

Editorial

One of the focused goals of *Romanistica Comeniana* is to reflect upon the world of Romance cultures and their Central European reception. Languages and literatures are unquestionably the royal paths through which the Romance world became present in the Slovak and, in a broader sense, the Central European area. Their union can be observed in the path that reading a foreign-language literary work and its translation have to undergo. The prominent Slovak Romanist Blahoslav Hečko considered translation to be an adventure. Let us add that it is not only translation which can be an adventure.

The French writer and Nobel Prize winner Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio mentioned in one interview how passionately he would read dictionaries and encyclopaedias in his early youth, the adventure of knowledge he would feel and how he used to make connections between different entries in different ways of reading. I had a foreign student who in the evenings would read a dictionary of Slovak language instead of books.

An encyclopaedia is an instructive and encyclopaedic dictionary in other words. If we play a bit with the latest etymological dictionary written by Ľubor Králik, we will learn that the Slovak word *náučný* (instructive) is derived from *učiť sa* (to learn), which in turn was created in different ways from the meanings *ísť* (to go), *zvykať si*, *navykať si* (to get used to or accustomed to something) and thanks to that *spoznávať* (to get to know). Le Clézio talked about the adventurous path of knowledge and the inner satisfaction of learning. My student also got used to the ritual of reading the dictionary and learned the language.

Reading the two-volume *Dictionary of Slovak Translators of Artistic Literature of the 20th Century* (Bratislava: Institute of World Literature, Veda Publishing House 2015, 2017). can also be described as an adventure of knowledge. This work of more than one thousand pages maps one hundred years of Slovak translation, book and literary culture and offers an endless amount of associations and knowledge. If we read it correctly, it will provide us with a survey of the political

and cultural situation and of the availability of the Slovak cultural environment to accept foreign-language literature translations. A careful reading of entries can bring together the reverse side of the history of literary translation as well, where literary translation appears to be a space where personae non gratae have found their exile from which they also had to emigrate. There are also those who with their own names sheltered others who suddenly had to become nameless. We will also find out how translators have learned foreign languages. Here, the indispensable role of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University and its philological departments is apparent: the dictionary could be a showpiece about this institution, because when you glance through it the majority of contemporary translators as well as many of those from the inter-war period are graduates of this faculty.

Let us look at the numbers: there are 400 entries in the dictionary about translators, who have translated from 134 literatures. Translation from Romance languages encompasses 26 national literatures, of which the most present is French, Spanish, Latin American, and Italian literature. If we focus on them, we can find important translators, a significant number of graduates, and teachers and Romanists from different generations who studied at the Department of Romance Languages and have worked at this department. Let us mention just a few of them – Jozef Felix, Anton Vantuch, Nelida Noskovičová, Michaela Jurovská, and František Hruška – who shaped other translators from Romance languages. This dictionary can also be read from a professional perspective as a history of Romance studies in Slovakia.

The Dictionary of Slovak Translators of Artistic Literature is a rare phenomenon in the European translation studies context: so far there are only two publications that are similar: The Universal Dictionary of Translators (*Dictionnaire universel des traducteurs*, Genève, Éditions Slatkine, 1993) and the Swedish online *Svenskt översättarlexikon* (Lars Kleberg 2009). In conclusion, it is enough to quote what was written by the prominent Slovak translator, Anglicist, pedagogue, and translologist Ján Vilikovský about the exceptionality and cultural relevance of The Dictionary of Slovak Translators of Artistic Literature of the 20th Century: “This is a respectable event that mediates both important and often inaccessible personal and

publication data as well as knowledge of the role played by translation in Slovak literature and culture in general. In a sense, it is an evaluation of the development that Slovakia went through over the past century and is confirmation of the fact that in spite of all the breakthroughs and changes – which have not always been praiseworthy – we have done a lot of work as a nation, and we can be proud of that.”

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