mnohých vtáčích motívov žánrového maliarstva 17. storočia a znamená to isté čo predchádzajúci výraz (de Jongh 1995a, 21 – 25; 1995b, 245 – 254). Historik umenia Eddy de Jongh sa domnieva, že Codde mohol byť čitateľom zbierky epigramov, sonetov a básní *Brabbeling* (Táraniny, 1614) básnika a emblematika Roemera Visschera, kde nachádzame dialóg medzi poľovníkom a záletníkom, v ktorom záletník opisuje odlišnú činnosť než podobnými slovami vykresľuje poľovník (92). Na obraze podčiarkuje lascívnosť výjavu falická symbolika predmetov pri posteli a takisto odhrnutý baldachýn. To, že sa k nám zo šiestich postáv obracia tvárou päť, spočíva na maliarskej konvencii, pochádzajúcej z talianskeho *quattrocenta* (por. Alberti 1966, 78), ktorá umožňuje bočnú participáciu tretieho, teda nepriamo vtiah-

nutie pozorovateľa obrazu. (Je to, mimochodom, situácia ako pri konverzácii – sme pri besedujúcich, ale sa na rozhovore aktívne nezúčastňujeme.) Kontrast medzi oblečením a korisťou poukazuje na iné používanie reči v mužsko-ženskom rozhovore ako v parížskom salóne tých čias (napr. vo vplyvnom salóne u Madame de Rambouillet), kde v danej dobe vládne precíznosť, prísne štylizovaná maniera rozhovorov, vďaka ktorej sa vyobcovala zo spoločenského rozhovoru nielen akákoľvek nízkosť, ale aj každá narážka na čokoľvek nízke. Takisto je symbolické, že portrét uškŕňajúceho sa muža v prostých holandských šatách visí *nad* klasicistickým portálom. S touto bohatou a mnohoznačnou rétorikou kontrastuje prázdna stena vľavo, zoči-voči ktorej onemieme ako pri pohľade na vysoké oblačné nebo na dobových holandských krajinkách. Medzi predstavou prázdna v prírode a mlčaním v rozhovore jestvuje priama súvislosť. Tak ako podľa Aristotela netoleruje príroda nijakú prázdnotu, bolo aj pre účastníkov spoločenských rozhovorov v parížskych salónoch 17. storočia zmlknutie čosi neslýchané, bol to signál blížiacej sa nudy. Vtedy sa hovorilo (a hovorí sa dodnes), že „preletel anjel“. Pascal, ktorý tento horror vacui v konverzácii pripisoval celkom všeobecne ľudskému nepokoju a tomu, že človek je nešťastný, ak má zostať v miestnosti ticho, vyvrátil ako fyzik aristotelovský horror vacui tým, že experimentálne (vývevou) dokázal existenciu, resp. možnosť vákua v prírode.

Coddeho obraz je od roku 1986 vo vlastníctve amsterdamského Ríšskeho múzea. Ako zapožičané dielo ho tu však bolo možné vidieť už v roku 1976 s názvom *Návrat poľovníkov* na výstave nizozemského žánrového maliarstva Pre poučenie a potešenie, kde vystúpila do popredia ikonografická škola Eddyho de Jongha. Táto výstava bola signálom k odelitárneniu Ríšskeho múzea pod vedením riaditeľa Simona H. Levieho (por. Pam 1989) a viedla k otvoreniu pohľadu na každodennosť nizozemského 17. storočia cez prizmu umeleckých diel.

V prvej polovici 17. storočia boli mlčanie, resp. málovravnosť a používanie eufemizmov v Nizozemsku propagované častejšie ako dve významné požiadavky neformálneho používania reči v spoločenskom styku. Nájdeme ich okrem iného v roku 1623 v prvej nizozemskej ranomodernej príručke slušného správania *Eene burgerlycke onderrechtinge* (Meštianske ponaučenie), ktorou sa jej autor Godefroy Boot (v Anglicku žijúci nizozemský lekár) explicitne dištancoval od francúzskych spôsobov spoločenského správania (1623, 291 – 292, 292 – 293, 300, 299 – 300 a 382 – 383). V kontexte ranomodernej európskej sociálno-pedagogickej literatúry zaujíma Bootovo dielo zvláštne postavenie. Málo napríklad pouča o dobrých či zlých stolovaciačích návykoch a vôbec nie o sociálnom, resp. asociálnom správaní, ako čistenie nosa, pľutie, spievanie, strúhanie komplimentov, hry a pod., čo je bežné v dobových románskych príručkách slušného správania, ale prináša katalóg cností pre vládnucu elitu, prvky všeobecnej morálnej nauky a odporúčania na výchovu detí. Pre oblasť verbálnej komunikácie neposkytuje Bootovo dielo (opäť na rozdiel od iných európskych diel podobného zamerania) odporúčania týkajúce sa fyzického postoja pri rozprávaní, foriem oslovenia, zdvorilostných formuliek, želaných a neželaných tém rozhovorov a výslovnosti, teda odporúčania, ktoré vytvárajú vonkajšie dekórum, ale je zamerané čisto jazykovo pragmaticky: popri rade vyjadrovať sa stručne a odporúčaní používať eufemizmy varuje hovoriacich pred protirečením a verbálnymi konfliktmi,

klamaním, zavádzaním rečou, ohováraním a nadávaním a je kritické voči zaliečaniu (291 – 293, 298 – 300, 382 – 383). Sociálny historik Wilbert van Vree považuje Bootovo dielo za príručku ranomodernej nizozemskej kultúry vyjednávania a deliberačnej demokracie vôbec (1995, 161 – 166); mohli by sme povedať, že táto príručka slušného správania ukazuje, ako sa v tejto časti Európy na základe racionality, etiky a ovládania afektov prekrýva pragmatika ranomodernej kultúry vyjednávania a rokovania s neformálnym verbálnym správaním.

Pre toto prekrývanie je okrem iného charakteristické Bootovo unikátne zdôvodnenie osožnosti eufemizmov. Tie majú hovoriacemu pomôcť, aby v rozhovore tematizoval „škaredé a nečestné veci“ (1623, 294 – 296), a pritom naňho nepadlo podozrenie, že sa s nimi stotožňuje. „Rozprávať zakrytými slovami,“ píše Boot, znamená rozprávať „z iného dôvodu“ (295). To je, pochopiteľne, spôsob, ako spraviť v spoločnosti diskutovateľným všetko: či už v rámci oficiálnych sekulárnych zhromaždení,⁶ alebo v neformálnom rozhovore (napr. lascivita a pod.⁷).

Odporúčanie málo rozprávať zdôvodňoval Boot argumentom rešpektu voči dialogickému partnerovi, pretože ten si nemôže všetko z nášho prejavu zapamätať. Preto sa treba obmedziť na to najpodstatnejšie („málo slov, ale jasne a bez akejkoľvek temnosti“; 1623, 294). To však nie je nové zdôvodnenie stručnosti. Nájdeme ho už v latinskej stredovekej učebnici mravouky *Facetus*⁸, obľúbenej v severnej Európe, a takisto v rétorických školách, ktoré propagovali stručný, neokrasný štýl hovorenia, orientovaný na Tacita. V jednej fáze nizozemskej republiky však mohlo byť odporúčanie málovravnosti motivované aj politicky, na čo poukazuje rýmovaný dialóg, resp. didaktická báseň právnika a diplomata Huga Grotia *‘T samen-spraeck tusschen vader ende soon, over de deught van weynigh spreken* (Rozhovor medzi otcom a synom o cnosti málovravnosti z roku 1619; de Vries 1884, 187 – 193). Autor sa ocitol v dôsledku náboženských sporov medzi radikálnymi a umiernenými kalvinistami v roku 1618 vo väzení, odkiaľ ho prepašovala na slobodu jeho žena v debne s knihami. Grotiov dialóg obsahuje pravidlá pre verbálne správanie v časoch ideologických konfliktov⁹: človek má málo rozprávať, a keď už rozpráva, mal by hovoriť krátko a len keď sa ho pýtajú; mal by viac počúvať, nemal by sa veľa vypytovať a už vôbec by nemal vyzvedať tajomstvá; nemal by sa chvastať a urážať iných, ale mal by sa učiť od múdrych a hľadať strednú cestu medzi hovorením a mlčaním. Utáranosť kvalifikuje Grotius ako rušivý zvuk.¹⁰

Naliehavosť málovravnosti, pre ktorú jestvoval v Nizozemsku vzor v otcovi národa, v princovi Viliamovi Oranžskom I., zavraždenom v roku 1584 a prezývanom aj „Mlčanlivý“, sa v druhej polovici 17. storočia oslabila. Toto oslabenie sa dá čiastočne vysvetliť relatívnou vnútropolitickou stabilitou spoločnosti prosperujúcej v mieri, čiastočne však i vplyvom importovanej kultúry rozprávania. Mýtické Harpokratovo gesto silencia, ktoré ešte pre Grotia znamenalo výzvu k mlčanlivosti, prekódoval o generáciu neskôr Rembrandtov žiak Nicolaes Maes na polysémantické gesto (*De luistervink* [Načúvajúca], 1657; obr. 2): ukazovák na jeho obraze nenaznačuje mlčanie a už ani nevaruje; skôr pozýva, aby sme sa stali svedkami tajomstva v prízemnej časti domu, a degeneruje na koketné gesto. Tajomstvo je tu aj adekvátne „prízemné“ (ľúbostné).



Obr. 2: Nicolaes Maes *De luistervink* (1657), 925 x 122 mm, olej.
Zdroj: Dordrechts Museum

Okruh pôsobenia Grotiovej didaktickej básne, uverejnenej až v 19. storočí, nepoznáme (v 17. storočí kolovala v opisoch, čo bola stále bežná forma distribúcie literárnych textov). Bootovo dielo sa naproti tomu ako tlačaná kniha obracala v prvom rade, ako čítame na frontispice, na „kráľov, vojvodov, kniežatá, princov, miestodržiteľov, magistrátov, guvernérov, hlavy všetkých štátov a republík“, ako „meštianske ponaučenie“¹¹ však bolo určené aj „všetkým ostatným túžiacim“. Jeho cieľom bolo čo najširšie odstránenie zlých spoločenských spôsobov, ktoré sa v Nizozemsku podľa všetkého prejavovali v oblasti verbálnej komunikácie okrem iného v netaktnej priamosti, označovanej vo vernakulárnom jazyku 16. a 17. storočia ako „bottichhey“ (dnes „botheit“) a človek sa s ňou mohol stretnúť naprieč všetkými stavmi, napríklad aj na malom miestodržiteľskom dvore v Den Haagu, kde panovali rodinné vzťahy a dvorský kódex sa tam nebral veľmi vážne. (Ešte v roku 1661 si zaznamenal istý nemecký aristokrat na dvore Viliama III. v Den Haagu: „Také zlé spôsoby stolovania by som nikdy nepovažoval za možné, keby som ich nebol býval videl na vlastné oči“; cit. podľa Haye 1981, 52.) Sociálny život v republike sa rozvíjal na rozdiel od iných európskych krajín tej doby v prieniku stavov a ich habitov (jestvovala tu kultúrna výmena medzi elitami a ľuďom), ale na druhej strane tu ani nebola centrálna postava vládcu, ktorá by určovala etiketu a dekórum; na túto tému existuje množstvo sociálnohistorických výskumov.¹² Severní Nizozemci boli podľa všetkého ešte v prvej polovici 17. storočia veľmi hrdí na svoju úprimnú priamosť, ktorú sa ako netaktnosť pokúšal Boot skrotiť eufemizmami a odporúčaním neprotirečiť: napríklad v roku 1614 položil básnik Roemer Visscher otázku: „Amsterdamské dcéry, povedzte mi, nehanbite sa za svoju hrubosť?“¹³ (100), afirmatívnu odpoveď na ňu však neočakával. Patriotické zdôvodnenie chýbajúceho taktu nachádzame aj v prvej nizozemskej

gramatiky Hendrika L. Spiegela *Twee-spraak vande Nederduitsche Letterkunst* (Dvoj-rozhovor o severonemeckej literatúre, 1584) napísanej v dialogickej forme, kde autor odvodzoval netaktnosť Holanďanov z chrabrosti a odvahy v súťaži s inými národmi.¹⁴ Tradície holandskej netaktnosti, ktorá sa stala národným klišé, stopuje súčasný kultúrny historik René van Stipriaan až do jazyka dnešnej nizozemskej zahraničnej politiky (2016, 11 – 25). Literárne príklady netaktnej priamosti stredných stavov nachádzame v komediálnej produkcii nizozemského 17. storočia u autorov ako Gerbrand A. Bredero. A napokon, ako mohla táto netaktnosť vyzeráť v dialogickej každodennosti sedliakov v ranom 17. storočí, to ukazuje básnik Apollonius Schotte (1570 – 1639) v žartovnom *Dubbel-boere-praatje, ofte 't Soet ghevry van Lieven ende Mayken* (Sladkom ľúbostnom rozhovore Lievena a Mayken, 1633; cit. podľa Komrij 1996, 41 – 42): „L: Moja sladká Mayken, azda si na mňa zabudla? / M: Nuž, chlapče, skrát' to, ešte som nejedla. [...] L: Ach, drahá najdrahšia, bude čas rozprávať. / M: To teda nie, Lieven, musím ísť skoro spať.“¹⁵ Protikladom tejto všadeprítomnej netaktnej priamosti (*botticheyt*) nebola slušnosť (*fatsoen*), ale *courtosye*, teda dvornosť, ktorú charakterizuje dekórum.

Hoci nizozemská hrubá priamosť pôsobí neohrabane a bezočivo, nikdy si ju nemožno zamieňať s vulgárnosťou. Tam, kde siahal vplyv kalvínskej cirkvi a magistrátov, bolo používanie vulgarizmov na verejnosti zakázané (napr. vo väzniciach alebo na staniach mestských milícií). Z kalvínskeho hľadiska sa používanie nadávok rovnalo ťažkému hriechu; slovné urážky („kurva“, „zlodej“, „darebák“ a horšie) mohli mať občianskoprávne a trestnoprávne dôsledky (por. Broers 1992, 295 – 313). Na rozdiel od vtipov ako jednoduchých žánrov bežnej reči, o ktorých sa predpokladalo, že podporujú konverzáciu, a ich tlačene zbierky sa tešili popularite¹⁶, nemožno považovať vulgarizmy ako elementy hovorového jazyka za stavebné prvky konverzácie, pretože v strednej a vyššej vrstve pôsobili spoločensky disociatívne (Leuker 1992, 319 – 320). Za ich vypudenie z komédií sa v rámci programu zjemnenia verbálneho výrazu zasaďovala v druhej polovici 17. storočia klasicistická teória drámy (Pels 1681). Naďalej ich však trpeli na amsterdamskej burze (Schama 2006, 355).

S neotesanosťou a lokálnymi zvláštnosťami sociálneho správania, ktoré sa najneskôr od polovice 17. storočia začali všeobecne pociťovať ako trápne, mali skončiť preklady talianskych a francúzskych príručiek slušného správania.¹⁷ Aristokratizácia sa u severonizozemských mestských elít, ktoré, pravda, zväčša nepochádzali zo šľachtických rodov, začala prejavovať už koncom 16. storočia, keď sa kurtoázia začala šíriť z Brabantska na sever. Voči apropiácii dvorských spôsobov *hovorenia* ako časti sociálneho správania však jestvovali v nizozemskej republike aj naďalej pochybnosti. Adaptovaný nizozemský preklad populárnej francúzskej príručky slušného správania Antoina de Courtina, ktorá sa v republike dočkala niekoľkých vydaní, tu vyšiel ešte v roku 1733 so sarkastickým listom Erazma Rotterdamského¹⁸ ako dodatkom či doslovom, kde tento humanista nabáda mladého muža, ktorého posielajú proti jeho vôli na šľachtický dvor, aby sa prispôbil pokrytectvu a získal tak pre seba výhody: „bohato vychvaluj“ (1773, 249), „musíš ich [dvoranov] nalákať na táraniny“ (251), „slubuj zlaté hory“ (251) atď. Návrat k Erazmovi ako kritikovi jazyka kurtoázie znamenal návrat k humanistickému komunikačnému ideálu, ktorého základom je priateľský, múdry, otvorený, duchaplný, povznášajúci a vzdelávajúci rozhovor.

REČ V OBRAZE A PRED OBRAZOM

Z predchádzajúcich epoch pochádza aj konvencia odpovedať v neformálnom rozhovore krátkymi frázovitými vetami, slovnými zvratmi alebo prísloviami či porekadlami.¹⁹ Túto techniku používal aj spomínaný Hugo Grotius. V 17. storočí nachádzame množstvo prísloví a porekadiel v spisoch významného básnika Jacoba Catsa, systematika sociálneho života svojej epochy.²⁰ Príslovia boli často frekventované aj v kalvínskych kázňach; odpovede v prefabrikovaných vetách tvorili maticu dobových katechizmov.²¹ Poučky, loci communes, porekadlá boli bežnými stavebnými prvkami ranomoderného „small talku“ – dnes sa nám síce javia ako pomerne málo duchaplné formy dialogického správania, v ranej moderne však boli obľúbené vo všetkých spoločenských vrstvách, pretože mohli viesť v rozhovore ako kvázi dokázané, stručne a elegantne vyjadrené životné pravdy k nastoleniu názorového súladu. Viera v komunikačný potenciál prísloví, porekadiel a loci communes vyplývala z nevinnosti humanistického veku, ktorá sa v priebehu nepokojného 17. storočia vytrácala.²² V románskych príručkách 17. storočia sa napríklad explicitne varuje pred používaním fráz a prísloví v spoločenskom styku, pretože zabíjajú novodobý inteligentný rozhovor.



Obr. 3: Jan Steen *Rederijkers* (1663 – 1665), 759 x 586 mm, olej.

Zdroj: Philadelphia Museum of Art

Ako sa menilo postavenie príslovia/porekadla v komunikačnej praxi 17. storočia, možno opäť ukázať na príkladoch z výtvarného umenia. Príslovia v nizozemskom maliarstve a v emblematike 16. a 17. storočia tvoria kapitolu samu osebe (por. Meadow 1993). Na príklade obrazu Jana Steena *Rederijkers* (Rétori, 1663 – 1665; dnes vo Philadelphia Museum of Art; obr. 3) možno naznačiť zmenu, k akej došlo v ich používaní v Nizozemsku v 2. polovici 17. storočia. Obraz ukazuje štyri hlavy v okne, vľavo hore vidíme piatu postavu, ktorá pije. Muž na obraze vľavo dolu (*declamator*) predčítava *nahlas* tzv. LOF LIET (chválospev), muž nad ním (*factor*, básnik) číta spolu s ním alebo si mrmle komentár. Mladší muž s červenou bláznovskou čiapkou prízvukuje s úsmevom, so zdvihnutým obočím a ukazovákou predčítanú pasáž, zatiaľ čo kriticky alebo melancholicky dívajúci sa muž vpravo dolu (*momus*, kritik) si ľavou rukou (päťou) podopiera hlavu a v pravici drží cínovú kanvicu na víno. Hore sa vinie vinič so zrelými plodmi, dolu vidíme cechový znak, na ktorom dnes už ťažko rozoznáme dve prekrížené fajky, pohár a cechovú devízu IVGHT NEMT IN (Mladosť/mlaď podmaňuje). Ide o zobrazenie bližšie neurčenej komory rétorov, ktorých bolo v severnom Nizozemsku po roku 1621 približne 90 – tieto komory pochádzali z 15. storočia a boli to básnické cechy, kde sa pestoval jazyk a poézia, hralo sa divadlo a v 16. storočí tam vznikali aj prvé nizozemské gramatiky. Komory rétorov sa starali aj o praktické vzdelanie mladých mužov v rétorike, ktorá ich mala naučiť, ako komunikatívne vystupovať na verejnosti (van Dixhoorn 2002, 17 – 30, najmä opis inscenovania tzv. *zinnespelen* – dialogických traktátov [24] a opis výchovných metód [29]). Renomé nizozemských rétorov však v čase vzniku Steenovej maľby už dávno pokleslo na obraz veselých pijanov (van Bruaene – van Bouchaute 2017). Vieťme si predstaviť, ako asi v 60. alebo v 70. rokoch 17. storočia ukazoval tento obraz jeho majiteľ návštevníkovi svojho domu: obaja naň chvíľu mlčky hľadia a návštevník po chvíli povie: „Rederijkers – kannekijkers“ (rétori – pijani, to bol dobový slovný zvrät); hostiteľ prikývne, pretože hosť pochopil moralizujúce posolstvo obrazu a medzi pánom domu a jeho hosťom vznikla na základe spoločne zdieľaného názoru sociálna väzba. To by bola elementárna úroveň pochopenia Steenovho obrazu. Nemožno pochybovať, že moralizujúce posolstvá žánrových obrazov a emblémov *neboli* jedinými intendovanými; obrazy, ilustrujúce v 17. storočí príslovia, slúžili ako stimulatory diferencovanejších rozhovorov (Becker 1999; Porteman 1995), a tak mohla aj nejednoznačná devíza²³ na cechovom znaku poskytnúť príležitosť pre zaujímavé dialógy, ktoré nemuseli smerovať len k dopredu stanovenej pointe. Analogicky fungovali v tej dobe obľúbené kabinety kuriozít ako „miesta pre rozhovor a usporadúvajúce myslenie“ (Becker 1999, 118; Welzel 1997, 502), ponúkali príležitosť k improvizovaným učeným rozhovorom.

Zatiaľ čo niektoré rečové prvky z družného rozhovoru v priebehu času miznú, iné sa používajú po stáročia. K nepostrádateľnému, hoci opäť marginálnemu lingvistickému materiálu, ktorý poukazuje na fatický aspekt verbálneho styku, rátame deminutíva, ktoré sa v nizozemskom jazyku 17. storočia používali rovnako často ako dnes. Vo svojich holandských, flámskych a brabantských morfológických variantoch sa používali zväčša so znežňujúcim a eufemistickým zámerom (teda takisto ako dnes; znežňujúco často v prípade ženských mien). Deminutíva nenachádzame v úradných spisoch,

pretože boli a sú doménou hovoreného jazyka (reči), zato sa s nimi často stretávame v literárnych dielach na miestach, kde konštatujeme prienik každodennej reči do textu. Zachytilo ich aj výtvarné umenie, a to v podobe sémantických enkláv, napríklad na obraze Jana Steena *Prinsjesdag* (Deň princiatka, 1660; obr. 4), kde dolu čítame prípitok: „Na zdravie chlapčeka nassauského / v jednej ruke rapier v druhej ruke pohárik.“²⁴ „Het Prinsje“, princiatko je znežňujúce označenie princa Viliama III. Oranžského,²⁵ ktorého narodenie (1650) je predmetom oslavy na obraze (Schama 2006, 211).²⁶



Obr. 4: Jan Steen *Prinsjesdag* (1660), 460 x 625 mm, olej.
Zdroj: Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

V každodennej komunikácii všadeprítomné zdobneniny pociťovali v priebehu času najmä nemeckí cestovatelia ako trápne. Koncom 18. storočia písal v jednom liste romantik August Wilhelm Schlegel o familiárnosti, aká panuje v nizozemskom jazyku vďaka deminutívam, tie jej však podľa neho zároveň dávajú čosi „nečisté/nešlachetné“ (Bientjes 1968, 144). Familiárnosť tu znamená chýbajúci sociálny odstup, ktorý patrí k modernému urbánnemu správaniu minimálne od 16. storočia (Erazmus). Dojem *nezdvorilosti* vzbudzovali u nemeckých vzdelancov, cestujúcich v 17. storočí po Nizozemsku, tri nedostatky: neskladanie klobúka z hlavy u mužov, zlé stolovacie spôsoby a málovravnosť holandských profesorov (226 – 227). K odstráneniu prvých dvoch sa usilovala prispieť kniha lekára Stefaana Blankaarta *De borgerlyke tafel* (Meštianska tabuľa, 1683), tretí nedostatok zostal nereflektovaný.

Rozdiely voči princípom francúzskej konverzačnej kultúry, ktorá sa v 17. storočí šírila po celej Európe, možno demonštrovať na príkladoch porovnateľných „settingov“. Napríklad na inštitúcii salónu, ktorá existovala v istej podobe už v prvej polovici 17. storočia aj v Nizozemsku. Literárna spoločnosť okolo významného básnika Pietera Corneliszoon Hoofta, označovaná ako Muidenský kruh, bola až do druhej polovice 17. storočia akýmsi salónom, alebo ju do takejto podoby štylizovali ďalšie

generácie. Výtvarné zobrazenia Muidenského kruhu z 19. storočia sú ako *conversation pieces* romantickými montážami (Strenghold 1986, 265); ukazujú pospolu známe osobnosti, ktoré v Muidene buď nikdy neboli, alebo sa spolu v takejto konštelácii nikdy nestretli. Vyjadrujú, tak ako obraz Louisa Moritza²⁷ z 19. storočia, želanie kompaktnej národnej kultúrnej reprezentácie. Štúdie o Muidenskom kruhu z 80. rokov 20. storočia poukázali na najdôležitejšie diferencie voči francúzskym salónom: na nepravidelnosť stretnutí, chýbajúcu synchronizáciu návštevníkov a na relatívnu uzavretosť (domáckosť) malého okruhu, ktorý pozostával vlastne len z básnikových priateľov. O charaktere letných rozhovorov na zámku Muiden pri Amsterdame vypovedá korešpondencia básnika P. C. Hoofta: *conversation sérieuse*, vážny rozhovor, prevládala nad *conversation enjouée*, zábavnou konverzáciou. Detailný protokol jedného takéhoto rozhovoru z 1. júla 1645 poskytol učiteľ Franciscus Martinius: rozhovor sa týkal jedného Kallimachovho verša v gréckom jazyku, ktorý citoval Paulus v jednom liste Titovi (Hooft 1979, 697 – 698). Debata bola filologickým rozhovorom expertov. Podobne zrejme vyzerali aj niektoré ďalšie nezaznamenané literárne rozhovory na zámku Muiden. List P. C. Hoofta, adresovaný Marii Tesselschade (dcére spomínaného Roemera Visschera) odhaľuje ešte ostrejší rozdiel v porovnaní s galantným štýlom francúzskej salónnej komunikácie tej doby. Po návšteve dámy v Muidene jej básnik napísal, že si na zámku zabudla papuče, a, ako pokračuje, „bolo by bývalo lepšie, keby ste si tu boli zabudli nohy a to, čo je na nich“ (1977, 439). Z hľadiska vtedajšej francúzskej salónnej komunikácie porušil Hooft niekoľko tabu: hovorí o papučiach a o nohách ženy, ktoré mohli byť v parížskom salóne spomenuté len prostredníctvom perifrázy „les chers souffrants“ (Baudou de Somaize, 1761), a napokon to ominózne „čo je na nich“. Odpoveď Tesselschade sa nezachovala. Najmä francúzsky listár Jeana Pugeta de la Serre *Le Secrétaire à la Mode*, vydaný v Amsterdame po prvý raz v roku 1643 a odvtedy viackrát, ponúkal neskúseným pisateľom listov praktickú pomoc pri zostavovaní ľúbostnej korešpondencie (van den Berg 1978).²⁸ Za dokázaný sa považuje jeho dlhodobý vplyv na maliarstvo (Alpers 1985, 325) a na vývin epištolarneho románu (Bray 1967). Hooft pritom nebol neskúsený pisateľ listov, on len jednoducho čerpal z inej epištolarnej tradície, založenej na rétorike.

KONVERZÁCIE V PAMFLETOVEJ LITERATÚRE

Iný aspekt nizozemskej konverzačnej kultúry sprostredkúva do 18. storočia rozšírený „nízky“ literárny žáner tzv. *praatjes* (rozhovory, táraniny alebo diskurzy), inscenujúci neformálne dišputy fiktívnych osôb alebo alegorických postáv v typicky nizozemských „settingoch“, akými sú čln na kanáli ťahaný koňom (*trekschuit*) alebo stanica mestských milícií (*kortegaard*), pri tých druhých sa mnohým vybaví tá najznámejšia z Rembrandtovej *Nočnej hliadky*. Tzv. *praatjes* boli často anonymné dialogické pamflety alebo klebetné rozhovory, čosi ako dnešné blogy, len v podobe dialógov. Dozvedáme sa z nich o dobových politických a iných udalostiach, ktorými sa zaoberali súčasníci, napríklad o priebehu vojny, o nových zákonoch, o ekonomických špekuláciách, napríklad o tulipánovej horúčke v rokoch 1734 – 1737, o mierových dohodách, mestských mravoch atď., menej už o *skutočnom* priebehu neformálnych rozhovorov v člne (Vries

1978) alebo na stanici mestských milícií (Borger 1996) či na ulici. Napriek literárnej štylizácii *praatjes* reprodukovujú štrukturálne prvky neformálnych rozhovorov danej doby, prípadne fragmenty hovorenej reči, performatívy: pozdravy (*conversation openers*), formy oslovenia a verbálne rituály slúžiace na ukončenie rozhovoru – stratégie ako nenútené pýtanie sa (nikdy nie naliehavé vypytovanie sa) a zmierlivé ukončenie rozhovoru. Do polovice 18. storočia je na *praatjes* nápadná absencia významového zvratu (Mukařovský 1982, 208 – 229), t. j. asociatívnej alebo abruptnej zmeny témy, ktorá je v románskom rozhovore tých čias možná a môže byť indexom sociálnej dominancie (v parížskom salóne môže zmeniť predmet rozhovoru saloniéra). V krátkych *praatjes*, ktoré sa sústreďujú vždy na jednu tému, sa táto téma rozvíja dovtedy, pokiaľ sa nevyčerpá; potom sa rozhovor ukončí.²⁹Colloquia familiaria, ktoré bolo vzorom pre neformálne rozhovory v rôznych životných situáciách. Tu aj tam bolo nikdy nevyslovenou požiadavkou kultivovaného vedenia rozhovoru neodbiehať od témy. Keďže *praatjes* 17. storočia poučajú, jeden z účastníkov v nich býva dominantný. Keď v nich vystupujú ženy, panuje v nich relatívna rodová rovnosť; ženy sa neraz vyjadrujú o politike (Davidszoon 1652). Jedno z pravidiel, na ktoré sa úzkostlivo dbalo, bolo, že žiaden z účastníkov rozhovoru nesmie prísť skrátka. Vyjadruje to aj emblém Roemera Visschera: „Keď plameň sviece dosiahne nasledujúci kliniec, je na rade ďalší tárať“ (1949, 13, emblém 1/XIII).

KOORDINÁCIA A JEJ NARUŠENIE

Starosť o zmierlivý priebeh a o dobre ukončený rozhovor tvorí aj základ vzorového diela konverzácií určených pre cestujúcich, ktorého autorom je kalvínsky kazateľ a literát (alebo skôr grafoman) Franciscus Ridderus a ktoré vyšlo v roku 1663 pod názvom *De nuttige tijd-korter* (Užitočný skracovač času). Toto dnes zabudnuté dieło bolo v 60. rokoch 17. storočia absolútnym bestsellerom. Obsahuje 42 triviálnych rozhovorov kazateľa, historika a lodníka na najbanálnejšie témy.³⁰vonkajšej jednoty hovoriacich osôb ako individualít, resp. samostatných entít (Riegl 1931), ktorú si v roku 1902 všimol viedenský historik umenia Alois Riegl na holandských skupinových portrétoch zo 17. storočia a ktorá bola charakteristická pre spoločenský poriadok nizozemskej republiky a je pre nizozemskú spoločnosť charakteristická azda dodnes. Na konci posledného rozhovoru pozve historik svojich konverzačných partnerov k spoločnej skromnej večeri, ktorá pozostáva z chleba a *rybičky* (Ridderus 2004, 486 – 506).



Obr. 5: Eglon van der Neer *Elegant couple in an interior* (1678), 855 x 701 mm, olej.
Zdroj: Wadsworth Atheneum Hartford, Connecticut

Posledný príklad možno chápať ako kontrast k predchádzajúcemu: Je to obraz maliara Eglona van der Neera, známy pod anglickým názvom *Elegant couple in an interior* (Galantný pár v interiéri, 1678; obr. 5), na ktorom vidieť vplyv klasicizmu a od šesťdesiatych rokov 17. storočia charakteristickú módu v sekulárnej oblasti; nielen oblečenie, vybavenie interiéru, *contrapposto* pána v popredí a putta na rímse kozuba, ale najmä parochne pánov ohlasujú nové storočie, ktoré sa bude nazývať „dobou parochní“; baletné pohyby počas konverzácie pochádzajú z registra telesných postojov, propagovaných dobovými príručkami slušného správania a maliarskymi traktátmi (Roodenburg 2004). Rapier pri stoličke svedčí o cvičení v šerme, ktoré patrilo k výchove šľachtica. Všetko poukazuje na hladké rozhovory. Nádherný riad, ktorý je tak prekvapivo bezúčelne umiestnený vľavo dolu, akoby podčiarkoval bezúčelnosť diania na obraze; strieborná misa s kanvicou však vyjadrujú skôr pokrytectvo, pretože ich lesk odvádza našu pozornosť od rozhovoru,

ktorý prebieha na zadnom pláne obrazu, kde sa pánova pravá ruka s vystretým ukazovákam približuje k prsníku dámy. Tento pohyb prerušujú dve nádoby, jedna priehľadná a druhá nepriehľadná, takže pozorovateľ by si mohol v prvom okamihu myslieť, že to sa dáma dotýka rukou brošne vo svojom výstrihu. Pri lepšom pohľade však rozpoznávame pánov lakeť a cez sklo nádoby obranné gesto ruky, ktorá patrí dáme. Latentné nebezpečenstvo tejto konverzácie podčiarkuje soška sfingy nad vchodom vľavo a vágne rozpoznateľná scéna boja alebo obetovania na obraze nad kozubom. Možno súhlasit s poznámkou kultúrneho historika Simona Schamu, podľa ktorej sa Van der Neerov obraz voľne pohybuje v morálne neurčitej zóne medzi zjemnením a dekadenciou (2006, 464 – 465). Cieľom telesných a rečových činností na obraze je rafinovaný klam a zvádzanie. Konverzácie na tomto obraze zrejme neprebiehajú v nizozemčine, ale vo francúzštine.

Na záver je potrebné zdôrazniť, že načrtnuté zvláštnosti nizozemskej konverzačnej kultúry 17. storočia v skutočnosti nepredstavovali nijakú reálnu alternatívu voči univerzálnej koncepcii konverzácie, založenej na *bienséance*, teda slušnosti šíriacej sa v 17. storočí do celej Európy z Francúzska. Ide skôr o prvky mentality, resp. mentalít, ktoré zostávajú čiastočne dodnes prítomné a funkčné v neformálnej nizozemskej komunikácii. Úsilie smerovalo k priblíženiu práce s prameňmi, ktoré podľa všetkého majú schopnosť oživiť zlomky dávno stratených rozhovorov.

POZNÁMKY

- ¹ Por. publikácie autorov ako Peter Burke, Svetlana Alpers, Simon Schama, Jonathan I. Israel, Rudolf Dekker, Herman Roodenburg, Willem Frijhoff a Marijke Spiess, Wilbert van Vree, Maarten Hell a mnohých ďalších.
- ² Pokiaľ nie je uvedené inak, citáty z nemčiny a holandčiny preložil A. B.
- ³ Informácia pochádza z Boymans-Van Beuningen Museum v Rotterdame.
- ⁴ Podstatné meno „gezelligheid“ (družnosť) patrí s prídavným menom „gezellig“ (družný) v nizozemskom jazyku dodnes k vysoko frekventovaným slovám. Oba výrazy boli však prítomné už od 13. storočia v strednej hornej nemčine i v strednej dolnej nemčine.
- ⁵ K „piktorialnému obratu“ por. Mitchell 2009.
- ⁶ Napr. výraz „zulke koophandel“ (doslova: „taký obchod“), ktorým bol oficiálne v roku 1621 označený masaker J. P. Coena domorodcov na ostrovoch Banda.
- ⁷ Napr. „vaderlandtje“ (doslova: „otčina“) ako eufemizmus pre jenever (druh alkoholu).
- ⁸ Skrátený názov všeobecne rozšíreného diela *Liber faceti docens mores hominum precipue iuvenum*.
- ⁹ Ešte pred vydaním diela Baldasara Graciána *O svetskej múdrosti* (1649).
- ¹⁰ Zvony, ktorými sa zvolávala mládež, zakázala synoda v Dokkume v roku 1591. Averzia voči akýmkoľvek „zvukovým efektom“ sa u nizozemských kalvínov odvodzuje z odporu voči všetkým zvukom, ktoré nesúvisia s Božím slovom. V tejto línii sú aj zmienky Constantijna Huyghensa o správnom používaní a zneužívaní organu.
- ¹¹ K používaniu pojmu „meštiansky“ („borgherlyck“, „burgherlyck“) v humanistickom zmysle *urbanitas* alebo *civilitas* por. Schama 2006, 565.
- ¹² Peter Burke, Herman Roodenburg, Rudolf Dekker a ďalší.
- ¹³ „Amsterdamse Dochters doet mijn bescheyt / Schaemt ghy u van de Hollantsche botticheyt?“
- ¹⁴ „waar aan zoudt gebreken? om datse onze botte Hollanders worden genoemt? daarze dóch in het kloeck bedryf geen ander vólkeren wycken“ (Spiegel 1962, 58).

- ¹⁵ „L. Mijn soete *Mayken*-lief, hoe kunje mijn vergeten? / M. Nu veyntje maket cort, ick heb noch niet ghegeten. (...) M. Wel aen dan, liefste lief, ick spreeckje nog wel bet. / M.: Neen *Lieven*. (...) ick moet wat vroech te bedt.“
- ¹⁶ Herman Roodenburg (2004, 53 – 54) uvádza tieto nizozemské a zahraničné zbierky vtipov: Jan de Brune jr.: *Jok en ernst* (1635); Aernout van Overbeke: *Rym-wercken* (1678); Julius Wilhelm Zinnegref – Johann Leonhard Weidner: *Teutsche Apophthegmata* (nl. 1669); Arlotto Menardi: *Facezie, motti, buffonerie et burle* (1569); Béroalde de Verville: *Le Moyen de parvenir* (1610); Archie Armstrong: *The Banquet of Jest* (1630); Johann Peter de Memel: *Lustige Gesellschaft* (1656); Giovanni Loredano: *Degli scherzi geniali* (1642); Anonym: *'t Leven en bedrijf van Clement Marot* (1655); Archie Armstrong: *A Choice Banquet of Witty Jest, Rare Fancies, and Pleasant Noverls* (1660); Charles Colotendi: *Arlequiniani* (1694); *Scaligeriana* (1667); *Sorberiana* (1694). O zbierke *Anecdota* Aernouta van Overbekea, ktorá obsahuje 2 440 vtipov a anekdot, pozri Dekker 1997.
- ¹⁷ Nizozemský preklad diela *La civil conversazione* Stefana Guazza vyšiel v Amsterdame v roku 1603, *L'Honnête homme* Nicolasa Faretu v roku 1657, *Il libro del Cortegiano* Baldesara Castiglioneho v roku 1662 a *Nouveau traité de la civilité* Antoina de Courtina v roku 1672. Posledné spomenuté dielo vyšlo aj v reediciách v rokoch 1677, 1733, 1737, 1742 a 1768.
- ¹⁸ Niektoré z týchto diel čítali vzdelaní Nizozemci už dávnejšie v origináloch, Castiglioneho kniha o dvoranovi tu bola známa už pred rokom 1662; por. Roodenburg 2010, 274.
- ¹⁹ Por. zbierku *Proverbia communia* (1480), obsahujúcu približne 800 prísloví v latinskom a nizozemskom jazyku; v roku 1500 vyšli *Adagia* Erazma Rotterdamského.
- ²⁰ Názory Jacoba Catsa o hovorení v jeho diele *Houwelyck* sa mimochodom netýkajú *dialogického* hovorenia, ale len všeobecných pravidiel „ako hovoriť“: „een effenbare, eenvoudige, ronde en gans gemeene maniere van seggen, de selve meest overal ghelijck makende met onse dagelickse maniere van spreken“ (teda: „prostý, jednoduchý, zaokrúhlený a celkom obyčajný spôsob hovorenia, ktorý je všade rovnaký ako náš každodenný spôsob rozprávania“); cit. podľa Roodenburg 1990, 42.
- ²¹ Por. Martin Luther: *Kleiner Katechismus* (1529); Johannes Kalvinus: *Katechismus* (revidované vydanie 1542); *Heidelberger Katechismus* (1563). V 17. storočí boli v Európe takisto rozšírené rýmované dialogické katechizmy.
- ²² Napr. *Adagia* Erazma Rotterdamského, komentovaná zbierka latinských výrokov a prísloví z antiky a latinského stredoveku, tvorila ešte v 16. storočí jednu zo smerníc humanistických rozhovorov. Pre rozvinutú európsku konverzačnú kultúru nasledujúceho storočia mohol však reprezentovať Erazmus vzor najmä vďaka jeho dielu *Colloquia familiaria*, dialogickej učebnici latinčiny, ktorú vďaka jej espritu už v 16. storočí začali prekladať do vernakulárnych jazykov. Po tom, čo sa toto dielo spolu so všetkými ostatnými Erazmovými dielami ocitlo po Tridentskom koncile na *Librorum prohibitorum index*, bolo ho možné čítať už len v protestantských častiach Európy. Pointovane by sa dalo povedať, že v Nizozemsku 17. storočia netvorili základ dobrého hovorenia vtip a štylistická finesa Erazmových *Colloquií*, ale skôr lapidárnosť jeho *Adagií*.
- ²³ „IVGT NEMT IN“ je hravou variáciou devízy „Jeught neempt aen“ (Mládež začína) komory rétorov *De Jonge Batavieren* v Den Haagu; por. Tummers 2012, 146.
- ²⁴ „Op de ghesontheyt van het nassaus basie/ in de eene hant rapier in de andere hant het glaesie“.
- ²⁵ Tento Viliam III. sa stal, mimochodom, v roku 1688 kráľom Anglicka, ktorý spolu so svojou ženou Mary reformoval v puritánskom duchu anglický dvor a vyhnal z neho frivolné spoločenské spôsoby Stuartovcov.
- ²⁶ Holandské obrazy krčiem sprostredkujú pitkami len jednu, maliarsky najčastejšie zobrazovanú funkciu komunikatívneho správania v holandských hostincoch; (amsterdamské) hostince plnili aj iné funkcie, ktoré sa spájali s formálnymi i neformálnymi rozhovormi – okrem iného slúžili ako miesta porád, obchodných rokovaní atď., por. k tomu Hell 2017, 9 – 11.
- ²⁷ *Een feestmaal op het slot te Muiden*, obraz vznikol pred rokom 1851.
- ²⁸ Ako píše Van den Berg, listár Daniëla Mostarta *Nederduytse secretaris oft zendebriefschryver* z roku 1635 bol ešte úplne v stredovekej rétorickej tradícii epištolárneho umenia, s ktorou podľa všetkého skoncoval Puget de la Serre okrem iného požiadavkou „prirodzenosti“ a inštrukciami, ako písať ľúbostné listy.
- ²⁹ Táto stratégia siaha, samozrejme, k sokratovským dialógom.

³⁰ Cestujúci, nebo, slnko, vietor, loď, hry, spánok, kniha, topánky, oblečenie, žobrák, chudobní, almužna, voda, pitie, veľký pohár, list, kostol, biblia, domy, obrazy, maliar, deti, starí ľudia, oheň, jedlo, chlieb, víno, pľan, voz, peniaze, vojaci, zbrane, študenti, sedliaci, stromy, kone, psy, kamene, vtáky, búrka.

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Speech is silver: Conversation culture in the Dutch “Golden Age”

Conversation. Informal speech. Habitats. Literary sources. Visual sources.

The boisterous conviviality we know from Dutch genre painting of the 17th century expresses only one side – albeit an important one – of the culture of conversation in the Dutch “Golden Age”. The author writes about what the ideal image and everyday life of conversation looked like in the Republic of the Seven United Provinces, the freest European country of the Baroque period. The picture of the multifaceted culture of communication in the Netherlands of the era can be shown by means of not only visual, but also rich literary material. Diaries, memoirs, correspondence, conduct manuals and, in many cases, literary works of the time show what rules governed free communication, what habitats were predominant in sociable conversation and what was permitted in it. However, it was not only great personalities of Dutch education such as Hugo Grotius or Constantijn Huygens Jr. who commented on the sociability of their time; impressive images of it were also provided by numerous foreigners who travelled to and admired the Netherlands.

Prof. Mgr. Adam Bžoch, CSc.
Ústav svetovej literatúry
Slovenská akadémia vied
Dúbravská cesta 9
841 04 Bratislava
Slovenská republika
adam.bzoch@savba.sk
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3943-3669>

JITKA MALEČKOVÁ: “The Turk” in the Czech Imagination (1870s–1923)

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Much has been said about the relationship between the East and the West in regards to its cultural implications for political discourse as well as various issues such as international relations, nation-building and imagined communities. One of the stronger elements of this relationship is the image of the Oriental, one of the most highlighted “Others” for Western culture. As a widespread and easily reproduced concept that has evoked various perspectives and opinions, this image has been employed in a number of literary texts, artistic genres and cultural trends, showing its significance for many of the European nations. The “Turk”, one of the most common images regarding the Oriental, was and still is an important element of the cultures and countries where the Ottoman Empire once ruled, as well as those it bordered upon and with which it had cultural, political, economic ties (positive or negative). Contrary to the classical Saidian understanding of Orientalism, images regarding these Oriental Turks had a different effect on the ever-changing frontier between the East and the West, in other words, the westernmost border of the Ottoman Empire.

In her work *“The Turk” in the Czech Imagination*, Jitka Malečková from the Institute of Near Eastern and African Studies at Charles University (Prague) examines the image of the Turk reproduced by Czech authors, underlining the differences between the Czech society and their neighbors in regards to their perspective on the Orient between the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although the Czechs have never been directly ruled by the Turks, they were nonetheless affected by the political history of their region. The neighboring Slovaks and Hungarians having endured the “Turkish yoke” for

a substantial period, and the Czechs having been incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the arch-nemesis of the Turks in the West for a few centuries, the image of the Turk in the Czech imagination possesses both similarities and differences with its form elsewhere. It can be argued that the imagination of the Czechs, neither a colonial Western power nor a former Christian subject nation of the Ottoman Empire, signifies an important outlook for the field of imagology, and this monograph has been published in Brill/Rodopi’s long-running series “Studia Imagologica”.

Joep Leerssen suggests that such images are the result of the national and regional experiences of the people who create them and are in constant motion. In the classical sense of the term Orientalism, the Oriental is usually perceived as a weak, inferior and primitive culture that needs to be civilized and dominated by the superior European culture and hegemony. Said’s understanding of Orientalism in this regard usually refers to the relationship between the Arab nations and the Western powers, namely Britain and France. However, it is possible to observe that different dynamics, quite the opposite of those employed in the classical sense of Orientalism, are at play in specific geographies and regions of Europe. One of the most interesting of these regions is Central Europe in which the image of the Turk found itself a place in various political, literary and artistic narratives. Contrary to the classical understanding of Orientalism, images regarding these Oriental Turks had a different effect on the ever-changing frontier between the Ottoman and Habsburg Empires, as Andre Gingrich has analyzed in his concept of “frontier Orientalism”.

In Chapter 1 of her work, Malečková explores how the image of the “Terrible Turk” was reproduced in the Czech imagination, both in regards to their experiences in the Turkish Wars and as a part of their cultural and social structure. She argues that, even though Czechs were not subjected to Turkish rule, the implications of the bordering Turks were quite prominent among the population. The image of the Turk, perceived as an oppressor and alien threat to the sovereignty of the Christian world, is also employed by the Czechs for various political and social purposes. Malečková emphasizes the Turk’s role as a proxy in literature, painting and folk tales and their purposes as a whole for the Czech society. In accordance with the popular anthropological issues of the period, the race of the Turk was also brought into question by various European sources. Malečková underlines the importance of such discussions regarding the Turk in consideration of the scientific and political atmosphere of the era. Additionally, she further discusses the development of the image of the Turk by exemplifying its various purposes and how they were adapted to the political and social narratives of Czech society. Contrary to the popular narrative, Malečková also stresses the function of the image of the Turk in folk tales and ballads, as an element of entertainment.

Malečková comments on the relationship between the Czechs and other Slavic nations living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire in Chapter 2 of her work, which is especially important for the discussions regarding the multi-cultural status of the Ottoman Empire and how emerging nationalistic ideas shaped and influenced cultural perceptions. The opinion of Czech society regarding their Slavic brethren living under the Turkish yoke is examined thoroughly and the function of the image of the Turk in this regard is analyzed and exemplified. Accordingly, concerning Czech perceptions of the Turks, Malečková also comments on the concepts of exoticness and backwardness which are often associated with the Orientals by Western accounts. From

the writings of Czech travelers, she discusses how this exoticness can be observed from the opinions and experiences regarding Turkish women, as well as how the backwardness of Turkish society was perceived as a whole. However, she states that the opinions regarding the Turks were not always negative and in fact, they also received admiration and praise. She explains the differences of opinion of Czech society regarding the Turks by underlining the political concepts and social conditions of the period.

Another important aspect of Malečková’s work is that it also focuses on the opinions and images of Czech society regarding what Gingrich has called the “Good Muslims”, namely Bosnians, who were incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In Chapter 3, she also comments on what she calls the “colonial ambitions of the Czechs” (150), even though they were not a Western colonial power, especially regarding the relationship between Czech intellectuals and Bosnians, who were considered to be the Slavic brethren of the Czechs despite being Muslims. This important topic deals with the power dynamics of the region in a period of great change, nationalist ambitions and nation-building efforts. Furthermore, she comments on the function of these “Good Orientals” by serving as a gateway for Czech cultural interest and influence in the Orient, as well as on the cultures and countries of their Slavic brethren. She also strongly emphasizes the role of travelogues and guidebooks focusing on Bosnia-Herzegovina, underlining that some authors noticed and commented on the Oriental character of Bosnia-Herzegovina and perceived the region as being oppressed under the Turkish rule.

Malečková additionally comments on the historical development of Oriental studies in Czech academia as well as its current position and goals, in addition to many issues in the field of cultural studies such as translation. In Chapter 4, she explains the historical development of Czech Oriental studies and stresses that “the reliance on foreign scholarship that can be observed

in the early and some of the later writings of Czech Orientalists does not mean that the Czech field of Oriental studies emerged as a pure replica of Orientalist schools abroad” (176), underlining the differences in regards to their purpose, aims and subjects as well as providing examples from prominent Czech Orientalists. She highlights the struggles concerning the field of Orientalism in the Czech lands, such as the poor wages, demanding requirements, etc.

Malečková’s *“The Turk” in the Czech Imagination (1870s–1923)* is a valuable addition to the field of cultural studies as she explores the terra incognita between the frontier and the West in its relationship with the Orient while commenting on the crucial points

of the discourse as a whole, as well as providing examples for the differences between Oriental approaches of various regions and nations. This study of the Czech imagination regarding the Orient is an important addition to the imagological studies, as it presents how otherness differentiates between nations, how it was and is employed for various reasons, and how it was perceived differently throughout the time. Scholars and general readers alike will find that Malečková’s book is a pleasurable read, possessing great academic importance as well as providing valuable scholarly work on the topic.

HALUK IHSAN TALAY
Yeditepe University
Turkey

JOHN CORBETT – TING HUANG (eds.): The Translation and Transmission of Concrete Poetry

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Translation theory and practice as a rule takes into consideration the particulars of what facilitates the carrying over of meanings which are necessarily often inherently indeterminate and shrouded in mystery. Anyone who has ever tried their hand at translating poetry would probably agree that any serious attempt at doing so is complicated – sometimes almost to the point of impossibility – by the necessity of continually taking into consideration a host of often conflicting factors such as the semantic ambiguity of tropes, the intended versus accidental effects of the rhythm, and the graphical layout and play on words. As the recently-published volume *The Translation and Transmission of Concrete Poetry* edited by John Corbett and Ting Huang shows, the matter becomes even more complicated when it comes to the translation of concrete and experimental poetry. The volume, addressing such issues as the translation of Chinese characters and ideograms, playfulness or

transcreation, grew out of a seminar held by the Department of English at the University of Macau in late 2016 and from a grant aimed at mapping avant-garde movements in literature in the latter half of the 20th century.

The volume is comprised of twelve chapters covering a wide range of topics from early Western visual poetry (Juliana di Fiori Pondian) through the forms and varieties of Chinese experimental poetry and the problems of its translation (Li Li, Chen Li) and the reception of concrete poetry in North America (Odile Cisneros) to the problems addressing the translation of playfulness and metaphor (Susan Bassnett, Chris McCabe). All of the contributions address in one way or another the problem of “‘untranslatable’ concrete poetry [...] through the lens of ‘transcreation’, that is, the informed, creative response to the translation of playful, enigmatic, visual texts” (i). Probes into the topic look into

innovative writerly practice and the translation of poetry originating in three different continents. The prism of transcreation naturally forefronts such clusters of problems as translatability, handling of the poem's materiality in translation, the sound and/or the visual as the carriers of meaning, and the limits of translational creativity that would strive for a preservation of the linguistically innovative character of the source text. The volume makes the readers ponder such issues as how – or if – an ancient poem embroidered on silk can be carried over to contemporary audiences in digital form, whether the insertion of visual elements into a translation of a source text in which these are absent can still be termed a translation, or whether the Loch Ness monster in Virna Teixeira's Brazilian version of Edwin Morgan's sound poem, "The Loch Ness Monster's Song" should disappear under the surface to the sound of the original "blm plm/blm plm/blm plm/blp," or to "blu plb/blu plb/blu plb/blb" (6). More freely connected with the problems of translating poetry in the modernist and postmodern tradition is the question of to what extent various authorial paratextual material, such as T.S. Eliot's notes to *The Waste Land*, add to the readers' enjoyment of the work: in this context, Di Fiori Pondian mentions Ezra Pound's observation that Eliot's addi-

tion of notes "added nothing to his pleasure in the poem" (33).

It is only natural that the scope of issues pertaining to the translation, reception and other phenomena connected with carrying over concrete poetry into different contexts covered in *The Translation and Transmission of Concrete Poetry* is necessarily limited by the research interests of individual authors and the space and time they had at their disposal – as John Corbett acknowledges in his introduction (8). Nevertheless, the volume's openness with regards to the question of value of a transcreated cultural artefact and abstaining from assuming a rigid position towards (un)translatability in the face of a concrete poem is inspiring, and instead of providing simple answers or manuals provokes further thought experiments on the part of the reader, be they translators, poets, students or scholars. What is more, the volume also provides many examples of geographically, poetologically and linguistically diverse interpretations of concrete poetry and its translation which also makes it into an attractive guide to such writing – a sort of commented anthology – even for those who have not encountered concrete poetry before.

ANNA FOSSE
Norway

ROY YOUNDALE: Using Computers in the Translation of Literary Style: Challenges and Opportunities

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"Why do literary translators, and their trainers, often give the impression that they are at best ambivalent about the use of technology in literary translation, and at worst simply antagonistic?" (1) This is the opening question of the book *Using Computers in the Translation of Literary Style* by Roy Youdale, research

associate at the School of Modern Languages of the University of Bristol.

The book is divided into eight chapters and an introduction where the author describes his motivation to write the book, which is already hinted at by the opening question. The first three chapters are theoretically focused, in-

roduce the use of computers and technology in literary translation, and the material for the later chapters (the novel *Gracias por el fuego* [Thank you for the light] by the Uruguayan author Mario Benedetti), and Youdale's novel approach to the analysis of literary style – close and distant reading (CDR). The later chapters focus on applying his methodology to the selected text, to test whether the CDR analysis would help literary translators in identifying traits of literary style and in doing so help them produce a translation that would match up to the style of the original. Finally, the author devotes one chapter to the analysis of his own translatorial style to identify unconscious traits of his own writing.

So, what is the CDR analysis? It is basically a set of corpus-linguistic tools, techniques, and visualizations used to analyze a text (the original in this case) to reveal information that close reading would not identify due to them being, e.g., spread out across several pages. In other words, CDR is a combination of close reading and quantitative analysis which, the author argues, is beneficial for stylistic awareness and leads to better informed translations. It needs to be added, however, that a better-informed translation might not actually be a better translation, but it has the potential to be so.

Youdale argues that this methodology can be used in four ways: to analyze the source text after the initial reading; to help with the first draft of the translation; to compare the draft with the original and determine whether all translation goals of the translator were met; and to perform an auto-analysis of translator style. The countless examples the author provides leave him believing that CDR is indeed a great tool for literary translators. In addition, he describes ways to use the different software tools in a way that makes them seem easy to use and helpful.

Among the several functions Youdale describes are corpus summaries, word lists, keyword lists, n-grams, frequency, distribution, contextual analysis, and measures of lexical richness. These help him extract information from the source text that would otherwise be impossible to obtain by close

reading only. Notable among the many examples are the frequencies of the conjunction “and”, which, as shown by an analysis, is used more frequently by one of the characters in Benedetti's novel. Such an observation can have an impact on the translation and its style. Another fascinating example is the translation of the title *Gracias por el fuego*, where the translator needs to decide whether to translate “fuego” as “fire” or as “light”. After a comparative analysis of other translations including Czech, German, and Greek, and the book cover illustrations of these editions, the author confirms the validity of the translation of *fuego* as “light” for a prospective English version.

CDR makes it easy to analyze sentence length and determine patterns in direct and indirect speech as well. Youdale repeatedly proves that the information gained by CDR is relevant to translation decision-making in connection to literary style and can have an impact on the translation from the beginning of the translation process up until the final stages of revision.

Using Computers in the Translation of Literary Style in a way introduces the field of “computer-assisted literary translation” (CALT) to translation studies and discusses its many benefits but also limitations. It needs to be added that Youdale's methodology does not deskill or attempt to replace human translation by machine translation – it tries to enhance human translation instead. Youdale reminds the reader time and again that not every countable feature of the source text needs to be relevant for the translation process and while statistically oriented analyses tend to decontextualize language, it is precisely the human factor that plays a vital role in literary translation, since as of now, as Michael H. Short and Geoffrey N. Leech put it in their *Style in Fiction*, only a human can feel “the mystery of having been moved by words” (2007, 3).

MARIÁN KABÁT

Comenius University in Bratislava
Slovak Republic

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6482-2367>

Translation and interpreting studies (TIS), as a dynamic area of study, is constantly evolving both methodologically and theoretically in order to examine and explain new tendencies in the field. The volume under review contains a selection of contributions to the conference “Translation, Interpreting and Culture: Old Dogmas, New Approaches” held in Nitra, Slovakia, in September 2018 and offers a closer look at the issues, developments and challenges related to translation and interpreting practices and theories from the cultural point of view. It includes twelve studies by TIS experts from various institutional and linguistic backgrounds and offers a multifaceted array of approaches through which to study culturally-embedded interlingual exchanges.

As mentioned in the introduction by the editors, the contributions aim to address four main areas of TIS-related phenomena, namely (a) “geographical, sociocultural and political potential and limitations of translation theory, history and criticism” (13), (b) research related to the current “professional performance and status of interpreters” (14), (c) “translation of texts that transcend genre, text type and media borders” (15), and (d) issues concerning “improvement and further potential with regard to the translation and interpreting profession” (15).

The first article, “Translators and Publishers in Czechoslovakia (1968–1989): Following and Subverting the Ideology”, by Marianna Bachledová, describes how publishing activity was determined by political factors during the normalization period. On the basis of theoretical and historical sources, the author describes the way totalitarian tendencies of censorship and self-censorship practices in literary translation served to impose political values. The analysis shows that

more than a third of the paratextual materials were explicit ideologically tinged and that the shifts in the political atmosphere between liberalization and renewed repression rarely affected the degree of ideologization observed in the corpus.

Marie Krappmann’s chapter “The Translation of Yiddish Literature into Czech in Jewish Periodicals: The Impact of the Medium and the Genre of the Source Text on the Choice of Translation Strategies” focuses on the detailed investigation of applied translation strategies. Her corpus is composed of materials in periodicals (*Židovská ročenka* [Jewish almanac], *Věstník židovských náboženských obcí v Československu* [Bulletin of Jewish religious communities in Czechoslovakia]), since these were almost the only spaces for the publication of Yiddish literature in Czech translation before the fall of state socialism. Because the study is based on close reading of a few selected texts, its conclusions are limited to observing such tendencies as individual translators’ consistency in domesticating culture-bound and religious terms or generalizing idiomatic Yiddish phrases. However, since the material is itself highly fragmentary (Yiddish literature holds a peripheral place in the field of Czech literary translation), the study is a solid starting ground for further research into the topic.

In “Hybridity and (Re)Contextuality as a Conceptual Tool in Selma Ekrem’s *Unveiled* and Its Turkish Translation”, Büşra Yaman deals with the mixing of Eastern and Western elements in the autobiography *Unveiled* (1930) by Selma Ekrem and its Turkish translation *Peçeye İsyân: Namık Kemal’in Torununun Anıları* (Rebellion against the veil: Memoirs of Namık Kemal’s granddaughter, 1998) by Gül Çağalı

Güven. The source text, originally written in English, is itself a self-translation, and, as Yaman asserts, it provided the author/self-translator with “practical means to construct a new identity for herself, a gateway to resistance against Western stereotypes and standardizing codes and, at the same time, a vehicle to meet the Orientalist expectations to some degree” (162). Yaman’s literature overview positions the concept of hybridity within the framework of translation studies on the agential and textual level. In her self-translation, Yaman asserts, Ekrem expresses her hybrid identity mostly through transliteration, explicitation and literal translation. In the Turkish translation, agential hybridity concerns two responsible actors: Mehmet Atay’s publishing house Anahtar Kitaplar promotes leftist values, while the translator Güven, although herself a historian, generally prefers literal translation with brief explanations, but relies on historicizing when it comes to key terms in Ottoman administration.

The remaining studies are highly context-bound and culturally embedded. Ludmila Lambeinová’s “Paratexts of Academic Texts: Polish History from a Czech Perspective” is mainly based on the reception of Polish history and culture and emphasizes the importance of researching paratextual elements in the field of translation history.

Other contributions focus on translator training and on the translation profession. “Quality in Translation Crowdsourcing: A Case Study with Professional and Non-Professional Translators” by Maria Stasimioti, Vilemini Sisoni and Katia Lida Kermanidis investigates the quality level of translations created by experienced professionals and those without specialized training who “either work for free or for a small fee” (169) on crowdsourcing platforms. Marián Kabát’s “Toward a Context-Based Definition of Localization” proposes a definition of localization “that would encompass both translation and culture” (205) and would help to create a link between translation studies and

the localization industry. In “Training Future Professionals in Slovakia: Contexts, Changes and Challenges in Translator Training”, Martin Djovčoš and Emília Perez reflect on current developments of the translation market and profession in the country, pointing out both positive aspects of university training and issues that need improvement. “Students’ Motivation and Their Subjective Readiness to Enter the Translation Profession: A Survey of Four Different Universities in One Country” by Pavol Šveda examines the studies and career plans of 4th-year students, emphasizing a close link between their motivation and future perspectives of their programs.

Additional chapters in the volume focus on interpreting studies and interpreter training. In “The Factors Influencing the Role of Sign Language Interpreters: The Case of Turkey”, İmren Gökçe Vaz De Carvalho specifies the role of the sign language interpreter (SLI) in Turkey. She asserts that Turkish SLIs lack the proper awareness of adequate strategies and professional ethics, which is rooted in the lack of interpreting-related training and the absence of university degree programs. Antony Hoyte-West’s “A League of Their Own? Conference Interpreters Viewed Through the Prism of Elite Sociology” examines the contemporary status of conference interpreting as a field that has not yet been thoroughly researched. Mária Bakti’s “Fluency and Delivery in the Evaluation of Interpreter Performance: Evidence from Evaluations from Trainers and the Target Audience” calls for more attention to be paid to the delivery skills of the students in the training of interpreting. Soňa Hodáková’s “To Be or Not to Be an Interpreter? Should Interpreter’s Training Change the Personality or Subordinate Itself to It?” focuses on the importance of the motivational factors in interpreting, and reflects on how students’ levels of motivation and personality traits affect their performance as interpreters.

The volume *Translation, Interpreting and Culture: Old Dogmas, New Approaches*, although heterogeneous in topics and research

methods, provides a collection of insightful, informative and inspiring contributions. It represents an array of options in which translation, interpreting and culture can be interconnected, in the sense of how they can be affected by the social and cultural environment. Furthermore, the studies explore the roles of translators and interpreters in terms of their own perception of their profession and their work environment, while taking into consideration how university preparation of future translators and interpreters can form their attitude towards the practice of their profession. The collection brings together the results of contemporary research in TIC, including some valuable observations on literary translation which could be significant for further research in the field.

LENKA POLAKOVÁ

University of Prešov in Prešov

Slovak Republic

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7595-4325>

WORLD LITERATURE STUDIES
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VOLUME 14

1 / 2022

Preklad a tvorivosť

Translation and Creativity

IVANA HOSTOVÁ – MÁRIA KUSÁ (eds.)

2 / 2022

Svetová literatúra z pohľadu „malých“ a „veľkých“ literatúr

World Literature from the Perspective of “Small” and “Large” Literatures

RÓBERT GÁFRIK – MILOŠ ZELENKA (eds.)

3 / 2022

Transkulturalizmus a stredoeurópsky literárnohistorický naratív

Transculturalism and Central European Literary History Narrative

MAGDALENA ROGUSKA-NÉMETH – ZOLTÁN NÉMETH – JUDIT GÖRÖZDI
(eds.)

4 / 2022

Perspektívy výskumného komplexu „literatúra a veda“ v kontexte analýz
literárneho interdiskurzu

Perspectives on the Research Complex “Literature and Knowledge”
in the Context of Literary Interdiscourse Analysis

ROMAN MIKULÁŠ – JÁN JAMBOR (eds.)