

## TRANSLATION OF FICTION AS A SPECIFIC FORM OF BULGARIAN-SLOVAK INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION II

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**Abstract.** The article continues the presentation of the Slovak translation school of Bulgarian literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the first part, the author introduces the most productive translators, namely, Vladimir Zsabkay, Yozef Marushiak, Gusta Baritsova and Viera Prokeshova, and discusses their translations of Bulgarian literature. The second part of the article provides readers with the information on life and work of Yuliya Staykova who significantly promoted Bulgarian literature and culture in Slovakia.

*Keywords:* The Dictionary of Slovak Literary Translators of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; translations of Bulgarian literature in Slovakia; translator Yuliya Staykova

Two volumes of *Slovník slovenských prekladateľov umeleckej literatúry 20. storočia* (*The Dictionary of Slovak Literary Translators of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*; A – K, 2015; L – Ž, 2017) contain almost four hundred entries on Slovak translators<sup>1)</sup> selected according to set criteria.<sup>2)</sup>

The list of translators from respective literatures mentions seventeen names in the section Bulgarian literature. However, some poets, for example Pavol Horov, Yozef Mihalkovich and Yan Ponitchan, translated Bulgarian poetry in collaboration with language experts. Milan Ferko and Andrey Vrbatsky only translated a single book from Bulgarian while Yozef Gerboc, Yan Irmeler and Lyudmila Pikulova published their translations in periodicals. Besides, all mentioned persons predominantly translated from other languages. Vladimir Zsabkay, Yozef Marushiak, Gusta Baritsova and Viera Prokeshova therefore distinct in the list of translators of Bulgarian literature, not only due to the number of translated books but especially due to artistic qualities of their translations.

Vladimir Zsabkay (1921 – 1990)<sup>3)</sup> studied law but only worked as a lawyer for a short time. He worked in diplomacy, and later was an editor and a journalist. As a translator, he focused on adventurous, historical and science-

fiction literature, as well as on war novels and criminal stories; he mostly translated from French and German (Babotova, 2015: 359). He got familiar with Bulgarian language and literature during his diplomatic mission in Sofia, since he was the first secretary of the Czechoslovak Embassy between 1945 and 1949. He chose genres compatible with his preferences. He translated science fiction, for example, *Гибелта на Аякс* “The Death of Ajax” (in Slovak *Záhuba Ajaxu*, 1975) by Pavel Vezhinov, and *Тежестта на скафандръра* “Weight of the Scaphander” (in Slovak *Bremeno skafandra*, 1980) by Lyuben Dilov, one of the most remarkable representatives of Bulgarian science fiction.

Gusta Baritsova (1926 – 2002)<sup>4)</sup> studied Slovak and French philology, and started translating immediately after finishing university studies. She worked in editing houses specialized in children’s and youth literature. Her everyday work as an editor and proofreader developed her natural talent for languages and translation, and resulted in mastering the art of words. She published numerous translations from Czech, French and Bulgarian in periodicals. She also translated thirty-five books; twelve among them were translations from Bulgarian. These were books for the youngest readers and for adolescents, adventurous novels, criminal stories, travelogues and titles of popular science with various themes. Gusta Baritsova was enormously capable to convey the atmosphere of original literary works. For example, in Dimitar Gulev’s story about six boys, set in streets of Sofia during holidays, *Парола “Фокси”* “Password Foxi” (in Slovak *Heslo Foxi*, 1986) she was able to mediate successfully not only the story but also different languages and thoughts of boys. Her ability to express dramatic qualities and the culmination of the story was obvious from her translation of Ventsislav Diavatov’s and Milan Milanov’s criminal novel *Крадци на богородици* “Thieves of God-bearers” (in Slovak *Vyšetrovanie sa skončilo*, 1976), about an illegal business with artistic objects of high cultural and historical value. She also showed her interpretation qualities when translating fiction set among basketball players, as in Atanas Mandadzhiev’s novel *Старт към живота* “Start in Life” (in Slovak *Štart do života*, 1961), or among cyclists, as in Bojan Bolgar’s *Само една крачка* “Just One Step” (in Slovak *Len jeden krok*, 1963).

Yozef Marushiak (1938 – 1997)<sup>5)</sup> began to study at the College of Agriculture in Nitra, after one year of studies he was awarded a foreign scholarship, and finished his studies in Plovdiv. When he returned to Slovakia, he did his post gradual studies in journalism. He worked as an editor in various publishing houses, later as a dramaturge and scriptwriter in Slovak television. He translated approximately fifty television scripts from various Slavic languages and fifteen books that significantly contributed to promoting Bulgarian literature in Slovakia. He already began to translate

shorter stories from Bulgarian during his studies in Plovdiv. He tended to choose prose with a dynamic story line where he used his ability to mediate the atmosphere of the story (Dobrikova, 2017: 57). His translations benefited from his knowledge of Bulgarian cultural milieu. Marushiak's translations of Vera Mutaftschieva's historical prose *Случаят Джем* "The Case Jam" (in Slovak *Sultánov syn*, 1974)<sup>6</sup> and of Pavel Vezhinov's novel *Нощем с белите коне* "Night with White Horses" (in Slovak *Nocou s bielymi koňmi*, 1978) with the theme of inter-generational relations manifest his outstanding ability to mediate qualities of narration and dialogues. Yozef Marushiak was also very able to express the language and world of children's readers, as seen from his translation of the book *Господин Дръж ми чадъра* "Mr. Hold-Mu-Parasol" (in Slovak *Pán Držmislničník. Prešibalkove dobrodružstvá*, 1987). His style of translation was very creative, using standard and colloquial speech as well as dialects as, for example, in Georgi Mishev's satirical prose *Дами канят* "Ladies' Choice" (in Slovak *Dámska volenka*, 1990).

Viera Prokeshova (1957 – 2008)<sup>7</sup> graduated from the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University in Bratislava. Already during her studies of Slovak and Bulgarian philology, she showed genuine interest in literature. She wrote six collections of poetry dealing with themes of a female subject and interpersonal relations. She was an editor in the publishing house

Slovensky spisovateľ (Slovak writer); and she worked in the Institute of World Literature of the Slovak Academy of Sciences from 2000 to 2008. She translated works of various genres. She also edited, reviewed, and wrote epilogues to many literary translation books. In collaboration with language experts, she translated poetry from different European and exotic languages. For example, she published verse by the sixth Dalai lama from the 17<sup>th</sup> century under a title "Voices from Lhasa" (in Slovak *Hlasy z Lhasy*, 2003)<sup>8</sup>. Her books introduced works of several Bulgarian poets; for example, she presented Vatyó Rakovski's poetry in her collection "Flying Day" (in Slovak *Letiaci deň*, 1980), and she included writers who debuted after 1956 (M. Basheva, I. Tsanev, K. Donkov, G. Konstantinov, N. Kantshev) in her book "Sunday Earthquake" (in Slovak *Nedeľné zemetrasenie*, 1988). Her book "Bohemian Nights" (*Bohémske noci*, 1991) contained some works of the most remarkable representatives of Bulgarian Symbolism. The collection "Moon haiku" (*Mesačné haiku*, 2006) is Prokeshova's translation of Dimitar Stefanov, a pioneer of haiku in Bulgarian poetry. Her translations in periodicals also promoted new Bulgarian poetry. Viera Prokeshova was a respected literary critic, talented poet and translator. Her premature death was a significant loss not only for Slovak literature and literary criticism but also for Slovak-Bulgarian literary relations that she eagerly promoted.

The first part of the article on the most prolific Slovak translators of Bulgarian literature introduced four authors whose translation activities were

indispensable for the mosaic of the Bulgarian-Slovak relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Especially Gusta Baritsova, Yozef Marushiak and Viera Prokeshova significantly contributed to promoting Bulgarian literature in Slovakia. However, other four creative translators, namely Maria Topolska, Yuliya Staykova, Yan Koshka and Emil Kudlitschka also dedicated their entire lives to translating from Bulgarian and promoting Bulgarian-Slovak literary and cultural relations (Dobrikova, 2018: 531). Maria Topolska was the most productive translator of Bulgarian literature in Slovakia. The periodical *Bulgarian language and literature* published an article on her literary and translating activities last year. The next part of the text wishes to offer a portrait of Yuliya Staykova for whom Bulgaria and Bulgarian literature truly became the destiny.

Yuliya Staykova, née Yurtschova (1921 – 2001)<sup>9</sup> studied Slovak and French at the Faculty of Arts at Slovak University (today Comenius University) in Bratislava. During her studies, she attended optional Bulgarian language classes, and got familiar with history and culture of the country. This stimulated her interest in Bulgarian literature and in translation. In 1947, she married a Bulgarian P. Staykov. She improved her language competence in family and during her residence in Bulgaria (from 1954 to 1956) where the family was repatriated after a politically motivated request from the Bulgarian side<sup>10</sup>. After returning to Czechoslovakia, she remained in contact with Bulgarian language, since she worked at the Bulgarian Embassy in Bratislava and later, in her senior age, she collaborated with the Bulgarian cultural and information center (today Bulgarian cultural institute).

As a translator, she debuted by translating a selection of Bulgarian fairy tales entitled “Golden Apple” (in Slovak *Zlaté jablko*, 1947) which she prepared together with her husband. In 1949, she translated two works by renowned Bulgarian writers; namely, the first Bulgarian novel for children with elements of science fiction *Ян Бибиан. Невероятни приключения на едно хлапе* “Yan Bibiyan. Unbelievable Stories of One Boy” (in Slovak *Ján Bibiján*) by Elin Pelin, and *Немили – недраги* “Unkind – Undear” (in Slovak *Nemilí – nedrahi*) by Ivan Vazov, the latter one about the life of Bulgarian revolutionary emigrants in Romania before Bulgaria was liberated from the Turkish oppression. Her first translations indicated her further development as a literary translator, since she focused on both children’s and youth literature, as well as on prose for adults.

Yuliya Staykova was able to attract children’s readers using suitable language and expressions already in her translation of Yan Bibiyan. In her translation of Kalina Malina’s novel *Златно сърце* “Golden Heart” (in Slovak *Zlaté srdce*, 1976), about an orphan trying to find out the truth about his parents, she showed an exceptional sense of metaphor. Translating Bulgarian traditional folk and modern fairy tales is a separate chapter among Staykova’s translation activities for children. She translated Georgi Rusafov’s *Юнакът със златни-*

me kocu “A Lad with Golden Hair” (in Slovak *O bedárovom kožuchu*, 1963), as well as a selection of thirty-eight fairy tales “Wooden Throne. Bulgarian Tales” (in Slovak *Drevený trón. Bulharské rozprávky*, 1964, 1968, 1983), containing both folk fairy tales and stories by A. Karaliytshev, G. Rusafov, R. Bosilek, and others. Staykova’s translations of Bulgarian fairy tales were also included in several representative collections of foreign fairy tales, such as “Seal Princess” (in Slovak *Tulenia princezná*, 1974, 1985), “How a Fairy Tale Went in the World” (in Slovak *Ako šla rozprávka do sveta*, 1980, 1983, 2008), and “Fairy Tales from Near and Far” (in Slovak *Rozprávky zďaleka i zblízka*, 1984).

It is natural that between the 1960s and 1980s, Yuliya Staykova could not completely avoid translating ideologically biased works discussing propaganda and industrialization. However, she was able to choose works without flat characters and black-and-white stories but which, instead, addressed moral values in the society, and noticed discrepancies and complexities of life. Among such books, we can mention Staykova’s translations of Bogumil Raynov’s criminal novel *Бразилска мелодия. Няма по-хубаво от лошото време* “Brazilian Melody. There Is Nothing Nicer Than Bad Weather” (in Slovak *Brazilska melódia*, 1972); Emil Manov’s novel for young female readers *Моето първо лято* “My First Summer” (in Slovak *Moje prvé leto*, 1972); as well as Kamen Kaltshev’s stories on life in Sofia *Софийски разкази* “Sofia Stories” (in Slovak *Sofijské poviedky*, 1975), and Aleksandar Karasimeonov’s novel *Любов* “Love” (*Láska*, 1976) discussing ideals and values of several generations. Together with Anna Sikorova, she translated two cult philosophical and psychological novels by Pavel Vezhinov; namely, *Барьерата* “Barrier” (in Slovak *Variéra*) and *Белият гущер* “White Saurian” (in Slovak *Biely jašter*), and published them in 1983 under the title of the former story. Both stories contain elements of science fiction. Both protagonists, in spite of being very different, represent otherness and are unable to integrate in the society (due to a different perception of the world in the former story; due to the physical appearance in the latter one). Staykova’s translation of P. Vezhinov’s novel *Равновесие* “Balance” (*Rovnováha*, 1985) was similar in genre.

The range of translation activities of Y. Staykova also includes a selection of stories “Hunter’s Luck” (in Slovak *Polovničke šťastie*, 1968) containing works by outstanding Bulgarian fiction writers such as Y. Yovkov, E. Pelin, E. Stanev, Tschudomir; as well as a selection of Radi Tsarev’s stories on animals published under a title “Silent Friends” (in Slovak *Mlčanliví priatelia*, 1979).

Staykova also successfully translated books with historical themes. Besides I. Vazov’s work *Немили – недраги* “Unkind – Undear”, she translated Stoyan Zagortchinov’s novel *Ден последен* “The Last Day” (in Slovak *Posledný*

*deň*, 1954) about the events in the 14<sup>th</sup> century before the Turkish domination began in Bulgaria, as well as Dimitar Talev's novel *Железният светилник* "The Iron Candlestick" (*Železný svietnik*, 1976) about the national fight of Bulgarians in Macedonia against the Greek church hierarchy in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Y. Staykova entered the scene of Bulgarian-Slovak literary relations in a difficult period, in the 1950s. Her path as a translator, however, was influenced by the fact that she was the first person to translate works by classical Bulgarian writers Elin Pelin and Ivan Vazov. These were books for children and youth, as well as books with historical themes, in which she was able to mediate the authenticity and particular atmosphere of Southern Slavic area contained in original texts. In the 1960s, more than forty titles from Bulgarian literature were translated and published in Slovakia. Even though many of them were ideologically biased, Y. Staykova tried to translate books of artistic values that could create an imaginary bridge between the two cultures. The 1970s were a fruitful period in the history of Slovak-Bulgarian relations. The number of translations from Bulgarian literature reached its peak: between ten and twenty books were translated annually; translations appeared in magazines and newspapers, in television and radio; besides, scientific articles, essays, and reviews were published... (Koshka, 1986, 1998). In that period, Y. Staykova, avoiding the spotlight, modestly and thoroughly continued working on literary translations, published either as books or in periodicals, as well as on translations of scientific and popular scientific literature. In spite of this diversity in genres and themes, she was extremely consistent in her interpretation of texts; she knew historical contexts as well as specific details of Bulgarian cultural and geopolitical space.

Staykova ranks among the most prolific translators from Bulgarian literature in the 20<sup>th</sup> century when considering both the number of translated works and the quality of her translations. For her contribution to the development of bilateral cultural relations, Y. Staykova received an Honorary Acknowledgement and a Commemorative Medal of the Minister of Culture of Bulgarian Republic, as well as The Order of Cyril and Methodius of the Second Degree.

## NOTES

1. A more detailed characteristics of this remarkable lexicographic and encyclopedic work on literary translation can be found, together with Maria Topolska's portrait containing information on her life and bibliography, in the article Translation of Fiction as a Specific Form of Bulgarian-Slovak Intercultural Communication [Bulgarski ezik I literatura-Bulgarian language and literature], 2018, 60 (5), 529 – 537].

2. Major selection criteria were the number of published titles (books) and their artistic quality; “in some cases, though, including an entry was motivated by the effort to present also authors of translations typical for the atmosphere of the era and translations of works extremely popular with readers” (Kovachichova – Kusa, 2015: 7 – 8).
3. The entry on ŽABKAY Vladimir (2017: 359 – 360) in *The Dictionary of Slovak literary translators of the 20th century* was written by Maria Babotova.
4. The entry on BARICOVÁ Gusta (2015: 116 –117) was written by Maria Dobrikova.
5. The entry on MARUŠIAK Jozef (2017: 56 – 57) was written by Maria Dobrikova.
6. Jozef Marushiak translated two other works by a historian and Herder Prize holder (1980) Vera Mutaftschieva: a story *Белот на двете ръце* “A Card Game for Two Hands” (in *Slovak Sedma vo dvojici*, 1981) and a historical novel *Ханът Аспарух* “Khan Asparuh” (in *Slovak Chán Asparuch*, 1986).
7. The entry on PROKEŠOVÁ Viera (2017: 165 – 166) in *The Dictionary of Slovak literary translators of the 20th century* was written by Yan Zambor.
8. Viera Prokeshova translated verse of the sixth Dalai lama in language collaboration with a Slovak expert in Chinese and Tibetan studies Martin Slobodnik (1970 – 2019).
9. The entry on STAJKOVÁ (STAJKOVOVÁ) Júlia (2017: 235 – 237) in *The Dictionary of Slovak literary translators of the 20th century* was written by Maria Dobrikova.
10. After World War II, groups of Bulgarian workers began to arrive in Czechoslovakia, since the unemployment was high and work opportunities were scarce at that time in Bulgaria, while Czechoslovakia needed workers after a mass expulsion of ethnic Germans. On 16 September 1946, an agreement on sending six thousand people from Bulgaria to work in agriculture in Czechoslovakia for one year was signed in Sofia (Penchev, 2017: 132). Bulgarian workers soon started leaving jobs in agriculture for better-paid positions. Some of them began to study or got married and requested a permanent residence in Czechoslovakia. Since standards of living in Czechoslovakia were higher than in Bulgaria, most of them tried to remain in Czechoslovakia (Rikhlik, 2005: 27). The number of Bulgarian workers and students who wished to legalize their stay in Czechoslovakia and refused to return home got so high that the supreme Bulgarian and Czechoslovak state authorities had to deal with it. The Czechoslovak government refused to force Bulgarian citizens to return home and left the decision on them whereas the Bulgarian government kept looking for some measures that would lead to their repatriation. The situation acquired a political dimension after 1947 when the Bulgarian state security got involved in the issue.

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