

The place of translated American literature in Slovak publishing houses after 1989

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As stated in Mária Kusá's study *Preklad ako súčasť dejín kultúrneho priestoru* (Translation as a Part of the Cultural Space History) each translation is impacted by the dominant national, political, social, cultural and literary system, and its functions change over space and time (2005, 16). Libuša Vajdová points out that within each national literature there exists a reception tradition consisting of translated works of literature and, more importantly, non-literary acts related to foreign literatures and cultures. She defines reception tradition as everything that has shaped the image of a foreign culture in the receiving environment (2013, 311) and Katarína Bednárová identified the following determinants of Slovak culture: geopolitical situation, language situation, the Czech language and Czech and Slovak cultural milieu, political gesture, religion as well as the translator's status in society (2013, 51).¹

Historically, besides their natural contacts with Czech culture, Slovaks have also had contacts with Russian culture, dating back to the 19th century and Ľudovít Štúr's work *Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft* (Slavdom and the World of the Future), first published in Russian translation in 1867, as well as with Hungarian (due to a common history under Austria-Hungary), German (due to the activities of Slovak Protestant intellectuals in Germany), and French culture (embodied in the legacy of Milan Rastislav Štefánik). However, there have been fewer contacts with English and American culture. This changed after 1989, exemplified by the publishing policy since, which has mainly been shaped by the changed geopolitical situation and the diminishing political influence on the selection of literary works for translation. Slovakia is now politically more influenced by Western Europe and North America.² As stated in our previous research (Djovčoš and Pliešovská 2011), the selection of works to be translated clearly shows the shift in power structures. Whereas during the socialist period, translation (with the exception of the 1960s) was affected by political interventions into translating (Bednárová 2013, 51), now translation is treated as a commodity.³

The various stages of American literature's reception in Slovakia against the backdrop of changing political and social conditions have been studied by several Slovak scholars,⁴ but comprehensive research of the post-1989 situation has yet to emerge.

Our thesis is that the publishing policy in Slovakia before and after 1989 is an indicator of the effects of social and political changes on various spheres of national

culture. We will describe the changing publishing tendencies using quantitative research of American literature⁵ published in Slovak translation between 1989 and 2016.

1 CHANGES IN THE SLOVAK PUBLISHING SPHERE AFTER 1989

In the 1980s, publishing activities in Slovakia were governed and controlled by Slovenské ústredie knižnej kultúry (the Slovak center of book culture). There were twenty publishers, each of which produced a certain type of literature for a different type of reader (Šrank 2015, 57). In line with the political changes after 1989, publishing activities in Slovakia underwent a process of democratization, deregulation and decentralization (8). All these changes were framed by the newly passed Trade Licensing Act of 1991.

The reforms shaped by the social and political climate of the early 1990s resulted in four major changes: the proliferation of publishers, the privatization of formerly state-owned publishers, the commercialization of literary production and the globalization/Americanization of the literary market.

1.1 Proliferation

During the post-revolution years, the number of publishers in Slovakia proliferated significantly in just two decades. As early as 1990, 400 publishers were registered, and their number kept increasing dramatically (Šrank 2015, 58). According to a survey among the representatives of leading Slovak publishers from September 2, 1998, an average of 200 new publishing companies were established every year. However, the survey also demonstrates that many of them ceased to exist after publishing a single volume.⁶ Since 2010, statistics show 1,500 existing publishers in Slovakia (59). Also, since 2010, The Slovak National Library in Martin has been compiling statistics specially designed to keep track of newly established publishers, and this data confirms that the annual addition of publishers still fluctuates around the number 200 (Table 1). However, according to Julia Sherwood⁷ (2013), only about a hundred of them publish “quality literature”.

2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
207	191	236	337	201	219

Table 1: Annual addition of publishers (Slovak National Library, 2010–2015)

1.2 Privatization

In addition to the proliferating tendency of publishers, there was another important transition, which concerned the change of ownership rights. Before 1989, almost all enterprises were state-controlled. Following 1989, the country began an extensive privatization program, seeking to denationalize and quickly transfer a large number of state-owned enterprises to private proprietors. As far as the publishing industry is concerned, in the early 1990s, there were two types of publishers in Czechoslovakia: the former state publishing houses that had been gradually privatized, and newly established private book publishers (Šmejkalová 1998, 147). The pre-1989 publishers in the state's possession (e.g. Tatran, Mladé letá, Obzor, Východoslovenské vyda-

vateľstvo and Slovenské pedagogické nakladateľstvo) were privatized in 1994 and 1995 as a part of the so-called second wave of large-scale privatization.⁸ Deprived of state subsidies, many former state publishers had accumulated debt and had to compete with the newly emerging private publishers (Ikar, Slovart, Motýľ, Marenčin PT). According to Katarína Bednárová, due to privatization, traditional publishing houses such as Slovenský spisovateľ and Mladé letá lost their positions as established publishing brands that were the guarantors of quality literature (original as well as translated) even though they had been built under the socialist regime (2015, 42).

The privatization of state-owned publishers and the emergence of dozens of newly established private enterprises have had a great impact on what is published nowadays. In order to saturate the market fast, publishers started focusing on those titles that had been absent before and that generated profits. As for fiction, this meant orienting to translated literature of a lower literary quality. Katarína Bednárová attributes the lowering of the aesthetic quality of published titles to the fact that the gradual change of the publishing environment resulted in the extinction of the job position of editors (2015, 42). Private publishers employ them rarely and they only hire proofreaders externally, so many titles published nowadays had not been edited or proofread at all. On the other hand, as the number of translations has dramatically increased, some notable translations may have remained unnoticed in the flood of substandard ones that have become a thorn in the side of literary critics and academics.

The last change related to the democratization of the cultural domain and the privatization of the publishing industry is the disintegration of the centralized book distribution system. Prior to 1989, Slovenská kniha (Slovak book), the state-owned monopoly for the book market, saw to it that books were made available to bookstores and libraries across the entire country. After 1989, the organization and its regional branches split into several distributors (Pezolt, Partner Technic, Modul, BO-DI, Knižné centrum, KD Slovakia, Slovart-Store, Slovart GTG) (Šrank 2015, 78). These distributors are governed by free-market principles; however, since 1989, the book distribution system has almost collapsed several times. Katarína Bednárová suggests that one of the factors that most hinders book distribution is the significant constriction of the Slovak book market after the division of Czechoslovakia (2015, 41).

1.3 Commercialization

In the early 1990s, an unprecedented number of new books became available in post-socialist countries, giving the public the opportunity to choose between various types of literary works. Publishers became much more consumer- and market-oriented. According to Wachtel, the advent of market-driven publishers and the disappearance of censorship in post-socialist countries resulted in the appearance of previously forbidden forms of literature, particularly translated literature (2006, 6).⁹

Today, most publishers are not willing to risk printing titles that are unlikely to make a profit. When deciding whether to publish a book, publishers have to look first at the cost estimate of the book's publishing and distribution. In the 1990s, for a company to cover all of a book's expenses, e.g. the copyright fees and author's royal-

ties, it had to be published in a print-run of at least 5,000 (Vojtek 1995, 12). In 2011, the minimum was 2,000 copies sold, 3,000 for the book to yield a substantial profit (Marenčin in Gális 2011a).

As the book market in post-socialist Slovakia opened up, many readers gravitated toward books that had been previously banned. According to Julia Sherwood, “following decades of suppression under communism there was an understandable thirst for low-brow literature and several publishers have cashed in on this” (2013). Most of all, American popular literature started to dominate the market. The bestsellers by such American novelists as Robin Cook and John Grisham were published by Ikar in print runs of tens of thousands (Gális 2011b).

Some Slovak cultural figures voiced anger and sadness at the production and spread of commercial fiction, so amply represented in publishers’ output. The renowned Slovak 20th-century playwright Osvald Zahradník argued that the invisible hand of the market was turning into a fist clenched so tight that it was systematically subverting “time-tested” cultural values and doggedly promoting new, ostensibly global approaches towards the arts and culture (Horobová 2003). Others took a more positive view. Miroslav Santus, the founder of Slovakia’s first privately owned bookshop chain (Martinus), denied the existence of paraliterature, claiming that dismissing written endeavors as low-brow would mean the same as dismissing the readership of such literature (1994).

The pressure for popular literature also comes from booksellers. If the publishers want to occupy precious bookshop display space, they have to offer titles that will sell. Ikar, one of the largest publishers, is often perceived as “giving up on cultural and artistic works” (Bžoch in Samcová 2013, 58).¹⁰ Some publishers, among them Tatran and Slovart, are well aware of the particulars of the publishing business, practicing what they call a creative middle way. Both Eva Mládeková, the director of Tatran, and Juraj Heger, the director of Slovart, understand the need for combining aesthetically more demanding literature with commercially viable titles. To them, publishing is half business and half art. The money acquired from the high sales of entertainment-oriented titles is subsequently used to release artistically valuable works, which preserve the company’s high status (Djovčoš and Kubaš 2013; Rácová 2017; Taranenková and Jareš 2013). The ratio of commercial to quality literature in publishers’ output varies – for one of the leading Slovak publishers, Albert Marenčin, the creative middle way means that the commercially oriented titles comprising 90% of their output finance the remaining 10%, the so-called “loss production” (Šrank 2015, 73).

1.4 Globalization/Americanization and its effects

With regard to the contemporary situation of Slovakia’s book market, critics often complain that the post-revolution political system has led to what they term as “Americanization”. This concept can be defined as the course of events through which non-Americans adopt and spread American ways of life, values and preferences (Oha 2008, 132). It occurs at various levels and in various spheres of life such as politics and economics, and just as importantly, it influences and penetrates literary culture. American culture has become such a global force that today Americanization

is sometimes viewed as synonymous with globalization (131), and this expansion of American hegemony has been not welcomed by all. Throughout Europe, Americanization is often associated with “a certain lowering of standards, the replacement of highbrow culture or indigenous artistic culture by a popular culture requiring no intellectual background from its consumers” (Durczak 1999, 149). For people who subscribe to this narrative, the United States is not a nation of cultural experimentation and original art but merely a country of tasteless TV shows and soap operas (149). However, we must emphasize that America is not a unified whole; its culture and art is complex and oriented towards diverse social and economic groups.

The changes in the publishing industry have also led to changed circumstances for the translators. Many of them are now themselves faced with the difficult decision whether to undertake the task of translating titles which lack apparent artistic value. According to Kot (Passia 2013a), most of them have switched pragmatically from potential classic works to low-brow literature. Publishers tend to offer higher rates for the translation of more serious literature; however, the difference is so negligible that it makes more financial sense for the translator to translate several commercial titles than to struggle with one or two artistic gems (Passia 2013b).

Bestseller culture has a far-reaching influence on translators’ pace of work as well, partly owing to tighter deadlines. Before 1989, it was not rare for a translation to take more than half a year (Seibertová 2012). Nowadays, the translator is part of the market game. On the other hand, while publishers’ tighter deadlines can indeed verge on the unfeasible, the translator’s work has also changed.¹¹ In the age of the Internet, translators have technologies at their disposal that save considerable time previously consumed by searches in dictionaries or secondary texts to properly understand the source text. In cases when the publisher realizes the impossibility of meeting the deadline by an individual translator, they may opt for collaborative translation, where the full text is split up between several translators, speeding up the process (Vojtek 1995, 12).¹² Though collaborative translation certainly has its drawbacks, some translators with experience with it argue that collaboration allows them to discuss translation methods and solutions, which can result in a better-quality final translation.¹³ Today’s industry is also distinguished by the return of so-called indirect or second-hand translation. Publishers often opt to release two translation versions, both Slovak and Czech. Although the released book does not usually provide any evidence of it, many Slovak (or sometimes Czech) translations are not based directly on the original work but on the version translated into Czech (or Slovak) (Hochel 1993).¹⁴ According to more recent research (Bubnášová 2011), the number of second-hand translations in Slovakia has increased since 1989. While between 1950 and 1980, the number was rather stable (about 55 titles per year), it increased in the 1980s and reached 194 titles per year in the 1990s. This trend continued into the new millennium: between 2000 and 2004, 110 second-hand translations were published (86).¹⁵

2 THE PLACE OF AMERICAN LITERATURE AMONG TRANSLATED FOREIGN LITERATURES IN SLOVAKIA

To assess the place of American literature among literatures in Slovak translation, we performed quantitative research and data interpretation.¹⁶ Our analyses were based on bibliographical data retrieved in January 2017 from the online catalog of the Slovak National Library in Martin which cover a period of 28 years, providing a comparative overview of the publication of literary translations in post-revolution Slovakia.¹⁷ We focused exclusively on print books and both new translations of classic titles and reprints of books published before 1989 are included in our analysis.¹⁸ As argued by Libuša Vajdová, quantitative aspects of reception can serve as an important research tool. Numerical expressions of cultural processes help us understand other cultures. Not only do they reflect practical aspects of culture in certain periods, the types of readers and their interest in translations, they also express human perceptions about the vastness of the surrounding world (2013, 294).

2.1 Methodology

Our research is a large-scale quantitative analysis, providing the following insights:

- the number of translated American titles per each year between 1989 and 2016 and
- a comparison of the translation rates of American literature and other literatures.

After conducting several bibliographic surveys, we further processed the data, ridding them of duplicate and misclassified entries and narrowing them down to the genres of our interests.

Our hypothesis was that the number of translated American titles would exceed the number of works from other literatures, and that the number of translated works would serve as an indicator of publishing policy tendencies in Slovakia and the phenomena that affect them (as described in the first part of our paper).

2.2 American literature in numbers

Chart 1 shows the evolution of translation from American literature via statistics from 1989–2016. The Slovak National Library lists 2,781 titles, whose annual distribution is presented in Chart 1.

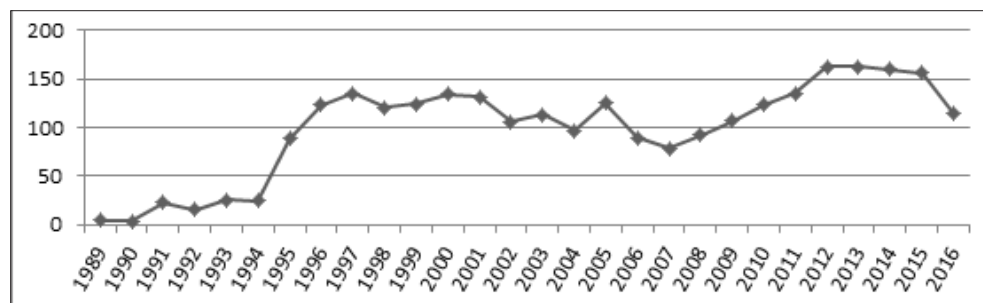


Chart 1: The production of translated books of American literature 1989–2016

Between 1989 and 1992, the number of books annually translated from American literature more than tripled, from 5 to 16. After a sharp increase between 1994 and

1997, the number levelled out, fluctuating slightly between 100 and 135. The highest point of 135 titles was in 1997, with 2000 coming in close second with 134 titles. The relatively low annual growth of translation during this period can be explained by the fact that by 1997 the book market had stabilized, having reached a natural saturation point. The only exception to this even flow of translations was from 2005 to 2007, when the number started to decrease considerably, bottoming out in 2007 with 79 translated titles. This figure implies a severe drop in translation from American literature by an unbelievable 56 titles since 1997, a 41% decrease.

One possible explanation for the poorer state of American literature translation in 2005–2007 was Slovakia's newly increased VAT rate on books. The rate rose from 14% to 19% in 2004, which, among other unfortunate effects, increased retail prices (Bašťovanská 2004, 62). This had an especially negative impact on small publishers, who could no longer afford to release as many books as in the past. The higher VAT rate did not last long, however, dropping to 10% in 2008,¹⁹ and as a result translation from American literature quickly recovered from the low point of 79. In 2009, the number of translations climbed above 100 titles again, reviving the previous ascending tendency. In the following years, the database recorded an average annual increase of 15 titles in 2009–2010 and 2010–2011, and 30 titles between 2011 and 2012. After this period of steady growth, the number of translations began to hover around 160 throughout 2012–2015, peaking in 2012 and 2013 with 163 translations.

2.3 Comparative research

The following part of the research presents statistical data on the share of various literatures, including the American one, in Slovakia's overall translation publishing output, enabling comparisons among them. The translation rates of six Western European literatures, namely Spanish, Italian, French, German (including also Austrian and Swiss), British,²⁰ Scandinavian (including Norwegian, Danish and Swedish²¹), and one Eastern European Slavic literature, namely Russian, are compared with the American one.²² Table 2 shows the evolution of the translation of these literatures in Slovakia.²³

1989 provides a useful starting point for our analysis. As the revolutionary events took place at the end of the year, a major part of 1989 displays certain typical characteristics of the publishing industry under the socialist regime. Obviously, one (not even complete) year cannot represent four decades of the totalitarian regime, which is, moreover, by no means a homogeneous period. However, it can at least provide a snapshot to help understand how the revolution affected the publishing industry. It is important to mention that the Communist Party had drawn up publishing plans for this and the following year (Magová 2015, 66). As a result, translations of American literature were not a top priority in 1989, comprising only 14.7% of the overall translation output. The following year, 1990, was the first full year after the collapse of socialist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe. Starting in 1991, American literature started to build its hegemony among translated literatures. The statistics show a substantial increase in the share of translated American titles by about 30%, from 15% in 1990 to 47% in 1991. This sudden growth is presumably related to the drastic decline of the

percentage of translations of Russian literary works which dropped from about 53% (18 books) in 1989 and 37% (10 books) in 1990 to about 4% (2 books) in 1991, pushing Russian books on the margin of interest. Russian literature never returned to its pre-1989 level. As displayed in Table 2, it is now neglected by most of Slovakia's publishers.

Year	Spanish	Italian	Russian	Scandinavian	French	German	British	American
1989	0	2.94	52.94	0	23.5	5.88	0	14.7
1990	3.7	0	37	0	29.63	7.41	7.41	14.81
1991	2.04	0	4.08	8.16	10.2	10.2	18.37	46.94
1992	7.27	9.09	3.64	1.82	14.55	14.55	20	29.1
1993	0	0	0	4.45	15.56	11.11	11.11	57.78
1994	3.7	0	3.7	0	9.26	12.96	24.07	46.3
1995	1.34	2.01	2.01	2.01	11.41	8.05	13.42	59.73
1996	2.16	1.72	2.16	3.02	13.36	9.91	14.66	53.02
1997	1.22	0.81	2.83	1.62	11.74	10.12	17	54.66
1998	0.9	1.80	1.35	3.6	11.71	12.61	13.51	54.5
1999	1.18	3.54	1.97	1.57	11.42	14.57	18.11	48.82
2000	0	3.5	1.17	1.56	8.56	14.01	19.07	52.14
2001	0.77	3.46	2.31	1.54	11.92	10	19.23	50.77
2002	0.45	4.98	5.43	1.81	11.31	8.14	19.91	47.96
2003	1.23	7	4.12	1.65	9.88	9.47	20.16	46.5
2004	1.01	2.51	2.52	4.02	7.54	9.55	23.12	48.74
2005	2.32	2.7	4.63	1.54	8.49	11.58	20.46	48.26
2006	2.61	3.04	4.78	0.87	10.87	9.57	29.13	39.13
2007	1.1	2.76	4.42	2.21	10.5	9.39	25.97	43.65
2008	2.12	3.17	3.17	2.12	9.52	8.47	22	48.68
2009	2	3.5	2	4.5	8.5	9	17	53.5
2010	1.36	2.27	5	4.55	6.36	5.45	19.09	55.91
2011	0	3.54	5.12	2.76	5.12	6.69	23.62	53.15
2012	1.04	2.77	2.77	4.15	3.11	7.27	22.49	56.40
2013	0.69	2.78	4.51	5.56	3.13	5.56	21.18	56.6
2014	0.7	2.09	3.14	11.15	1.74	5.92	19.51	55.75
2015	0.99	3.62	2.3	11.18	3.95	7.89	18.75	51.32
2016	0.84	2.93	2.51	7.11	4.18	7.11	27.2	48.12

Table 2: Percentage shares of translated literatures in Slovakia

In 1992, a decrease in the ratio of American literature translations occurred, dropping by about 18%. The translation ratios among all the literatures investigated in our paper went into a relative state of equilibrium. Six out of eight literatures, namely American (29.1%), British (20%), French (14.55%), German (14.55%), Italian (9.09%), and Spanish (7.27%), attained a share of production above 7%.

The most conspicuous disparity between the translation rates of American and other literatures occurred in 1993, accompanying the split of Czechoslovakia into

the Czech and Slovak Republics. The size of the Slovak book market diminished, and the number of published book titles decreased – while in the 1980s the production of Slovak publishers exceeded the number of 3,000 titles per year, in 1990 there was a decrease to 2,734 titles. However, in the second half of the 1990s the number increased; Slovak publishers offered 4,500 titles a year (Šrank 2015, 59). The variety of literatures translated into Slovak was at its narrowest. The share of Russian literature dropped to 0%, as did Italian and Spanish literatures, allowing American works to dominate considerably, surpassing 50% (57.78%) for the first time. Out of the seven European literatures included in our research, American literature had to compete with only four of them, namely Scandinavian (4.45%), German (11.11%), British (11.11%), and French (15.56%).

Another statistically relevant milestone was the year 1995. The last remaining state-owned publishing companies freed themselves of state regulations, granting independent publishers additional freedom to publish whatever they desired. This may be why 1995 constituted another significant breakthrough in the share of American literature; it was the first and only time that it made up about three fifths of translated book production. The general trend of American literature translations accounting for more than half of Slovakia's overall translation production remained unchanged throughout the second half of the decade, with the exception of 1999, when it accounted for 48.82%.

The first two years of the new millennium marked a short-lived reversal, restoring American literature's majority share of translations. The following 15-year period, from 2002 to 2016, demonstrates a fairly regular pattern. From 2002 to 2008, European literatures, taken as a whole, constituted an absolute (over 50%) majority of translated books. 2006 saw the largest decline in American literature's share of book production, displaying the reverse phenomenon of the one observed in 1995. This might be explained as one of the belated effects of Slovakia's 2004 accession to the European Union. About three fifths of translations were now of European literatures. Over the following seven years, from 2009 to 2015, American literature grew stronger, again representing over 50% of the total translation production.

Chart 2 demonstrates the overall percentage of translated literatures for the time span of 1989–2016. The Slovak National Library lists 5,491 translated titles from American, British, Italian, Scandinavian, Russian, German-language, French and Spanish literature.

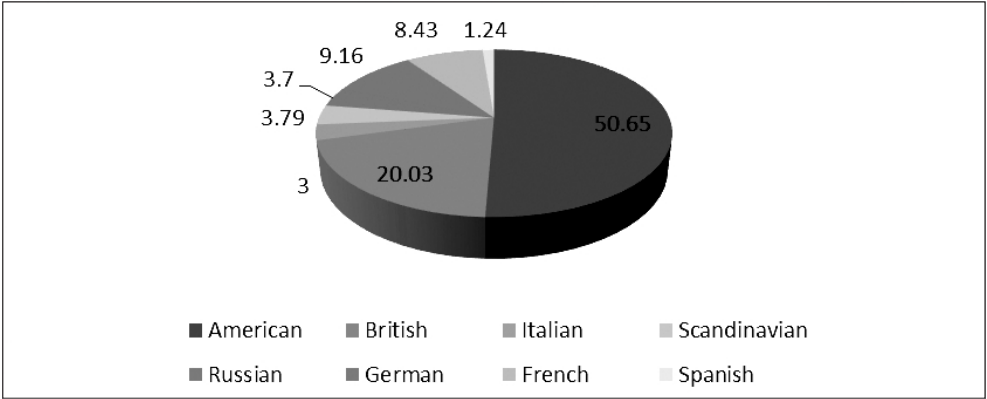


Chart 2: Overall percentage shares of translated literatures between 1989 and 2016

2.4 Translated genres

We have classified the translated works of American literature according to four main genres: commercial fiction, classic novels,²⁴ poetry, and drama. Both commercial fiction and classic novels are listed under prose in the database; however, we separated them to demonstrate the disparity in publishing between the two.²⁵ Due to the variety of works categorized as commercial fiction, we further break down this group into several different subgenres: contemporary romance, suspense, speculative fiction (sci-fi, dystopian novels, horror), historical fiction, adventure fiction (including westerns), religious novels, autobiographical novels, socio-psychological novels, and an “other” category (fiction-based writings which do not belong to any of the other subgenres). Chart 3 shows the percentages of the genres and subgenres over the entire period studied.

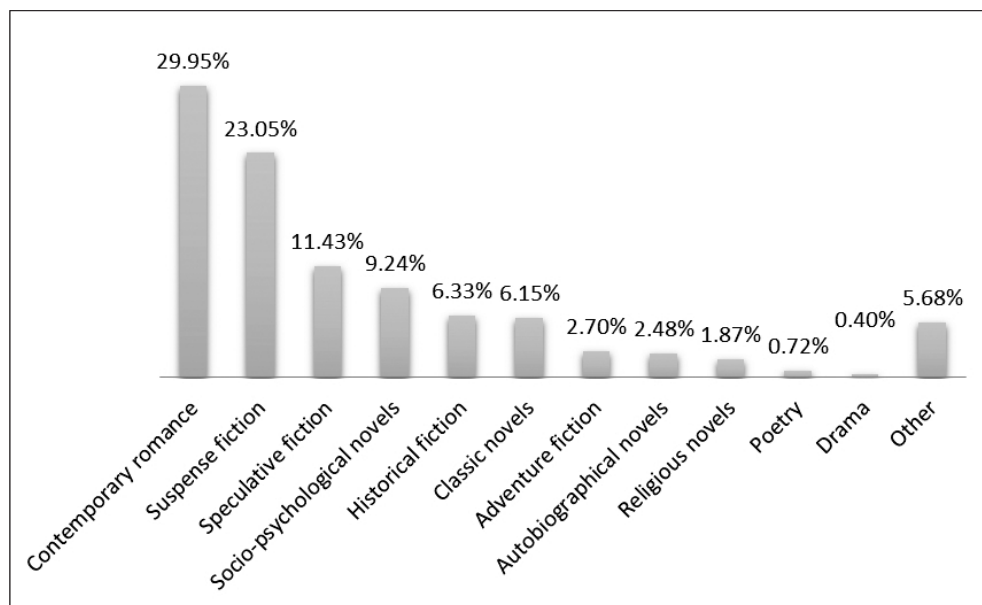


Chart 3: Translated genres and subgenres of American literature in Slovakia (1989–2016)

The genre breakdown shows the predominance of commercial fiction, which alone accounts for 93% of all the literary translations published during the studied period. Classic novels comprise 6.15%, while poetry and drama account for only 0.72% and 0.4% respectively. The most translated subgenres are contemporary romances and suspense fiction, with over 600 titles each during the whole period studied. These are followed by speculative fiction, socio-psychological novels, historical fiction, and classic novels, with numbers between 170 and nearly 300 titles. Adventure fiction, autobiographical novels, and religious novels exceed 50 titles. Genres below 30 titles are poetry and drama. The rest of the works in the category of “Other”, including legends, fables, short stories, and novels not belonging to any of the other subgenres, amount to almost 160 titles.

2.5 Translated authors

For the time span of 1989–2016, the online catalog of the Slovak National Library lists a total of 933 American writers whose works were translated into Slovak at least once.²⁶ We decided to categorize the authors, according to the number of translated books, into four groups: below 5, between 5 and 15, between 16 and 30, and those with over 30 translated titles.

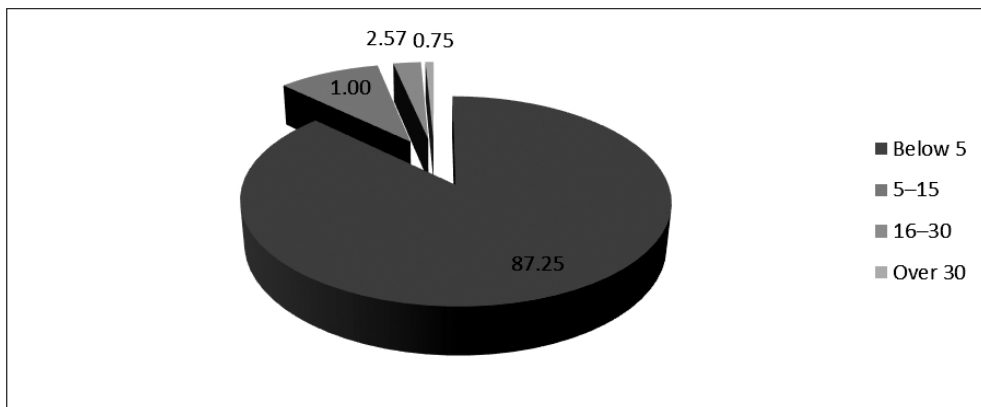


Chart 4: Distribution of the translated American authors

As can be observed in Chart 4, the distribution of American authors in translation is very broad. About 87% of all the translated authors, numerically 814, had less than 5 titles translated into Slovak. The majority of these are fiction writers with one or two highly successful titles appearing on the New York Times Best Seller list – authors such as Chris Mooney (1 title), Tosca Lee (1 title), and Erica Spindler (1 title). Some writers of classic literature, namely Walt Whitman (2 titles), Emily Dickinson (1 title), and William Faulkner (1 title), as well as the more contemporary Philip Roth (4 titles) and John Updike (3 titles), also belong to this group. While under-represented in post-1989 Slovak literary translation, some of them were more amply represented during the restrictive socialist era. For example, translations of four prominent, award-winning works by Faulkner (*The Sound and the Fury*, *The Wild Palms*, *Dry September*, and *Intruder in the Dust*) were published in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, most of the leading works of 20th-century American literature were translated into Slovak in the 1960s thanks to the efforts of a strong generation of translators from English, represented by Ján Vilikovský, Pavel Vilikovský, Jozef Kot, Otakar Kořínek and others. In the post-revolution Slovak translation market, the only work of Faulkner's to appear was *As I Lay Dying* (*Keď som umierala*, 2016).

Moving on to the group of writers with 5 to 15 works in translation, the database lists 88 authors, about 9.5% of the total. Besides commercial writers such as Veronica Roth (7 titles), John Green (8 titles), Suzanne Collins (8 titles) and Stephanie Meyer (11 titles), there are a number of classic writers. In ascending order, these include Vladimir Nabokov (5 titles), Jack Kerouac (6 titles), William Saroyan (7 titles), Jack London (9 titles), Joseph Heller (9 titles), John Steinbeck (10 titles), Edgar Allan Poe (11 titles) and Jerome David Salinger (12 titles). As for contemporary/living authors of classic novels, it is worth mentioning John Irving (9 titles).

The following group with 16–30 translated works consisted of 24 writers, or 2.6% of the total. Only one of them is universally recognized as a classic author – Ernest Hemingway, with 17 titles translated. The rest are commercial writers, such as Dan Brown (16 titles), Mario Puzo (16 titles), Francine Rivers (20 titles), Nora Roberts (24 titles) and Stephen King (25 titles). These figures clearly show that commercial success is the leading factor in the choice of a work for translation.

The smallest and most prolific group of authors, with over 30 translated titles (only 0.75% of the total), includes commercial authors like Jude Deveraux (31 titles), Michael Connelly (34 titles), Sandra Brown (35 titles), John Grisham (46 titles), Robin Cook (47 titles), and Janet Dailey (53 titles). The romance writer Danielle Steel, with 96 titles, is the most widely translated American author into Slovak.

2.6 Notes on translators

The online catalog of the Slovak National Library lists a total of 601 translators who have translated at least one work of American literature into Slovak.²⁷ The database recorded many young aspiring translators (Lucia Halová, Barbora Kráľová, Martin Kubuš) who have just recently started their careers, as well as older-generation translators (Ján Vilikovský, Pavel Vilikovský), who were more productive before 1989. As a result, both of these groups of translators are represented by a smaller amount of translated works in the post-revolution years. Chart 5 provides the names, as well as the numbers of titles translated, of 20 translators of American literature who translated at least 25 books between 1989 and 2016.²⁸

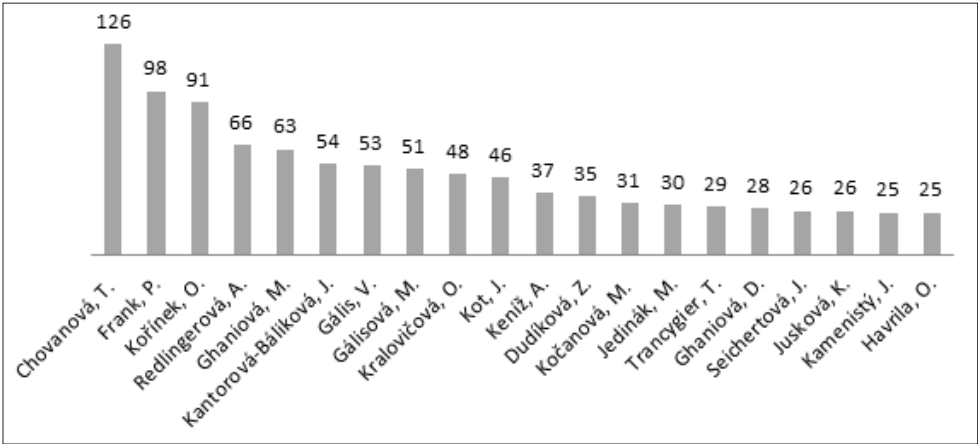


Chart 5: Top Slovak translators of American literature

In view of the data on the percentage of individual genres in the total translation production, it is not surprising that the first two places included translators who are primarily engaged in translating commercial fiction – Tamara Chovanová is a well-established translator of the work of Danielle Steel (31 translated novels) and John Grisham (7 novels); Patrick Frank is associated with the genres of sci-fi, detective novels, and thrillers. Otakar Kořínek, who placed third, is considered to be one of the most versatile Slovak translators. Unlike the preceding two, he has also translated classic novels – some were originally translated before 1989 and later reissued

(e.g. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*), some were translated after 1989 for the first time (e.g. Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*). Other translators who ranked in the top ten and translated at least one classic novel in addition to commercial fiction are Jana Kantorová-Báliková, Vladislav and Marína Gális, and Jozef Kot.

Processing the data allowed us to closely observe certain particularities and take notice of several additional tendencies in the publishing and translation industries. Firstly, none of the top translators of American literary works provide their services to only one publisher; they all alternate between at least two different publishers. To illustrate, the publishers Ikar, Slovenský spisovateľ, Artforum, Gemini, Remedium, and Petit Press all publish translations by Jozef Kot. Similarly, Otakar Kořínek's translations are distributed among companies such as Ikar, Slovart, Slovenský spisovateľ and others.

Secondly, the same goes for the relationship between translators and authors: in most cases, translators cannot be considered as having exclusive rights to particular authors. For instance, Stephen King's popular thrillers and horror stories have been translated by sixteen different Slovak translators (Dušan Janák, Viktor Krupa, Marína Gálisová, and Alojz Keníž, among others). Similarly, seven translators – Alexandra Ruppeldtová, Marián Gazdík, Alfonz Bednár, Jozef Kot, Vladislav Gális, Juraj Vojtek and Miloš Ruppeldt – have all contributed to translating Hemingway's classic novels. As for connected or related book series written by a single author, it is more common for one translator (or group of translators) to translate all of them.²⁹

Thirdly, we noticed that team translations have long been commonplace in Slovak literary translation: altogether 217 titles in the period studied were translated by at least two translators. We submit two main reasons for this widespread phenomenon. Firstly, publishers want books which receive major attention and good sales abroad to be translated and launched as soon as possible before they lose their appeal. One solution is collaborative translation. Since translations of trade books are more immediately deadline-driven than translations of classics, it is hardly surprising that most of the collectively translated titles are commercial blockbusters. Another reason for the prevalence of collective translation is the narrow specialization some texts require. More specifically, the database included a number of prose titles which contained poetic passages, so the translator specializing in prose required the help of an expert translator of poetry. For instance, the main section of the memoir *The Needful Threads*, also published as *My Name is Mahtob* (*Otcovi som odpustila*, 2014) by Mahtob Mahmoody was translated by Otakar Kořínek, while the verses were handled by Jana Kantorová-Báliková.

2.7 Data interpretation

Several striking conclusions can be drawn from the findings above. The statistics show a growth in the translations of American literature over the past three decades in absolute numbers and percent of the total production. Since 1989, its share has risen by 40%, peaking in 2012 and 2013 with 163 translations; 2014 showed a similar figure of 160 translations. These years can thus be considered the most successful and fruitful period for translations of American literature into Slovak, at least numerically.

Thus, American literature took the dominant role that had belonged to Russian literature before 1989, becoming the undefeated though not unchallenged champion: British literature maintained a strong position in 1992, 2006 and 2007, almost drawing level with American literature. It is no coincidence that these two place high above all other foreign literatures. Accelerating globalization is closely linked to English's ascension as a global lingua franca, and the statistics show that English has become the dominant language from which Slovak publishers purchase translation rights. The two English-speaking countries in our study, namely the United States and the United Kingdom, took first and second place respectively, together accounting for about 70% of the translated literature on the Slovak book market. This clearly indicates that the English language strongly predominates over other languages, among them German, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian and the Nordic languages, which lumped together amount to only 30% of the overall translation production.

The translation of American works is by no means limited to complete book series written by the most popular, successful authors. The general strategy of publishing companies is to embrace a wide range of writers, giving lesser-known authors voice. The current trend in Slovak publishing is to shift away from author name-recognition towards certain topics and subgenres that sell well. This is illustrated above all by the high number of authors with a very small number of works in Slovak translation.

As for translators, most of them work for a wide range of publishers, they do not have exclusive rights to particular writers, and in cases of commercially promising titles scheduled to be published shortly after their original release, they often work in collaborative teams.

CONCLUSION

American literature has had a great impact on the Slovak translation and publishing industries since its rise to dominance following 1989. In many ways it has both liberated and constrained the Slovak book market. The flood of American literature gives Slovaks more titles to choose from but limits the amount of literature publishers put out from other nations.

As socialist ideology no longer informs the choice of books for translation, new complex, varied topics and themes have appeared on the European book market. Though the supply of commercial writing now considerably exceeds that of classic novels, the conditions have also been created for filling the gaps in the translation of masterpieces of world literature. New translations of classics as well as revised editions of prominent works have been published.

NOTES

- ¹ For detailed insight into the nature and status of the translator in Slovakia, see Djovčoš (2012), Djovčoš and Šveda (2017).
- ² The influence of Western Europe and North America is a result of, inter alia, the fall of the socialism in 1989, the newly gained independence from the dominance of the Soviet Union as well as Slovakia's accession to the EU (2004) and NATO (2004).
- ³ This claim may not apply to translations of literary texts of high aesthetic quality subsidized by institutions like Slovak Arts Council (self-governing public institution guaranteeing support of art activities, culture and creative industry); however, it certainly applies to translations of popular texts.
- ⁴ The period between 1945 and 1968 was studied by Pliešovská (2016); Tyšš researched Slovakia's socialist period (2017); Bachledová (2018) studied the presence of ideology in paratexts to translated literature.
- ⁵ By American literature we mean literary production of the USA written in English.
- ⁶ "Anketa: Pri jesennej ofenzíve myslia niektoré vydavateľstvá aj na pôvodnú literatúru." (In the autumn offensive some publishers do not neglect the original literature). *SME* September 2, 1998. Accessed November 30, 2019. <https://www.sme.sk/c/2163846/anketa-pri-jesennej-ofenzive-myslia-niektore-vydavatelstva-aj-na-povodnu-literaturu.html>.
- ⁷ J. Sherwood, who is the daughter of writer, scriptwriter and translator Ján Ladislav Kalina and journalist Agneša Kalinová, and who emigrated from Slovakia to Germany in 1978, is one of the most prominent translators of Slovak fiction into English.
- ⁸ "Predbežný zoznam podnikov zaradených do 2. vlny privatizácie" [Preliminary list of enterprises included into the second wave of privatization]. *SME* May 23, 1995. Accessed November 20, 2019. <https://www.sme.sk/c/2122519/predbezny-zoznam-podnikov-zaradenych-do-2-vlny-privatizacie.html>.
- ⁹ The need of a body of work within translation studies that would reflect on specific cultures and states in the Eastern Bloc during and after the period of socialist and communist government is emphasized by Nike Pokorn (2012).
- ¹⁰ Of a total of 1,133 translations of American literature published by Ikar between 1989–2016, 812 titles fall into commercial fiction (contemporary romance, suspense fiction and socio-psychological novels).
- ¹¹ Based on Djovčoš (2012), a typical translator in Slovakia is a female in her thirties with a university diploma, however, not in the field of translating and interpreting. She specializes in non-literary translation and her computer literacy is at a high level (135).
- ¹² Gambier (2014) speaks of collaborative translation as of type of work where professionals share tools, problems and solutions and where their socio-professional enterprise is reconfigured due to technologies being implemented to meet the challenges of outsourcing, competition, job security, etc. (5).
- ¹³ The statement refers to the experience of translation trio Djovčoš, Tyšš and Laš, who collaborated on the translation of *Fire and Fury* by Michael Wolff (2018). The book was published by the publisher Ikar.
- ¹⁴ As proved in a case study by Ďurišová (2016), one example of a Slovak translation strongly affected by Czech translation is *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) by E.L. James translated by M. Sedláčková. It was published by the Czech publishing house Nakladatelství XYZ in 2012.
- ¹⁵ We are aware of the fact that although the figures above speak of an increase in book production in the analyzed years, they do not reflect the percentage increase in second-hand translations compared to the period before 1989.
- ¹⁶ The research was originally executed and interpreted for the purposes of the master's thesis *The place of translations of American literature in the publishing policy of Slovak publishing houses after 1989* by N. Popovcová (2017).
- ¹⁷ For our purposes, "literary translation" refers to translations of creative texts, meaning all the universally recognized literary genres, such as novels, short stories, novellas, dramas, poetry, satire, epigrams, fables, aphorisms, literary sketches and so on, as well as anthologies in which several genres appear. We do not include works classified by the library as non-fiction. We have also excluded books for young children.

- ¹⁸ We focus solely on traditional paper books, not taking into account audio or e-books, which usually comprise electronic versions of already published print titles. The same is true for print-braille books for blind adults, and so those were not included in our research, either. However, our analysis does include both new translations of classic titles of previously published books.
- ¹⁹ TAX OFFICE RELEASE. 2007. "Od januára bude nižšia DPH na knihy." [Starting January, VAT will be lower on books]. Accessed on December 6, 2019. <https://domov.sme.sk/c/3609819/od-januara-bude-nizsia-dph-na-knihy.html>.
- ²⁰ By British literature we mean literature from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland written in English.
- ²¹ German, Austrian and Swiss literatures, as well as Norwegian, Danish and Swedish literatures are treated, for the purposes of this study, as a single entity. We decided to refer to the first group collectively as "German-language literature", for their common language, and the second group as "Scandinavian", for their shared geographical and cultural identity.
- ²² Other nations' literatures were represented in Slovak translation only marginally, which is why they have been omitted.
- ²³ For easier comparison, we present the collected numbers in percentages rounded up to the nearest hundredth.
- ²⁴ The figures also include previously published translations of classic novels that were reissued after 1989.
- ²⁵ We considered classic novels to be works by authors who have gained worldwide recognition and prestige, as well as more recently active authors who have won prestigious literary awards and accolades for their creative endeavors. All other works of prose, namely mainstream and other commercial titles, are included in the genre of commercial fiction.
- ²⁶ One title was, according to the database, written by an anonymous author, whilst 11 other titles were edited works written by several different authors, some of which are not American. These works were excluded from the final list of translated works.
- ²⁷ The actual figure may be slightly different due to the fact that we were unable to identify the translators of 18 works in the complete list of translations.
- ²⁸ These figures also include new translations of classic titles and reprints of previously published books.
- ²⁹ For example, the *Divergent Trilogy* (2011–2013) as well as the related book *Four* (2014), written by Veronica Roth, were all translated into Slovak by Elena Guričanová.

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The place of translated American literature in Slovak publishing houses after 1989

American literature in Slovak translation. Slovak publishers. Post-socialist publishing policy.

This paper examines the main changes which were brought about by the globalization of culture and the commercialization of the book market in Slovakia after the fall of state socialism in 1989. It also aims at demonstrating the place of American literature in literary translation in Slovakia in the wake of the Velvet Revolution. The research assesses several different trends within publishing by answering such questions as: What are the most translated genres/subgenres? What are the proportions between aesthetically demanding literature and commercial/popular fiction? Who are the most widely translated American writers? Who are the translators that translated their works?

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