Translated, transgressed, transported: A century of Whitman in Slovakia

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Walt Whitman. Slovak literature. Literary translation. Intertextuality. State socialism.

This article examines the reception and influence of Walt Whitman's poetry in Slovak literature from the early 20th century to the present day. Through thorough analysis of translations, tribute poems, and paratextual material, the author traces Whitman's journey into Slovak literary consciousness, highlighting key moments of engagement and adaptation. From early translations in the 1950s under state socialism to contemporary retranslations, the article maps out Whitman's evolving presence in Slovak poetry, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities of translating his work in different socio-political contexts. Furthermore, it explores the complexities of literary translation and the shifting dynamics of cultural capital in post-socialist Slovakia, where Whitman's enduring appeal continues to resonate within a fragmented and ever-changing literary landscape.

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ACT I: ENTER, HESITANTLY, WHITMAN – EARLY DECADES OF THE 20TH CENTURY

Contrary to popular expectation, it appears that Slovak literati did not readily succumb to the charms of Walt Whitman's poetry. While the first Czech translations were published only a few years after the poet's death in 1895 (Kalandra 2007, 48), it took more than half a century before the literary magazine *Slovenské pohľady* published Ján Boor's translation of the poem "Years of the Modern" (Whitman 1950) – the earliest Slovak translation of Whitman I have discovered.[1] Walt Whitman's reception in Slovak literature was hesitant, to say the least. However, he certainly did not approach his own domestic scene with hesitation and the celebratory reviews he wrote for his *Leaves of Grass* proved to be self-fulfilling prophecies:

> An American bard at last! One of the roughs, large, proud, affectionate, eating, drinking, and breeding, his costume manly and free, his face sunburnt and bearded, his postures strong and erect, his voice bringing hope and prophecy to the generous races of young and old. We shall cease shamming and be what we really are. We shall start an athletic and defiant literature. We realize now how it is, and what was most lacking. The interior American republic shall also be declared free and independent. (Whitman 1855, 205)

The ambitious thirty-six-year-old aspiring poet had his first edition of *Leaves of Grass* printed in a local print shop in 1855 and did not stop revising it and publishing new editions until his death in 1892. His strategy proved successful, and he became the key American poet – and not only in the United States. Whitman's style and democratic vision mesmerized poets, translators, and critics all around the world – and that is true for the Americas and the Old World, as well as for Asia, Africa, and Australia (Kummings 1984, 108). He became known for his radical refusal of poetic conventions including traditional verse and his long King James Bible-inspired lines are considered as the major impulse for the development of free verse in many literatures.

His influence on the development of Slovak free verse, however, was less pronounced. At a time when Slovak poets were experimenting with less rigid verse forms, they sought innovations – among other places – in the poetry of one or several literary generations younger European poets influenced by Whitman. These mainly included Emile Verhaeren and Maurice Maeterlinck, both of whom drew on Whitman (Scott [1980] 2010, 218; Erkilla 1980, 91). The first Slovak translations of their work, by the priest, politician, and poet Ignác Grebáč-Orlov (1888–1957), were published in the early decades of the 20th century. Following Grebáč-Orlov, a prominent Slovak poet of the era, Emil Boleslav Lukáč, undertook the translation of Maeterlinck's poems. From among the more prominent innovative poets, Slovak literary figures showed a keen interest in Guillaume Apollinaire and generally drew more on French avant-garde poetry. The close connection Slovak poets felt towards Apollinaire's writing can also be observed in the allusions they made to his work – such as in *Nedeľa* (Sunday, 1927), the first collection of poems written by the avant-garde poet Laco Novomeský (1904–1976): "My friend puffs a cigar and jokes about the light and dusk and evening air, / while to his girlfriend I expressive-

ly recite translations from Apollinaire" (Novomeský 2004, 89).[2] The indirect path inspiration often takes to Slovak literature can, however, be observed here as well – as the comparatist Pavol Winczer (2000, 54–55) notes, the quoted Novomeský poem was not in fact directly influenced by Apollinaire's poetry, but was modelled on the epic poem "Svatý kopeček" (Holy hill) from the collection of poems *Host do domu* (A guest on the threshold, 1921) by the Czech poet Jiří Wolker (1900–1924). Czech translations of French poetry – especially Karel Čapek's translation of Apollinaire – and Czech poetry as such (Vítězslav Nezval, Jiří Wolker, Stanislav Kostka Neumann) were the most important sources of verse innovation in Slovak poetry in the early 20th century. As to the style and character of Slovak free verse which was forming at that time, Czech translations of modern French poetry had a much greater impact (Kochol 1960, 354) and the free verse of the *nadrealists* (lit. above-realists) – the Slovak surrealists – was derived from European avant-garde movements. The 1938 comment of Jozef Felix (1985, 173–174), a major literary critic of that period, is significant in this respect: "We would surely be happier with a Slovak Whitman than a Slovak Breton in our poetry!"

Free verse in Slovak writing has therefore very little in common with Walt Whitman's writing and a more direct relationship between Slovak literature and the "father of American poetry" can be found in several tribute poems written in the first half of the 20th century. One such was the poem by the modernist and symbolist poet Vladimír Roy (1885–1936) "Za more" (Beyond the sea) from his collection of poetry *Cez závoj* (Through the veil, 1927) in which the poet and translator expresses his inclination towards Whitman's poetic form: "From time to time I like to leap in Whitman's style: / […] / It has been said, I'm also fond of Whitman's run" (Roy 1963, 146).[3] The poem also exhibits several characteristics of Whitman's style: it partly violates the regular metre, uses enumeration (e.g. of occupations), and alludes to "Song of Myself" (146).

One of the most intriguing impacts Walt Whitman had on Slovak poetry during the early decades of the 20th century lies in the relatively unexplored intertextual references found in the collection of poems by the leftist avant-garde poet Ján Rob Poničan (1902–1978). Poničan was a writer, journalist, and lawyer who studied in Prague (1920–1926) and in 1924, together with a group of leftist intellectuals, he co-founded the literary-political magazine *DAV*. The title of the magazine is both a noun denoting a crowd (of common people) and an acronym of the names of lawyers, politicians, and political scientists who co-founded it: Daniel Okáli (1903–1987), Andrej Sirácky (1900–1988), and Vladimír Clementis (1902–1952), the last being a victim of a communist anti-Semitic show trial. A year before *DAV* was first printed, Poničan self-published his first book of poetry, the formally and thematically diverse *Som, myslím, cítim a vidím, milujem všetko, len temno nenávidím* (I am, I think, I feel, and I see, I love everything, only darkness I hate). Amongst the poems in the book is "Dav, milujem ťa!" (Crowd, I love you!) which refers to Whitman's "Song of Myself". The Slovak poem combines expressionistic, modernist, and decadent images with engaged verses and passages expressing a love for the people:

Crowd, I love You!

I love You:
I guess:
from a million of atoms similar to me
that you are alloyed, –
I guess:
that you don't have a home –
(you are home in every place where something sprouts, –)[4]
(Poničan 1923, 55)

One cannot but hear in the passage the beginning of Whitman's most famous poem and its "For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you. / […] / I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass" (1891–1892, 29). Although the Slovak translation of "Song of Myself" was not published before the centenary of the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* (Whitman 1956), Poničan, who studied in Prague, could have easily read the American poet in the Czech translation by Jaroslav Vrchlický (1853–1912), one of the most important Czech poets of the 19th century and a prolific translator. Vrchlický's translation of Whitman was published in 1906 and was the first book-length Czech translation of the American poet. The leftist sentiment of unity with the people and sympathy for the masses which permeates Poničan's poem strongly resonates with Whitman's writing and the "loved crowd" – the masses advocated for by the magazine *DAV* and by the group of lawyers and other intellectuals named after it (*davisti* – the davists/crowdist) – is the same humankind celebrated by Whitman.

The very title of Poničan's collection *Som, myslím, cítim a vidím, milujem všetko, len temno nenávidím* is a Whitman-style line – the assertively positive attitude towards the world and its sensory properties combined with the visibly central position of the speaker and the unusual length of the title remind the reader of Whitman's poetic revolution. This direct textual inspiration, however, has not been explored yet – while the literary historian Michal Habaj does assert that some of Poničan's poems "can also be read in the context of the prewar civilizational poetry which drew on Verhaeren's and Whitman's poetry and which confronts urban-industrial and technicist themes with a social […] stance" (2008, 268), he does not mention any intertextual references. That is perhaps due to the fact that Poničan's collection was inspired by a host of different styles, and references to Whitman poetry are not too frequent. A more pronounced one – besides the book's title and the poem quoted above – is another reference to "Song of Myself" in the lines "I celebrate life, / I celebrate humankind, I celebrate their allies: proletariat, / and I celebrate also the proletariat's youth"[5] (1923, 12) from the poem "Sviedol ma život" (Life has seduced me) and in several cases, Poničan also uses the technique of cataloguing. What Poničan's case shows most importantly though is that the democratic, humanistic, and leftist orientation of Whitman's poetry was appreciated in his Slovak reception even before Marxism became the state ideology after the communist coup d'état in 1948.

Whitman's presence persisted in Slovak literature throughout the first half of the 20th century, not primarily through translation, but rather through individual inclinations and engagements with his work. After Roy and Poničan, the spirit of love for humankind and freedom that so strongly emanates from the American poet's verses appealed to the poet, journalist, and diplomat Theo H. Florin (1908–1973). Born as Teodor Herkeľ in the small Slovak town of Dolný Kubín, Florin worked abroad as a journalist and politician since the early 1930s, living in Novi Sad (Serbia), Paris, London, and in 1946–1948, in the USA, where he traveled extensively and wrote poetry inspired by his travels. After returning to Czechoslovakia from Washington, Florin worked as personal secretary to Vladimír Clementis until 1950, when he was unjustly imprisoned during the communist show trials. He was released in 1953, but after that he withdrew from political life and spent the rest of his life in his hometown. The poems Florin wrote in the USA were published during the period of political thaw in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s by the Stredoslovenské vydavateľstvo (Central Slovak regional publishing house). The collection *Oheň na Potomacu* (The fire on the Potomac river, 1965), written during the time Florin spent in the USA, tackles the racial issue and the poet's American experience. The first words of the author's foreword state that his "first love was a black girl"[6] (1965, 5) – and the book also contains "Spev o Waltovi Whitmanovi" (Song of Walt Whitman), written in Virginia in 1947. In his introduction, Florin frames his collection through the memories of pre-World War II Paris, using the old Czech exonym for the Seine River, *Sekvana* (5) and referring in this way to the Gallo-Roman myth (Sequana was the goddess of the river). The introduction and title of the collection in a similar synecdochic fashion refer to Washington, D. C., as a city on the Potomac River. Florin's "Spev o Waltovi Whitmanovi" addresses the American poet in the second person, delves into the time Whitman spent in Washington, and tracks the traces the poet left in the city. The speaker of the poem identifies with the American poet, celebrates his life, and admires his gentle and manly qualities.[7]

Surprisingly enough, this poem, together with six others, appeared in 1971 in the Canadian literary magazine *PRISM International*, at one of the peaks of totalitarian state socialism in Czechoslovakia. The English translation of Florin's poems was done by the philologist James St. Clair-Sobell who, according to the note accompanying the translation, was staying in Dolný Kubín as a guest of the Slovak poet when the armed forces of the U.S.S.R. entered Czechoslovakia in 1948 (1971, 14). The Whitman poem is the last of Florin's seven poems that open the third issue of the magazine which contains, among others, the texts of such poets as Philippe Soupault, Raymond Queneau, Bertolt Brecht, or Stanislaw Jerzy Lec. The publication of these translations is most probably the result of a combination of several factors – the existing personal contact between Florin and Clair-Sobell, the high ethos connected with anti-communist and anti-racial sentiments woven into the poems and the biographical note, the fact that Florin took as his topic in these poems American themes including the "[b]earded and wild, gentle and hard" (1971, 14) Whitman, and that the collection *Oheň na Potomacu* was published during the political thaw

of the 1960s. Thanks to these circumstances, the book found its way to the translator – and to several libraries located in the UK and US.

Owing to such idiosyncrasies as Ján Rob Poničan's declared love of the crowd and Theo H. Florin's travel poems, Walt Whitman served as a bridge between American and Slovak poetry – a skewed, slanted, and feeble one, but still a bridge. The following section will take a look at the first translations of Walt Whitman into Slovak.

ACT II: ENTER STATE SOCIALISM, ENTER WHITMAN THE COMRADE – MID-CENTURY TRANSLATIONS

The tone and message of Whitman's texts, their vocal anti-elitism and optimistic view of the world, was equally consistent with the authentic values promoted by leftist intellectuals before World War II as with the official communist ideology in totalitarian Czechoslovakia after 1948, and a translation of a Whitman poem was published in the literary magazine *Slovenské pohľady* – one of the few that were allowed by the regime – soon after the Communist coup. "Years of the Modern" was published in the last issue of the 1950 volume as "Roky novej doby" (Years of the new times) and was meant, like many other texts of the period, to discursively create a beginning of the new era in Slovak culture, politics, and life in general. The poem was rendered by the critic and translator Ján Boor (1915–2002) who modified the text in his Slovak version so that it would be clear that the poem was acutely topical: instead of "years of the unperform'd!" (Whitman 1891–1892, 370), the translation speaks about years of the new changes[8] (1950, 711). Boor was also the translator of the first book translation of Walt Whitman, published in 1956 as *Pozdrav svetu* ("Salut au Monde").[9]

Before the book translation was published, a few of Whitman's poems also appeared in *Ľudové čítanie* (Popular reading), a literary magazine intended to cultivate and educate the general public. The poems included were "Gods", "I Sit and Look Out", and a new version of "Years of the Modern" which was translated there as "Roky vekov budúcich" (Years of the ages of the future). The curator of the Whitman piece, Ž. Augustínová, was most probably unaware of the fact that Ján Boor was working on his translation – not only did she include a new version of the poem previously published in *Slovenské pohľady*, which, in the context of how few translations of Whitman were available in Slovak, is unusual, but the poems were not even translations from the English originals, but retranslations from Czech. The text does not give the full name of the re-translator, only the initials J. Z. The noticeable interest in the poem "Years of the Modern" in post-World War II Slovakia is explicitly explained in the introduction to the three relay translations – it "resounds with the prophetic voice of what is to come, of what we are already living" (Augustínová 1955, 274).

The first Slovak book translation of Whitman's poetry was published upon the occasion of the centenary of the first U.S. edition of *Leaves of Grass* in 1956. This first concentrated Slovak interest in Whitman might have sprung from the fact that the World Peace Council, a post-World War II organization founded in the Eastern Bloc "designed to draw non-Communists closer to the Communist movement", and listing prominent members from 74 countries (Grünzweig 2007, 344–345), pro-

claimed the centenary of *Leaves of Grass* a great cultural anniversary and in this way incited numerous ways in which Whitman was recognized in Eastern and Central Europe.

The Slovak translation was done by Ján Boor. Its title *Pozdrav svetu* is the Slovak translation of the poem "Salut au Monde" and as such is very fitting for the first proper introduction of Whitman into Slovak. The translator's foreword – like other period Czech and Slovak texts on Whitman – accentuated Whitman's democratic vision. The elements of his work and life that did not align with communist ideology could be readily adapted, reinterpreted, or even misinterpreted to present Whitman as a prototype of the desired revolutionary poet – a poet who preaches "true democracy, active mutual love and druzhba [friendship], progress, health, optimism, humanity" (Boor 1956, 17). Boor's preface to his 1956 translation is full of period rhetoric – it uses expressions like "revolutionary and bloody class struggle" and "son of the people" (10, 11) and at one point, it even claims that Whitman "[d]id not know what the American way of life was, because the bourgeoisie, its carrier, was alien to him" (12). A few pages later, the translator twists the idea in the opposite direction, claiming that his poetry contains "the pernicious influence of the bourgeois liberalism of those times" (18). In *O západných realistoch* (On Western realists), the collection of essays Boor published two years before the translation, he presents Whitman as a representative of realism – the only literary technique supported by the regime – and an author admired by Joseph Stalin at that (1954, 54). The translator brings Whitman very close to the target culture of those times – he even interprets his "camerado" as "comrade" – a word that bore a very specific meaning in socialist Czechoslovakia: "If we use the word comrade in the passages when Whitman speaks of friends, all the powerful lines pregnant with love and action, all these manly songs and enthusiastic visions strikingly fit our times, quite naturally, without a change, as if they were written for us long ago!" (59)

During the following decade, the period of political thaw of the "Golden Sixties", Slovak poets and translators were more fascinated by avant-gardists and the poets of the Beat generation than by the leftist democratic ideas of Whitman. The contents of the periodical focusing on world literatures in Slovak translation, *Revue svetovej literatúry*, testifies to that: founded in 1965, it brought renditions of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, T. S. Eliot, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Ingeborg Bachman, Paul Celan, Dylan Thomas, Samuel Beckett, Roland Barthes, André Breton, Max Bense, Saul Bellow, Umberto Eco, Jack Kerouac, Sylvia Plath, John Barth, and Vladimir Nabokov in the 1960s. New translations of Whitman were only published during normalization – a period roughly demarcated by the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968) and the Velvet Revolution (1989).

ACT III: WHITMAN THE NORMALIZED – THE SECOND HALF OF THE STATE SOCIALISM

In the 1970s, during so-called normalization, many authors stopped publishing their work – either completely or to a certain degree – because of the restrictions imposed by the regime after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops, and turned

to translating instead. Ján Stacho (1936–1995), a prominent poet of the 1960s, who also translated a few poems by Whitman, was one of them. His translation of part 6 of "Song of Myself" and "To a Locomotive in Winter" were published in the Sunday supplement of the *Pravda* daily in 1971 and part 32 of "Song of Myself" and the poems "Aboard at a Ship's Helm" and "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" were aired on radio in 1972 before they were included in his collected translations (Stacho 1983). Since Ján Stacho did not speak English and his other translations from that language were done in collaboration, it can be supposed that the method he used in translating Whitman was either compilative translation, or some other relay form of translation which was very common in poetry translation into Slovak in the second half of the 20th century. Stacho's input into this rendition, therefore, concentrated on the aesthetic modelling of the text, and his Slovak versions accentuate such aspects of the poems as striking stylistic color, wide connotative potential, and heightened expressiveness.

In 1972, two Whitman poems were also included in the ambitious translation project of the émigré poet Karol Strmeň (1921–1994), who emigrated from Czechoslovakia in 1945, settling in the USA in 1949. The two volumes of his anthology *Návštevy* (Visits), containing translations of more than 200 poets from around the world, were published in 1972 by the Pontifical Slovak Institute of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Rome. Strmeň was an editor, teacher, poet, and translator of poetry from more than twenty languages. The two Whitman poems in his 1972 anthology, "I Hear America Singing" and "The World below the Brine", are preceded by translations of Henry David Thoreau's "The Summer Rain" and followed by Charles Baudelaire's "Correspondances" and "Spleen". As the translator's note about the author suggests, they were probably only included because an "anthology of world lyric", as the subtitle of the book states, would be incomplete without it:

> Walt Whitman, the poet of democracy, the virtues of which he unjustly equated with his own eloquence, 1819 – 1892. The translator agrees with everything what Henry James had to say about him, in all basic things, but also saw in him the possibility of the surprisingly lively mosaic. Whitman wanted to be the American jungle when his home country has not been a jungle for a long time – neither with respect to the colonizers, nor to what they discovered. Nevertheless, open Whitman anyway, he still orates, recites, shines, amasses – not even after death is he at peace. (Strmeň 1927, 206)

The translator's distaste perhaps partly explains Slovak culture's more general lukewarm reception of Whitman – the form and tone of the American poet simply does not appeal to many Slovak poets.

The second Slovak translation of Walt Whitman's work was published in 1974 under the title *Tráva a tŕstie* (Grass and reeds). Like *Pozdrav svetu* (1956), this translation was also done by Ján Boor. Although the new selection partially overlaps with the 1956 volume, its whole editorial concept is different from the centenary volume. Reflecting a shift back towards aesthetics in literature after the ideologically charged 1950s, this edition enhances the book's qualities as an aesthetic artefact. Unlike the 1956 edition of Whitman, where the translator's commentary opened the book, in this instance it is discreetly placed at the back and nearly devoid of ideological bias,

which often served as paratextual camouflage during the totalitarian era (Tyšš 2017; Bachledová 2018). The translator's afterword not only offers the reader a neutral and scholarly analysis of Whitman's poetry but also explicitly outlines the translational and editorial approach followed by Boor. It contains, among other things, the translator's credo:

> The spirit of his [Whitman's] poetic language has to be preserved, his expressiveness, the character of his verse, his way of writing, the character of his poetic imagery and ornaments, his imagination. Whitman must not be made more polished or more genteel. However, here and there the translator can take the liberty of experimenting with language. (Boor 1974, 191)

Boor then goes on to say that "Whitman can be translated freely or strictly" and that he – the translator – alternated between the two concepts in his translation (191). Comparison shows that Boor's translation indeed is more philological than Stacho's, for example.

Since the late 1950s, Slovak translation critics have concurred that poetry translations are most effectively executed by poets themselves. However, few of these poets possessed sufficient proficiency in foreign languages to undertake translation work. In a discussion on literary translation published in 1966 in the renowned literary periodical *Mladá tvorba* (Young writing), writers, poets, critics, and translators agreed that Slovak literary translation had only achieved satisfactory quality standards for a select few languages. Unsurprisingly, Russian was among them, as it had been a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools since 1948. One of the leading Slovak translators from English, Ján Vilikovský, went on to note that

> [t]here are only a few outstanding translators in Slovakia […]. The vast majority of translators merely produce books for reading. Of the total publishing production, ten per cent of translations are done by 'quality' translators and 90 per cent are done 'routinely'. Then it is no wonder that the Slovak reader prefers Czech translations; the greater part of them are also done routinely, but this 'routine' is of a much higher level. (Vilikovský et al. 1966, 11)

The continuous appearance of Whitman in Slovak language and literature, where he achieves recognition without gaining full acceptance, mirrors a distinct facet of Slovak culture: its fragmented interaction with the outside world across various domains, including translation (Bednárová 2013, 42). Even after the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989, engagement with Whitman's writings remained sporadic and incomplete within Slovak culture, despite the altered political and economic landscape. A telling example is found in the work of the contemporary poet Katarína Kucbelová, who, in her 2006 collection of poems, chooses to reference Whitman's original English edition rather than the Slovak translation (7).

ACT IV: WHITMAN FOR FREE – SLOVAK WHITMAN IN THE GLOBALIZED PRESENT

Following the collapse of state socialism, the primary foreign language spoken by Slovaks shifted from Russian to English. However, reliance on Czech translations, or the preference for them, persists among Slovak readers, necessitating consider-

ation when conducting research or entering the publishing market. This prevalent influence of Czech translations in the Slovak literary landscape is evident in the case of Whitman. There have been no initiatives to translate his complete works, and it took nearly four decades for another book translation to be published after *Tráva a tŕstie* from 1974. In 2013, "Song of Myself" was retranslated as *Spev o mne* by Juraj Kuniak, a relatively obscure poet operating his own press, Skalná ruža, which received only marginal attention from critics and poets during that period. The translation of Whitman, however, propelled him to the heart of the Slovak poetry world. It inaugurated the successful "Poetry" series, which has since featured prominent Slovak poets and a diverse range of translations. Kuniak's translation garnered generally favorable reviews and was even shortlisted for Slovakia's most prestigious literary translation prize, the Ján Hollý Prize.

CONCLUSION

The positive reception of a translation has little bearing on the fact that poetry in translation remains a marginalized genre in Slovak literature, largely surviving due to subsidies. The publication of translations that are not financially viable – as is generally the case with poetry translations – relies on the funding independent publishers can secure from various grant schemes. Literary translation, along with related fields such as editorial practice and publishing, has become increasingly disorganized and haphazard compared to the era of state socialism when large publishing houses attempted to create standards.

Poets like Whitman, whose work is well-known and no longer under copyright, present a low-risk opportunity for small presses to generate cultural capital and obtain cultural funds. This trend is evident on projects like that of the musician Robert Pospiš. *Spev tebe – Budúcnosť* (Song to you – Future, 2019) does not aim to create a more comprehensive Slovak translation of Whitman. It is a selection of Whitman's poetry – even of parts of poems – translated by the poet Martin Solotruk and contains poems the musician did not include in his eponymous album. As Pospiš explicitly states in the afterword, he was not even interested in selecting whole poems (2019, 48). Such arbitrary treatment of the original text contradicts translation norms established during the decades following World War II and highlights the increasingly unsystematic nature of literary translation – and the closely connected field of editing (Navrátil 2018, 2020; Rácová 2020) – in contemporary Slovakia.

NOTES

[1] An unpublished translation of a segment of "Song of Myself" by the poet Pavol Gašparovič Hlbina (1908–1977) is listed among the holdings of the Archives of Literature and Art of the Matica Slovenská under the title "Dieťa sa pýta čo je tráva" [The child asks what is grass]. The translation is, however, undated (Mrušovič 1997, 273).

[2] "Môj priateľ zapáli cigaru a robí vtipy si z noci a z šera, / ja jeho milenke s pathosom vykladám preklady z Appolinaira [sic]" (Novomeský 1927, 10).

[3] Unless stated otherwise, all translations from Slovak into English are mine. "Ja zavše rád i whitmanovsky pozaplesám: / […] / Rád tiež, jak vravím, I whitmanovský beh."

[4] "Dav, milujem Ťa! / Milujem Ťa: / hádam: / z milionov mne podobných atomov, / že si sliaty, – / hádam: / že nemáš domov – / (doma si všade, kde čo klíči, –)"

[5] "Velebím život, / velebím ľudstvo, velebím ich gardu: proletariát, / a velebím I proletársku mladť"

[6] "prvá láska bolo čierne dievča"

[7] Although the collection in no way mentions any such thing, according to his contemporaries, Theo H. Florin identified as queer. This would, however, be unacceptable to admit openly during that time. Theo H. Florin's admiration for Whitman, his life and writing, may also have the dimension of appreciating the homoerotic elements of the American writer's poetry.

[8] "Roky nových zmien!"

[9] The book was introduced by a translator's foreword which provided political interpretation of Walt Whitman and contained a selection of Whitman's poetry and his *Democratic Vistas* – the latter was translated by the Esperantist and translator Magda Seppová.

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