

Agency in indirect and collaborative translation in the Slovak cultural space during socialism

IGOR TYŠŠ – EDITA GROMOVÁ

The historical research presented in this article covers one specific sub-type of collaborative translation in socialist Slovakia (mainly focusing on its incidence in the 1960s).^{*} This practice has been employed exclusively in poetry translation, has survived even to this day, and has had an outsize impact on the canon of Slovak literary translation. We have decided to call the process *translation in pairs* (more on the taxonomy later). It was first defined by Popovič as follows: “the expert prepares for the poet-translator who does not know the language of the original the so-called *podstrochnik*¹, the interlinear translation, which consists of translation of lexical meanings, translation on the syntactic level, and translational pre-interpretation of the expressive qualities of the original” (1983a, 163; emphasis added).²

This definition neatly encapsulates the main areas of interest in our article. First of all, since collaborative translation is by its nature “non-essential, open and dynamic” and its “position [...] within its unique fabric of relations is constantly shifting” (Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017, 3), we aim to provide a relational and historically bound definition of this practice. Secondly, by analyzing translation in pairs in the light of the newest sociologically oriented research in indirect translation and collaborative translation (since, as we shall see, it has the properties of both), we hope to better describe the various forms and configurations of agents and agency involved in the process. Thirdly, since Slovak translation in pairs has been researched only fragmentarily, we shall briefly present the results of two case studies of collaborative translation projects to help illuminate the discussed areas, support our conclusions, and provide new information on the subject.

As for our data, the first part of the article will be an attempt at a critical survey of the literature and pertinent historical accounts; the second part will be devoted to a sociological analysis of two concrete historical cases of translation in pairs in which we will use material from other analyses, oral history, and information from paratexts.

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MAIN CONCEPTS

Following the cultural turn of the 1990s and the sociological turn of the late 2000s, translation studies (TS) adopted many terms and corresponding concepts from social sciences, e.g. ideology, socialization, professionalization, *habitus*, field, capital, etc. *Agency* can be listed among these, and it is perhaps in part due to its crossing over that it still remains a rather problematic term. It must be said that apart from sociology and political science (Pym 2011, 76), the term had already been adopted by historiography in the 1970s (Adamo 2006). Perhaps because of its complicated history of adoption, some authors argue that the term has been adopted by TS all too easily (Kinnunen and Koskinen 2010), and some even warn that one should “not assume that the concept in itself does anything more than name a problem” (Pym 2011, 76), the problem being the question of free will operating within the limitations of objective social structures. Sources vary on the classifications of agency as well as the features they attribute to it, so it is difficult to come up with an all-encompassing definition. We stand convinced that a more open-ended definition with a few caveats based on preliminary findings is more useful.

We have decided to adopt the Finnish definition of translators’ agency, formulated by Kinnunen and Koskinen as “willingness and ability to act” (2010, 6). Here willingness means internal states and dispositions, which is an area linked to intentionality, consciousness, reflexivity, and even ethics; ability relates to issues of the individual’s power(lessness); finally, agency also means “acting”, that is, exerting one’s influence.

Of the many caveats to the definitions of agency formulated in the literature, we feel that our data justifies the three following:

- Caveat 1: Agency is not limited to humans.
Our data agrees with Khalifa (2014) who distinguishes between actors (human agents) and actants (non-human agents). Terminological pettiness aside, this distinction is useful, since it reminds us of the fact that in a heavily centralized literary field institutions hold great power and leverage.
- Caveat 2: Agency should be viewed in a dialectic relation to structure.
As Kinnunen and Koskinen put it, “[i]n any given structure, the actors will have agency, but this agency (or *habitus*) is structured by the context. The structures, however, are not permanent but constantly renegotiated by the agents” (2010, 7–8). Individual and institutional agency help create, sustain, and also incrementally change social structures, and, vice versa, social structures help shape and limit individual and institutional agency.
- Caveat 3: Agency is local and historical.
The practice of translation in pairs in Slovakia developed in an era of immense changes and centralization of cultural politics. Many authors active in the inter-war period were banned from public life and were not allowed to publish their original works, at least until the more liberal 1960s. For them, translation became the only means of earning a living. Another interesting measure was the change in copyright laws in the 1950s resulting in higher rates for translated poetry (Vilíkovský 2016).

The concept of *translation in pairs* has a complex onomasiological history. The literature suggests that it was Popovič who in 1970 coined the Slovak term “prekladateľské dvojice” (which we translate as *pairs of translators*³) which he understood as a type of translator (i.e. two translators working in pair on a translation; Popovič 1983a). Interestingly enough, even though Popovič systematically developed his concepts and corresponding terminology to denote both the processual and the textual aspects of translation (see Valentová 2017, 85–86), he never actually gave a specific name to this process. The closest terms related to translation in pairs, which Popovič provides in the dictionary *Originál/preklad* (1983b, Original/Translation), are “literal translation (interline translation)” and perhaps the self-explanatory “compilative translation” (224). He defines the former as “translation of linguistic meanings with annotations on possible stylistic equivalents” (1983c, 223). Of course, these are important features of the process, yet not the only ones. One could argue that Popovič merely attempted a top-down classical definition which is neither relational nor based on actual empirical data.

ONTOLOGICAL STATUS AND MODELS OF TRANSLATION IN PAIRS

Due to its circumstances, it can be argued that the practice of translation in pairs combines aspects of both *collaborative translation* (CTr) and – to a lesser degree – *indirect translation* (ITr).

The pertinent features of CTr (see Cordingley and Frigau Manning 2017) found in translation in pairs include close proximity and integral collaboration between the two agents – the expert (sources in the era use the term “linguist” or “philologist”) and the poet-translator, both having systemic influence on the translation.

As for features of ITr (which we view as a translation of a translation, Gambier 1994) in translation in pairs, these are relevant due to the potential and historically documented influence of earlier Czech translations on the process. Slovak translator Ján Vilikovský summed up the specific position of Slovak translators in the officially bilingual socialist Czechoslovakia⁴ as follows: “[w]e are being influenced by the stronger Czech translation culture. This happens directly, since we all read Czech translations, but also indirectly through our readers who also read Czech translations and get used to some kinds of translation solutions which they then, in turn, expect from Slovak translators” (“Problémy prekladu” – Problems of translation, 1966, 16).

Assis Rosa, Pięta and Bueno Maia (2017, 122) provide a classification of the ITr processes as well as languages and texts involved. Based on their taxonomy, translation in pairs falls into the categories of compilative mixed direct and ITr (if mediated by the mediating language) or compilative ITr (if mediated by the ultimate target language). The former is the case when the poet-translator (at least partially) knows and works with the source language (SL) and the interlinear (as seen in Case 1 discussed below); the latter is the case if the poet-translator does not know and work with the ultimate SL and is solely dependent on the interlinear translation provided by the expert (as seen in Case 2).

There are two models of translation in pairs which can help us understand the complexity of the practice. Vaněčková (1978) models the practice on literary text

interpretation which she sees as the most crucial – and potentially most problematic – part of the process:

$$ST - I_e - IT - I_p - TT$$

(ST – source text, I_e – the expert's interpretation, IT – interlinear, I_p – the poet-translator's interpretation, TT – target text, abbreviations slightly adapted by the authors)

According to Vaněčková, the potential problems of translation in pairs come about due to the two-fold interpretation involved in the process. From the two interpretations, however, only the interpretation of the expert (I_e) can be complete, since they have complete knowledge of the ST and its context. The interpretation done by the poet-translator (I_p) is only secondary because it is based only on the material (literal translation and annotations) provided by the expert. Vaněčková argues that “a work of art becomes an artifact at the moment of its perception” and this moment will fail to be the same for the poet-translator who “is expected to turn this auxiliary translation back into an original, to create an integrated work of art capable of realizing itself as an artifact” (1978, 12, trans. by Witt 2017, 171).

Týšš's (2017) operative model seeks to illustrate the process side of translation in pairs. The activity is seen as consisting of three phases:

1. ST and pertinent materials (if available) accessed and worked on primarily by the expert;
2. intermediary text packages – “a corpus of auxiliary texts and instructions created during the cooperation between the expert and poet-translator” (79);
3. TT and pertinent materials (if these are to be published) worked on primarily by the poet-translator and the editor of the translation.

(POSSIBLE) HISTORICAL MOTIVATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OF TRANSLATION IN PAIRS

Why did (and does) translation in pairs happen in the Slovak context? Popovič (1970) claims that it came about for professional and practical reasons. As for the *professional reasons*, he stresses the historical needs of the target culture to publish so-called critical editions of classical and older literary works. In this case the philological annotations, which are part and parcel of the translation in pairs process, are not merely internal utilitarian texts for the use of the poet-translator, but very often get published and serve as literary historical paratexts (in the form of endnotes or afterwords).

As for the *practical reasons*, Popovič specifically points out the lack of knowledge of geographically and culturally distant languages or issues related to cultural provincialism (1970, 26). However, an empirical survey of the Slovak National Bibliography reveals a completely different picture: the majority of indirect translations in the 20th century were of English, Russian, French, and German ultimate source texts (Bubnášová 2011, 85), none of which have ever been languages culturally (or geographically) distant in Slovakia. Fragmentary bibliographic data suggests that the situation is comparable in translation in pairs history.

The practice of translation in pairs in Slovak translation history has not been researched in a complex manner to date. We lack comprehensive bibliographic

research which would cover book production as well as poems in literary magazines. The following points are based on preliminary conclusions and ongoing research of socialist literary magazines (mainly Varačková 2016; Prišćová 2016; Mikleová 2018). The data we have so far suggests that the practice started appearing sparsely and infrequently after 1945 and the collaborations were mainly between well-known Slovak poets (e.g. Pavol Horov, Viliam Turčány, Ľubomír Feldek, or Rudolf Skukálek) and, in the majority of cases, literati speaking lesser-known foreign languages (e.g. Mária Topoľská or Anton Bolek) or well-known translators and foreign literature experts (Jozef Kot, Zuzana Bothová, Jozef Felix, etc.). The bibliographies also suggest that a number of translation in pairs projects followed the trajectory typical of the era: first several poems by the duo appeared in magazines, and then a collection was published in book format (as was the case with J. Felix and V. Turčány working on Dante or J. Kot and R. Skukálek working on E.L. Masters).

Another interesting pattern which comes up in the bibliographical resources is that several of the poet-translators worked on some poems from the same source language alone and on others in collaboration with an expert. This is the case with the poet R. Skukálek and his translations from English, but also of the poet V. Turčány, who translated poems from Italian by Michelangelo or Boccaccio alone, but on the translations of Dante he collaborated with Felix (see more in Varačková 2016). This empirical evidence further contradicts claims about translation in pairs operating due to insufficient knowledge of some SLs.

So far, the available data does not show a statistically relevant break between the 1950s and the following periods (as does other research of Slovak socialist translation history, e.g. Pliešovská 2016; Tyšš 2017; or Kusá 2017). Some data and historical sources, however, do suggest that *something* was changing in this practice of translation with the coming of the 1960s. First of all, there came a gradual exchange of generations in literary circles, accompanied by the establishment of literary magazines for young authors (the Czech *Květen* in 1955 and the Slovak *Mladá tvorba* in 1956) and a magazine specifically devoted to translation of world literature (the Czech *Světová literatura*, in 1956). Secondly, the gradual, albeit volatile, loosening of cultural politics after 1956 (see Marušiak 2001) encouraged the young literati, in the words of Zuzana Bothová, “seeking adequate forms to express their views of life drive their inspiration from streaks of Modernism which have been developing without ruptures in countries where no revolutionary social changes took place” (1964, 36).

Until the early 1960s, the most representative projects of translation in pairs were the critical editions of classical and older poetry, like the projects J. Felix participated in (see Truhlářová 2014) or translations of verse drama (see Vilikovský 2014 for examples from the history of Shakespeare translation). However, the then-young and up-and-coming poets of the so-called Trnava Group⁵ (namely Ľubomír Feldek, Ján Stacho, Ján Ondruš, and Jozef Mihalkovič) and other younger poets at the time, including most notably Miroslav Válek, Vojtech Mihálik, Rudolf Skukálek, and Ján Buzássy, started collaborating with language experts and began translating more contemporary or classical modern poetry. The young poets took up translating modern poetry as one of their generational and artistic goals. Many of the poets who col-

labored in pairs to translate modern Anglo-American poetry (e.g. the Beat poets, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, and others) were also attracted to the poetics or worldviews of the foreign authors, most of whom were blacklisted in the 1950s (see for example Štrasser and Buzássy 2013, 172).

Of course, the practical reasons for translating in pairs were still the case. As Feldek (1958) put it in his famous poetry translation manifesto “Bude reč o preklade” (Let’s talk about translation): “foreign languages seem to be Achilles’ heel of today’s poets. They would rather translate in pairs” (8).

COMPARISON WITH THE SOVIET *PODSTROCHNIK* TRANSLATION

The historically unique features of the Slovak practice of translation in pairs will be better understood if compared to the Soviet practice of translating poetry from the interlinear version called *podstrochnik*. Witt (2017) defines the practice as follows: “Here, the crude intermediate [...] was in the same language as the target text, rendering the entire transfer operation a translational hybrid involving an interlingual as well as an intralingual step [...]. Typically, the two steps were carried out separately with no contact occurring between the respective agents” (167).

The two steps were often separated by the center-periphery geographical and social distance, since the *podstrochnik* was produced in a Union republic (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, etc.) and sent to a poet-translator based in Moscow or Leningrad. It must also be added that Witt focuses on the 1930s and 1940s when many more or less successful attempts to institutionalize the practice took place. Even though the administrators of Soviet culture attempted to make it obligatory to produce *podstrochniki* with explanatory paratexts, Witt still found cases where the poet-translators working at a distant location had to make do with the interlinear version alone. The practice of *podstrochnik* translation developed throughout the 20th century and continues to be used in poetry translation in Russia even today. It has acquired new forms and expanded its domain of use.

Of course, one could legitimately ask whether – given the strong influence of Soviet cultural politics throughout the Eastern Bloc – the practice of *podstrochnik* translation was not simply carried over to the Slovak cultural space. Even though bibliographic material remains sparse and hard to get⁶, there is reasonable empirical evidence (and lack of archival documentation to contradict it) to assume that the practice was not bureaucratically imposed on Czechoslovakia. There were definitely important translations carried out in pairs before 1948, and these were complex works of older literature requiring expert knowledge of older languages, their poetic conventions, and culture (like the François Villon translation project Jozef Felix started in 1946).

Even though the translators and experts active in the studied era (including A. Popovič) used the Russian term *podstrochnik*, the practice they were involved in was markedly different from that in the USSR. In Slovakia the practice was viewed negatively only when it was performed without adequate expertise and in a mechanistic manner (see Feldek 1958). Unlike in the Soviet case, the Slovak practice was never a matter of concerted cultural policy nor did it operate across a geographi-

cal and social center–periphery barrier. The Slovak experts and poet-translators tended to know each other well, met and discussed their work in person, and some even worked on several projects together (like Felix with Turčány or Bothová with Buzássy).

CASE 1: DANTE’S “INFERNO” IN SLOVAK TRANSLATION

This translation is an example of a long-term project based on close collaboration of both agents. It was started in the early 1950s when Jozef Felix (1913–1977) got interested in the works and life of Dante, but, sadly enough, he did not live to see the project finished.⁷ As one of his colleagues reminisced, the fascination with the humanist message of the Italian poet was Felix’s “main source of support, strength, and security” (Pašteka 1994, 149 quoted in Kučerková 2014, 119) in the era of harsh ideological oppression. Himself a kind of Renaissance man, Felix is considered one of the founders of Slovak Romance studies. He was a literary and translation critic, an essayist, a literary historian, a university teacher, an editor, and an accomplished translator of over 50 works. The second agent who collaborated on the Dante translations was Viliam Turčány (1928), a poet and literary scholar specializing in literary history and comparative versology. It is notable that he did not speak Italian when he started working on Dante, but he gradually learned the language at such a level that, after Felix died, he was able to finish the *Paradiso* translation on his own.

Felix was well-read on Dante. His personal archive reveals that he diligently studied numerous critical and literary historical works from the most relevant Dante scholars and read other commented translations into several languages. His notes on Dante alone take up 13 boxes in the archive and books on Dante take up a huge portion of his extensive library (see more in Kučerková 2014). Felix argued that if one is to understand Dante, it is imperative to understand where the poet came from mentally and spiritually, as well as in terms of his worldview and (medieval) imagery. Such an approach set exceptionally high standards for the translators.

Felix’s translation method was reconstructed by Truhlářová (2014) who describes it as a historical method between actualization and modernization (the following lines are based on her findings). Felix used an anthropocentric and universalist approach which allowed him to show literary phenomena in their uniqueness and universality at the same time. His method was also modern in that he wanted to draw analogies between literary phenomena across times and cultures with an emphasis on their contribution to modernity. However, such “revival” of old texts was to be always based on the historical understanding of the ST and its context. Lastly, Felix always stressed that the author’s original style was to be retained, so the translator was obliged to work with stylistic functional equivalence.

The *Inferno* translation (1965) was a demonstration of this method: a book of well-wrought poetry in good Slovak accompanied by surprisingly extensive end-notes, which, as Felix argues, are important because if the reader “does not know anything about the sources of Dante’s poetry, if they do not know the complete historical background of the work [...] several parts of *The Divine Comedy*, perhaps even the most poetic ones, will strike them as soundless and unintelligible” (2005, 293–294).

What this meant in reality is that endnotes (single spaced and in two columns) comprise more than one fourth (!) of the total volume of the book.

Felix and Turčány took pains to describe this process to a general readership when they published some examples of their manuscripts (particular ST segments, segments of the interlinear with extensive commentary, and ultimate TT versions of the said segments) in the renowned literary magazine *Romboid* (“O prekladaní vo dvojici”, 1970).

This is how Turčány remembered his collaboration with Felix years later:

The translation of one canto took me 4–6 weeks. At first I learned the original by heart and afterwards or simultaneously I tried to internalize the commentary. My co-translator could provide me with as much as 20 pages of commentary⁸ to one canto. His notes contained the interpretation of the most notable Dante scholars as well as some by Jozef Felix himself. Only after having familiarized myself with them properly did I start translating the canto in question. While doing so, I had in mind all the peculiarities of its structure, those related not only to its content but also to its form, including rhythm, rhyme, sound imagery – in a word, all matters related to the verse structure. This is where my own research of Slovak verse structures came in handy, too (1994, 159–160).

We see that the collaboration between Felix and Turčány was close and methodical. Unlike in the Soviet case, the collaborators knew each other, met, and discussed their solutions. Moreover, the fact that the poet-translator learned Italian meant that even he had access to the ultimate ST, which shows that this collaboration defies a top-down definition of translation in pairs.

The agency of the pair can be analyzed from several aspects. First of all, it must be said that critics were quick to praise the duo’s translation of the classical work, e.g. “[t]he well thought-out strategy of the skillful translators has brought a work whose great qualities stand in stark contrast to the series of crafty *podstrochnik* translations” (Popovič 1970, 31; emphasis added). To this day, the text is considered one of the most important Slovak poetry translations. This earned its translators considerable symbolic capital among their peers; they became respected and were asked to lecture on their approach on several occasions. However, this acclaim did not reach beyond the circles of literati and poetry lovers.

Felix suffered from permanent harassment from the cultural political and educational establishment. He was hampered from pursuing his academic career, had to leave his position as producer in the Slovak National Theater in the early 1950s, and throughout his life he was well aware of the fact that some of his studies would not pass through the censors (see more in Pašteka 2014). It was perhaps true serendipity that he took interest in projects whose complexity and apparent historicity must have made them seem ideologically less problematic. When looking at the translation of Dante, for example, it is noteworthy that several Dante scholars commend Felix and Turčány for resisting the institutional pressures to downplay its religious undertones (see overview in Šavelová 2017).

Another interesting dynamic of agency is based on the relationship between the two collaborators. Both Felix and Turčány were literary experts and even the latter, who was 15 years younger, had already made a name for himself as a groundbreaking

poet (see Marčok et al. 2006) and as an up-and-coming literary scholar. Turčány held Felix's literary historical work in great esteem and on several occasions remarked that the commentary "is like a university course in poetry and offers excellent material for poetry translation theory" (2005, 406). Turčány used to be Felix's student at Comenius University in Bratislava, and even while working on Dante several years later, he still viewed his collaborator as his teacher and was thankful for working with him on a project he saw as "the best schooling of my life" (1970, 26).

CASE 2: LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI'S POETRY IN SLOVAK TRANSLATION

While the former case was an example of a long-term translation project rooted in a strong individual method of translation, this project can be seen as a reflection of the attitudes toward poetry translation in the 1960s. Case 2 represents a semi-close collaboration, one in which there were status and power differences between the agents.

The more open attitudes the 1960s brought to the arts in Czechoslovakia are reflected in the abovementioned poetry translation manifesto "Bude reč o preklade" (Let's talk about translation) in which Feldek came out with a new program for translating poetry (in pairs) which sought to overcome the mistakes and artistic inadequacies of past translations. Feldek sees poetry translation as a creative endeavor of poets of a specific era and a specific generation, decries historicizing translations, and argues that a translation should retain "mainly a relationship of immediacy" (1958, 6). It is also very telling that, in his view, foreign language competence is less important than creativity, since only a poet can guarantee the artistic integrity of a poem. This change of attitude along with the change of generation and loosening of cultural policy had an impact on the development of translation in pairs.

The selection of Ferlinghetti's poems which resulted from the collaboration between expert Ján Vilikovský (1937) and poet-translator Vojtech Mihálik (1926–2001) came out in 1965 and was titled *Smutná nahá jazdkyňa* (The Sad Naked Rider). The following information on the genesis and process of the project was provided by Vilikovský himself (Vilikovský 2016). Unfortunately, we are unable to uncover any archival or manuscript material pertaining to this project, hence the reliance on oral history (if possible, corroborated by other data).

Vilikovský, who at the time was a young translator of prose from English and worked as an editor for the state-owned publishing house Slovenský spisovateľ, was asked one day by its director Mihálik, a renowned poet, poetry translator, and editor, whether he would like to do *podstrochnik* translations for him, since he liked the Czech translations of Ferlinghetti he read and would like to translate his poetry into Slovak. Vilikovský agreed, and the pair decided to expand their selection by including part of *Starting from San Francisco*, which had then not yet appeared in Czech translation.

If we look at how Vilikovský describes the process of collaboration, we see a marked difference between the agents' relative power in decision-making:

The collaboration with Mihálik was proper, but in no way was it an enriching dialogue of two poetic souls. My interlinear was very prosaic: a literal translation of a verse or

a couplet; a prosaic version of the literal translation, this time in standard Slovak; and some commentary on the meter or meaning (possible interpretations, hints at word play, possible explanations of problematic passages and the like). When I was done, I gave Mihálik my interlinear. He in turn worked on it for some time and gave me back copies of my interlinears with the drafts of his translations. I took a look at it all, and then we sat together and went through possible corrections and variations – and that was it. There were no “confrontational polemics”, [as you termed it,] I’m afraid. Rather, I would say that our collaboration was of the kind you called “long distance” (Vilikovský 2016).

As we can see, this collaboration was more practically oriented and based on the logical division of labor given the actor’s competences. Unlike with Felix and Turčány, there was no profound impact and learning from one another. Also the formality of power relations was more noticeable, since Vilikovský claims that he was well aware that Mihálik was the chief author of the translation.

As for the translators’ agency in relation to the cultural authorities, the pair had reasonably more potential leverage, since one of the collaborators was actually a member of the literary establishment. Yet, we could see that their agency was limited. After all, institutionalized conservatism can be seen in the choice and paratextual treatment of the translated authors. It is thus not surprising Ferlinghetti was the first Beat author to be translated both to Czech (by Jan Zábřana, in 1962, 1964; see more in Tyšš 2017, 38–39) and Slovak and why, in his afterword to the Slovak translation, J. Vilikovský took pains to stress and argue that the author was no “pure-bred” Beat (1965, 148).

What should be mentioned in this case is the influence of Czech translations, which justifies our earlier claims about the collaborative practice potentially involving indirect translation. Vilikovský claims that, when it came to choosing the poems for translation, it was Mihálik’s responsibility, and “he chose what he already knew from Czech translation, and so our book was only different [from what was already available in Czech] thanks to the material from the author’s newest collection” (Vilikovský 2016). Moreover, though, Vilikovský himself admitted to having consulted the Czech translation with some problematic passages.

CONCLUSIONS

The Slovak practice of translation in pairs (that is, collaborative translation of poetry where the expert translates the ultimate source text with commentary for the purposes of creative re-formulation by the poet-translator) was historically distinct from the Soviet practice of *podstrochnik* translation in at least three aspects:

- the *close collaboration* the Slovak practice entailed enabled both agents (the expert and the poet-translator) to get more agency in the process, leading to more influence on the results, possibilities for discussion, etc.;
- the *use of paratexts* in written (commentary on meter, allusions, symbols, complicated passages, etc.) or at least oral form (oral consultations) throughout the process was standard practice in Slovakia (even though very few were made available to readers or survived);
- the Slovak practice was *not viewed so negatively* as the Soviet one (see Witt 2017 for overview of discussions). In Slovakia, translation in pairs was either used for

significant translations of older or classical poetry and drama or for translation of modern poetry conducted by excellent poets who did not speak the ultimate source language (and this even amounted to a generational phenomenon, see Feldek 1958).

Historically speaking, translation in pairs was specific in that many sometimes incongruous factors were at play. To name just the most important ones:

- The practice was indeed one answer to a problem Popovič (1970; 1975; 1983a) calls *the linguistic unavailability of the source text* by which he means the lack of linguistically competent professionals for certain culturally distant languages (like Chinese, Bengali, African languages, etc.) or philologically apt experts for old or classical texts (Old Greek, Latin, medieval literature, etc.).
- Another factor, which gained prominence in the 1960s, was that the young generation of poets started *translating to appropriate modern foreign poetry* which appealed to them; however, since many of them did not speak foreign languages well enough, there began a steady growth of translations done in pairs from languages such as English, Spanish, or German.
- The *influence of Czech* and the Czech reception of foreign literature was an important factor as well, since it introduces aspects of indirect translation to translation in pairs. Our cases, examples, and historical data showed that Czech translations often inspired solutions, or affected the choice of poems to be translated (in that the Slovak translators wanted to translate something similar, or differentiate themselves).

Another set of conclusions pertains to agency (which we understand as willingness and ability to act; Kinnunen and Koskinen 2010). First of all, the data suggests that agency seems to have been dependent on the manner of collaboration. This could be understood in terms of translational space:

- *close collaboration* (like the one in Case 1) means that the agents have enough opportunity to discuss their solutions, compromise on the most adequate ones, and learn from one another;
- *semi-close collaboration* (like the one in Case 2) means that there are some status and power differences between the agents; this does not mean that they did not meet and discuss the translation, but rather that one of them had the final say in the matter;
- *long-distance collaboration* is the case when the agents are not in personal contact, the most obvious example being the Soviet practice where the *podstrochniki* were made in the Union republics and sent to poet-translators located in Moscow or Leningrad.

Agency is also a reflection of power relations which – as our data and survey of the literature suggests – can be classified into two categories:

- *internal power relations* operate within the pair of translators;
- *external power relations* are the relations between the pair and the “outside” institutions.

There is no denying the fact that socialist Czechoslovakia had a centralized culture in which the state had the monopoly on publishing and distribution of books

and magazines. This is reflected in the somewhat paradoxical configuration of agency in translation in pairs. Even though the pair could gain considerable cultural and symbolic capital – and thus soft power – due to their expertise and renown, their power and leverage were limited both internally (as we saw with the Mihálik – Vilikovský collaboration) but also in relation to the institutions which directly or indirectly influenced the choice of material to be translated or even some editorial preferences.

Our article attempted to define and contextualize the practice of translation in pairs using the literature and empirical data. Even though it has had a huge influence on Slovak translation history, this sub-type of collaborative translation has not been researched in great detail so far. As for future research venues, we still need more bibliographic data on the actual poetry translations done in pairs. There is also room for comparative textual research; however, some caveats should be borne in mind:

- the research of the process is not feasible without access to the actual interlinear and its accompanying materials;
- the only feasible comparative studies using the ultimate target text should be based on comparing the Slovak translations to Czech translations with the aim of analyzing the degree of indirect translation.

NOTES

¹ The inflective form *podstrochnik*, meaning “interlinear”, is singular; the plural is *podstrochniki* (see Witt 2017). This term is also used by Popovič.

² All translations of quotations from Slovak, Czech, and Russian are by the present authors if not stated otherwise.

³ Our translation is based on the analogy to the phrase “to work in pairs”. We have opted for our own translation even though Špírk (2009) has already covered this term in his widely known article on Popovič. We feel that his variant, namely *translation couples*, has slightly awkward connotations and does not sound natural.

⁴ The relations between Slovak and Czech translation during socialism is complex and has not been fully researched to this day. See more on the reception situation of Slovak translated poetry and the impact of Czech translations in Tyšš 2017, 108–109.

⁵ This group of Slovak poets, active mainly from 1956 to 1973, revolutionized Slovak poetry after the stagnant 1950s (when poetry was mainly a mouthpiece for socialist propaganda) with their sensual and imaginative imagery and poetic experimentation. The group, which when it started included poets Ján Ondruš (1932–2000), Ján Stacho (1936–1995), Jozef Mihalkovič (1935), and Lubomír Feldek (1936), was named after the Western Slovak city of Trnava in which most of them grew up. See more in Bokníková 2011 and Feldek 2007.

⁶ This is mostly due to the sad fact that the Slovak national bibliographic reference website, the *Slovak Library Portal* (<https://www.kis3g.sk/>) does not contain proper metadata to publications which came out before 1950s, thus making it almost impossible to systematically call up all the needed data via the Advanced Search tool.

⁷ All of Felix’s and Turčány’s Dante book translations are listed in the “Sources” to this article. It must be added, though, that there are two other Slovak translations of the *Divine Comedy*. The first one was scheduled for publication in 1952, but it was canceled for political reasons. The poet-translator Andrej Žarnov (who worked in collaboration with the expert on Italian Mikuláš Pažitka) then fled Czechoslovakia and only managed to have the translation published in the US in 1978; the second complete translation, which also had a rough publication history dating back even earlier, to the

1940s, was by Karol Strmeň and came out in 1965 in Rome. Due to their disconnect with the Slovak context, the translations did not resonate. However, experts also criticize them for lack of expertise and too much interpretative freedom. See more in Šavelová 2017.

- ⁸ The notes which Turčány worked with when translating were longer than the ones that in the end made it into the book (see Turčány 2005).

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Agency in indirect and collaborative translation in the Slovak cultural space during socialism

Agency. Collaborative translation. Indirect translation. Poetry.

This article is a historical critical survey of one historically specific case of collaborative poetry translation, which we call translation in pairs, in socialist Slovakia during the 1950s and 1960s. Our point of departure is the broadly defined concept of agency (Kinnunen and Koskinen 2010) which allows us to bridge the various gaps between the individual vs. the social sphere and the determining circumstances vs. the determined ones. We argue that translation in pairs combines aspects of both indirect and collaborative translation. From the point of view of agency, it is even more complex, since a detailed look at specific cases reveals an intricate and historically determined web of intertextual and cultural influences and of personal, institutional, and power relations whose historical relevance goes beyond our examples. In the article we discuss two cases of cooperation: the Slovak translation of Dante's *Inferno* (1964) and of Ferlinghetti's poetry (1965). The two projects are distinct in terms of their genre, the form of collaboration, and their spatial-temporal and translation specifics. Drawing on the textual examples and the historical sources related to the creation and relevance of the translations, the article seeks to define such cooperation in terms of agency and in communicational terms; to define the social context of the activity in the given period; to look at agency on the level of paratexts as "footprints" (Paloposki 2010) of the agents involved.

Mgr. Igor Tyšš, PhD.
Department of Translation Studies
Faculty of Arts
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Štefánikova 67
949 74 Nitra
Slovak Republic
igor.tyss@gmail.com

Prof. PhDr. Edita Gromová, CSc.
Department of Translation Studies
Faculty of Arts
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra
Štefánikova 67
949 74 Nitra
Slovak Republic
egromova@ukf.sk