

MAGDOLNA BALOGH (ed.): Szomszédok a kirakatban: A szlovák irodalom recepciója Magyarországon 1990 után [Neighbors on Display: The Reception of Slovak Literature in Hungary after 1990]

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Although Hungary and Slovakia share a nearly thousand-year-long common history, for a long time their mutual past figured as an obstacle further separating the two nations rather than bringing them together. It is no wonder, then, that despite their geographic proximity, Slovaks and Hungarians know very little about each other even today. Whilst prior to the fall of Communism, Czechoslovakia and Hungary as friendly nations tried to incentivize cultural mediation between the two countries, Slovak artists were not only eclipsed by their Czech counterparts, but also the dominant ideology of the era largely supported the mediation of art that had no real significance outside the conceptual matrices of Marxism. After the end of an epoch that opposed any constructive engagement with national history and as the two nations sought to come to terms with their past, historical traumas were revived, often with the support of the newly-elected political elites, thus impeding any constructive intercultural dialogue. Hence, in the 1990s, the reception of Slovak literature in Hungary was nearly non-existent. It was only around 2005 that Slovak authors became regularly translated into Hungarian and readers gained some familiarity with Slovak literature. The next stepping stone was the 23rd Budapest International Book Festival in 2016, at which Slovak literature was the guest of honor. The publication under review grows out from the success of the book festival and is the product of the mutual effort between the Institute for Literary Studies of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

Szomszédok a kirakatban (Neighbors on Showcase) is a pioneering undertaking – for there has not been any previous publication on the reception of Slovak literature in Hun-

gary after 1990. In this sense, the book puts forward a number of texts that open up and maintain a dialogue about the reception of Slovak literature in Hungary, and thus *Neighbors on Showcase* becomes the agent of intercultural mediation.

The collection is divided into two parts. The first section takes a holistic approach and engages with the institutional and cultural background of the reception of contemporary Slovak literature in Hungary. Taking a more particularistic approach, the second part of the book examines the dilemmas of the previous section through the lens of particular authors and works of art.

The first section entitled “The cultural and institutional background of reception” begins with Renata Deák’s text “Good book, good neighbourhood”. Taking an important role in organizing the 23rd Budapest International Book Festival, Deák not only offers insight behind the façades of the festival but also contextualizes and highlights its cultural significance. Having touched on the possible reasons for the sorry state of Slovak literature’s reception in Hungary, Deák insinuates that the book festival had a positive effect on intercultural mediation between the two countries: not only was an unprecedented number of Slovak works translated into Hungarian but also meaningful cultural relationships were established between the two countries. Yet, as Deák correctly observes, whether it will be possible to build on this success remains to be seen.

Gábor Hushegyi’s article approaches the 23rd Budapest International Book Festival from the perspective of cultural diplomacy. According to Hushegyi the success of the book festival is an exception rather than the norm. He implies that the systematic deficiencies of Slovak cultural diplomacy are

rooted in the failure of the Slovak political elites to recognize its importance in maintaining diplomatic ties. By sketching out a new model for cultural mediation, Hushegyi invites us to imagine a future where culture plays an organic role in Slovak foreign affairs.

Anikó Dusík's chapter, building on the concepts of Pascale Casanova, George Steiner, and Jan Assmann, sheds light on how the residues of a shared cultural past manifest themselves in the contemporary texts of Slovak writers. Dusík's argument is premised on the assumption that the binary opposition of us and them is not only present in our cultures but also plays an important role in constructing our identities. In this respect, Dusík suggests that the memory of a distant past still shapes contemporary Slovak experience.

Magdolna Balogh focuses on the important role of the Kalligram publishing house in cultural mediation between Hungary and Slovakia. As Balogh writes, the publishing house through the act of cultural mediation seeks to create a regional sense of identity so as to counter nationalist, ethnocentric ideologies. In this sense, Kalligram by seeking to construct a central European identity has created a new mode of cultural mediation in the region.

In "Tranculturalism and contemporary Slovak literature: expat, migrant and dissident", Zoltán Németh suggests that in the East Central European cultural space, cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries are not as clear-cut as many would have us believe. Thanks to globalization, migration, and the advance of informatics every culture has become hybridized. In this respect, the features of transculturality – which Németh locates in the texts of contemporary Hungarian and Slovak authors – suggest that cultures in East Central Europe are not monolithic but heterogeneous and inherently intertwined.

Lívía Paszmár examines the Hungarian translations of Slovak works in the period between 1990 and 2015, focusing on the institutional and social aspects of cultural mediation. Paszmár implies that the 2006

foundation of the Anasoft Litera literary award was a turning point with regards to the reception of Slovak literature in Hungary. That is, according to the author, the literary award acquired a canonizing function as well as functioning as a reference point for Hungarian publishing houses with regards to Slovak literature.

Taking a more particularistic approach, the second part of the book begins with Judit Görözdi's paper that deals with the Hungarian reception of Pavel Vilikovský. In it, the author goes beyond the scopes of the traditional parallel to Péter Esterházy, and she seeks to draw attention to the similarities of Vilikovský's works with those of Péter Nádas and Pál Závada. Nevertheless, Görözdi correctly observes that, as the power of Vilikovský's texts lies in their linguistic ingenuity, recognizing these commonalities as well as the author's reception is premised on the quality of the translation of his works into Hungarian.

In his study, Tibor Gintli seeks to reevaluate Vladimír Balla's dominant perception in Hungary that usually associates his works with those of Franz Kafka. In so doing, Gintli compares the absurdity of the human condition that is so apparent in Balla's writings to the work of Thomas Bernhard. In this connection, for Balla the only authentic response to unstoppable decay (our human condition) is the melancholic acceptance of our inevitable finitude.

Sarolta Deczki's chapter "Accidental traitor" focuses on Daniela Kapitáňová's *Cemetery Book*. The central character of the novel, Samko Tále, a mentally and physically disabled man who cherishes hatred and ill-will towards the community he lives in, becomes an informer for the communist regime thanks to his desire for order. Consequently, he inadvertently engages in the construction of his own demise. Deczki asserts that the novel's positive perception in Hungary has to do with the fact that Kapitáňová's novel taps into the social self-reflection Hungarian society was going through at the time of the novel's publication.

In “Fragmentary worlds”, Judit Dobry provides an insight into the difficulties and dilemmas a translator faces when recreating the works of Veronika Šikulová in Hungarian. Dobry asks if a family narrative is conceivable solely from fragments as well as she explores the depths of how such a multifaceted linguistic world can be transferred in its totality into another language.

Tímea Péntzes also focuses on questions of translation and cultural mediation. Looking at Monika Kompaníková’s novel *The Fifth Boat*, Péntzes is particularly interested in how the metaphorical microcosm of the twelve-year-old protagonist Jarka is reproduced

in Hungarian, considering the difficulties that stem from the cultural and linguistic differences and suggesting solutions to these issues.

The eleven articles that comprise the publication open up a novel, multidimensional discourse about the reception of Slovak literature in Hungary after 1990. Consequently, *Neighbors on Showcase* may provide the foundation on which a larger intercultural dialogue could be premised, although whether this will be so remains to be seen.

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MARIA SAAS – ȘTEFAN BAGHIU – VLAD POJOGA (eds.): The Culture of Translation in Romania/Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien

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In the foreword of the volume with the promising title *The Culture of Translation in Romania/Übersetzungskultur und Literaturübersetzen in Rumänien*, its editors emphasize the ambitious main motivation of its creation: “an attempt to signal the need for a shift in Romanian scholarly and public perspectives on translation”. The volume represents the results of a collaborative Romanian and German project “Writers and Translators” focusing on Romanian literature, in particular on the Romanian perspective on foreign literature, co-financed by the Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu and the Romanian National Cultural Fund Administration. It is divided into three thematic sections according to methodologies and the degree of distance taken in the analysis.

The first section, titled “General Analysis and Quantitative Studies”, has a broader, especially historical/chronological focus, and presents contemporary insights into translation. As Andrei Terian argues in his study “Translating the World, Building the Nation: Microtheories of Translation in Romanian

Cultural Criticism (1829–1948)”, translation studies as a standalone discipline in Romania are “of a fairly recent date”: before 2000, translations often fell into the field of interest of linguistics, comparative literature, and cultural studies. Moreover, the interest in the theoretical aspects of translation has so far focused on two crucial periods (from the 16th to mid-19th century and after World War II), thus leaving out the ideologically and theoretically varied period of the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century. Terian therefore tracks the period from the publication of the first Romanian literary periodical (1829) to the establishment of the communist regime (1948), focusing on the critical and ideological views of translation. Unlike other theorists who called this period “proto-“ or “pre-translation studies” (G. Lungu Badea), he speaks of microtheories and distinguishes three phases: the phase 1829–1866 focused on translating the classics with the aim to enrich the expressive potential of Romanian literature; the phase 1866–1918 of ample “directional criticism” focused on