

# **The Presence of Slovak Literature in Spain**

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## **Abstract**

This article traces the history of the translation and reception of Slovak literature in Spain during the last one hundred years placing particular emphasis on the period beginning in 1993 –the year of the foundation of the Slovak Republic as an independent state – until the present day. It is precisely starting from the 1990s that translations of Slovak literary works begin to be published in Spain with regularity. In order for this to have occurred, it is important to note the significant contribution made by the first Slovakists educated in Spain, supported by institutions like the Embassy of Slovakia in Spain, the Independent Writers Club and, most of all, the Centre for Literary Information. Thanks to the efforts of all of the above, at present Slovak literature is a little less unknown by the Spanish reading public.

## **1. Introduction**

The translation and critical reception of Slovak literature in Spain has a short history. The Spanish public's interest in Slovak literature was awoken after the establishment of the first Czechoslovakian Republic in 1918 and the earliest translations of Slovak literary works into Spanish – by literary works are meant those pertaining to one of the following literary genres: poetry, prose (short story and novel) and drama – date from the 1920s (Hermida 2009). Throughout the course of the twentieth century the interest in Slovak literature fluctuated until in 1993, with the birth of the Slovak Republic and, above all, from 2004 onwards – the year Slovakia entered the European Union, a notable increase occurred in the publication of translated Slovak works. It should be acknowledged the special contribution made by the first Spanish Slovak philologists who had to overcome significant commercial and cultural obstacles in order for their translations to be published.

This study does not encompass all of the Slovak literary works translated into Spanish; rather it concentrates on those works published in Spain in book form or in issues of a journal devoted to Slovak literature. Other titles, however, published in Spanish speaking countries such as Mexico, Colombia, or Cuba (including those published in the former Czechoslovakia primarily aimed at Cuban readers) are not omitted and are included and commented on in the footnotes.

In terms of method the analysis is of a descriptive nature, whereby the works of Slovak authors, that we have knowledge of, translated into Spanish have been compiled. As a starting point for our research we have

begun with the studies of the outstanding Spanish scholar of Slovak literature, Alejandro Hermida de Blas (2004, 2009), as well as the Slovak scholar of Spanish literature Eva Palkovičová (2012). We have also worked with lists of translated works (Hermida 2004), and the UNESCO's database of book translations (Index Translationum). The resulting bibliography which has emerged due to our focus primarily emphasises the role of the translator and the historic-literary circumstances in which each of the works was created.

## **2. The Translation and Reception of Slovak Literature in Spain until 1993**

Prior to the last decade of the twentieth century the history of the translation and reception of Slovak literature in Spain could be described as one with very few high points. Among the reasons for Slovak literature's scarce presence in Spain cannot be included one of a lack of quality or interest on behalf of the Spanish reading public. Rather, the explanation lies in circumstances outside the specifically literary sphere, pertaining more to a political or linguistic context. Throughout the course of this article these contexts will be referred to in order to demonstrate that at certain moments they became determining factors in the evolution of the translation and reception of Slovak literature in Spain.

As Hermida de Blas observed, Slovak literatures's distribution in Spain occurred in discontinuous waves (Hermida 2009, 120). The first known translations, of which there is existing evidence, date to beginning of the twentieth century, coinciding with the period in which Spain and Czechoslovakia – the democratic state unifying the Czech and Slovak people founded in 1918 – established diplomatic relations. It is known that they were the works of two Slovak authors, Jozef Miloslav Hurban (1817-1888) and Martin Kukučín (1860-1928), although what remains unknown is which specific works were translated and whether or not they were published. The author of these translations was the linguist, translator and University Professor of the Czech language Rudolf Ján Slabý (1885-1957), who lived in Spain from 1914 until 1926 (Hermida 2009, 120; Knörr 2008).

Despite a more fluid and closer relationship between Spain and Czechoslovakia during the 1930s (Czechoslovakia being a political model for the brief existence of the Second Spanish Republic) this rapport did not result in a greater influx of Slovak literature in Spain. Until 1938 Slovakia formed part of the first Czechoslovakian Republic and in 1939, the year in which the Slovak state was born, it became an independent country. This period, lasting until 1945, neither witnessed an increase in the availability of Slovak works on the Spanish literary scene. The only traces that reflect the increased fluidity of political relations are the presence of Slovaks invited to study at the University of Madrid (Sánchez 2020, 170-171).

After the so-called victorious February (1948), whereupon the communist party took control of the Czechoslovakian government, Slovak literature entirely disappeared from the Spanish publishing panorama, especially so during the period 1948-1960. During the 1960s, coinciding with the Prague Spring democratic awakening, a number of social and economic reforms took place in Czechoslovakia that produced an improvement in the political relations between both countries. As a result Slovak literary works returned once more to the catalogues of Spanish publishers.

In 1967, the first novel by the Slovak journalist and novelist Ladislav Mňačko (1919-1994), was published. Mňačko was one of the most influential personalities within Czechoslovakian culture and a direct witness of the Prague Spring.<sup>1</sup> The novel in question was *Ako chutí moc* (*Cómo gusta el poder*), which was translated from German by Ana María de la Fuente and published by Plaza & Janés. In 1969, Plaza & Janés published another of Mňačko works: *Siedma noc* (*La séptima noche*), translated also from German (this time by Manuel Vázquez).<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the Mňačko translations and the 1969 reissue of the translated short story by Peter Karvaš (1920-1999) *Una aventura con la justicia* (*Dobrodružstvo so spravodlivosťou*) in the prestigious journal *Revista de Occidente*,<sup>3</sup> the first translations of Slovak poetry published in Spain were added this same year. These were two poems by Ivan Krasko (1876-1958) and one by Ján Kostra (1910-1975) translated from English by Felipe Baeza Betancort and included in the anthology of Czechoslovakian poetry, *Diez poemas checoslovacos*, published by the Canary Islands Museum.<sup>4</sup>

On August 21, 1968 Soviet troops occupied Czechoslovakia, which impacted tremendously on Czechoslovakian culture. The presence of the Soviet tanks meant the beginning of the 'normalisation' period, which was to last until 1989. During this period, characterised by the adherence to the dictates from Moscow and the enforcement of communist party

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<sup>1</sup> On the figure of Mňačko and his works see Hermida de Blas, Alejandro. 2011. La diáspora intelectual checa y eslovaca en los años 70 y 80 del siglo XX y su reflejo en la literatura: el caso de Libuše Moníková. In: *Revista de Filología Románica*, Anejo VII: pp. 137-147

<sup>2</sup> Many of the works of Mňačko were first published in German prior to Slovak due to political reasons (Mňačko was a dissident highly critical of the communist regime, despite having initially supported it). From this point on the works published by Noguer in 1970 –*La noche de Dresde* (*Nočný rozhovor*)– and 1971 –*Invierno en Praga* (*Oneskorené reportáže*)– were translations from German, the work of Gemma Strittmatter.

<sup>3</sup> Karvaš' work was first published in the anthology of Czech and Slovak prose, *Niños, jóvenes, hombres*, Prague, 1965, by the Czechoslovakian publisher, Orbis.

<sup>4</sup> In the case of Slavic literature (as is seen with the translations of Mňačko) indirect translations were customary in this epoch.

policies in all aspects of life, translations of Slovak literature in Spain are unrecorded (Hermida 2004, 2009; Palkovičová 2012).<sup>5</sup>

The historic events of 1989 acted in part to change this situation. The Velvet Revolution, which took place this year, led to the fall of communism and was followed a few years later by the division of Czechoslovakia into two independent States: the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic. The collapse of the communist regime favoured the establishment of closer political, economic and cultural ties between Spain and Slovakia, which as shall be seen, consequently resulted in a mutual interest in each other's language and culture.

### **3. The Translation and Reception of Slovak Literature in Spain from 1993 to the Present**

The Slovak Republic came into being on January 1, 1993. This was to have a significantly positive influence on the publishing of works by Slovak authors in Spain. In conjunction with the birth of the new republic the international journal of poetry, *Equivalencias*, dedicated a single issue to Slovak poetic works. Edited by the Slovak poet and translator, Ján Zambor (\*1947), the issue contained poems from the great names of Slovak lyric poetry such as, Milan Rúfus (1928-2009), Lýdia Vadkerti-Gavorníková (1932-1999), Ján Buzássy (\*1935), Ján Stacho (1936-1995) and Ivan Štrpka (\*1944)<sup>6</sup> translated by the Slovak Hispanists Vladimír Oleríny and Miroslav Lenghardt, and poeticised by the Spanish poet and translator Justo Jorge Padrón.<sup>7</sup>

Some years later in 1997, *Tiempo de adioses* was published, an anthology of the poetry of Milan Rúfus, translated by José López Alonso (Spanish Professor in the Faculty of Arts, Comenius University of Bratislava from 1981-1992) in collaboration with Clara Janés.<sup>8</sup>

In 2001 the magazine *ADE Teatro* published *Dos*, a translation by Santiago Mata (a resident journalist at that time in Slovakia) of the drama by Július Barč-Ivan *Dvaja*.<sup>9</sup> Neither these three translations cited above nor all of the previous ones within this article were done by translators who were academically educated and trained in the Slovak language and literature. The explanation being that it was not until 1981 that the Madrid Complutense University established a lectorate in the Slovak

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<sup>5</sup> Throughout the period Slovak literature continues to be translated into Spanish and published in Cuba – a 'friendly' country – of the then Czechoslovakia and aimed at the Cuban readers.

<sup>6</sup> In addition to the above mentioned were the following poets: Ivan Kupec, Ľubomír Feldek, Vlastimil Kovalčík, Štefan Strážay, Ivan Laučík y Ján Zambor.

<sup>7</sup> Antología de la poesía eslovaca contemporánea. In: *Equivalencias (Revista internacional de poesía)*. 24, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Rúfus, Milan. 1997. *Tiempo de adioses*. Barcelona: Lumen.

<sup>9</sup> Barč-Ivan, Július. 2001. *Dos*. In: *ADE Teatro*. 85: pp. 60-72.

language. Prior to 1981 it had not been possible to study Slovak in Spain. In 1985 the Philology Faculty of the university set up an undergraduate degree course, Slavic Language and Literature, with one of its elective subjects being Slovak language. One of the first graduates in Slavic Language and Literature was Alejandro Hermida de Blas, who chose to specialise in Slovak literature. He was to go on to present and defend his doctoral thesis on the work of Rúfus (*La poesía de Milan Rúfus*) at his alma mater in 1998. The thesis contains as an appendix a bilingual poetic anthology of the Slovak author, which is considered as the first translation of Slovak literature by a philologist educated and trained in Spain.

In 2002 Salustio Alvarado, a teacher, researcher and graduate in Slavic Philology from the Complutense University, in collaboration with the hispanist Renáta Bojničanová, authored a translation of the novel, *La Vicerregenta (Pani Rafíková)*, by the prose writer and poet Janko Jesenský (1874-1945). The work was released by the publisher Atenea Centre of Applied Linguistics and the translation was presented within the setting of the Slovak Language and Culture Conference celebrated in 2003 at the Complutense University. The translation received the support of SLOLIA (Slovak Literature Abroad), a translation grant programme financed by the Centre for Information on Literature (Literárne informačné centrum). This public entity, as part of the Ministry of Culture, was created in 1995 with the aim, among others, of disseminating Slovak literature abroad. In 1996, as a way of attaining this objective in 1996 the grant system SLOLIA<sup>10</sup> was established, whose principal task has been to support the publication of Slovak literature in translation. SLOLIA gives a grant to foreign publishers that want to publish Slovak literature in translation, which partially or totally cover the costs of the translation, copyright, and in some warranted cases includes printing and promotional costs<sup>11</sup>. From 1996 through to 2019 a total of 819 titles in 32 different languages have been published with the help of the Centre for Literary Information through SLOLIA's grant system, of which 20 of these have been works translated into Spanish.<sup>12</sup>

*La Vicerregenta* was the first work that emerged with the support of the Centre for Literary Information through SLOLIA, and was to represent a significant impetus to make known Slovak literature within Spain. This was the wish of Hermida expressed within a review of Jesenský's translated work, published in the journal *Eslavística Complutense*: "It is the hope that this ground-breaking publication will inaugurate a growing

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.litcentrum.sk/institucia/sloia>

<sup>11</sup> The size of the grant depends on the number of pages translated, the degree of difficulty involved and the limitations according to the internal regulations covering SLOLIA's grant award system.

<sup>12</sup> The total number of translations of Slovak literature published outside of Slovakia that have received a grant from SLOLIA can be consulted at: <https://www.litcentrum.sk/stranka/statistika>.

interest amongst publishers, critics and readers for the lesser known Slavic literatures, whose relatively modest commercial success does not at all justify the oblivion into which they have fallen" (Hermida 2003, 305).

Subsequently in 2003, The Centre for Literary Information embarked on several initiatives to raise the profile of Slovak literature in Spain. From 1 to 4 October the 21st edition of the International Book Festival (LIBER 2003) was celebrated in Madrid, whereby for the first time Slovakia participated as an invited country (together with other countries that were preparing to enter into the European Union such as, Poland, Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia, Cyprus and Malta). For this occasion the Centre for Literary Information produced an informative pamphlet that included a study by the literary critic Vladimír Petřík about contemporary Slovak literature, which imparted information about some of the most representative authors of the era such as, Pavel Vilikovský (1941-2020) or Rudolf Sloboda (1938-1995) amongst others. Additionally, it commissioned the translation of fragments from works by Slovak writers Michal Hvorecký (\* 1976), Pavol Rankov (\* 1964) and Roman Brat (\* 1957), that were presented as part of the LIBER festival.

Additionally in 2003, Professor of Slavic Philology Alejandro Hermida de Blas published through La Poesía, señor hidalgo, *Campanas*, a translation of the work by Rúfus Zvony, with the support of the SLOLIA. In the critique that the Slovak poet and translator Ján Zambor wrote of this work for the journal *Eslavística Complutense*, attention was brought to the fact that these Spanish translations of Slovak poetry were the first that had not arisen in a context of a linguistic collaboration. In addition to praising the author's translation, particularly his excellent knowledge of Slovak and thorough literary and theoretical foundation, Hermida's translation was affirmed to have combined the appropriate semantic accuracy with an effective transmission of images, syntactic-intonative division, text verse and stanza organisation (Zambor 2004, 279-280). The then Slovak Professor and hispanist, Tatiana Kotuliaková, of Madrid Complutense University coincided with these views underlining in another article the exceptional quality of the translation. The translation was presented to the Madrid academic community interested in poetry at the Slovak Language and Cultural Conference held at Complutense University in 2004 (Kotuliakova 2004, 7).

In spite of these efforts in the interests of increasing the presence of Slovak literature on the Spanish literary market it failed to grow. Towards the end of February 2004 the Centre for Literary Information, conscious of the difficulty in raising the awareness of the rest of the world to Slovak literature, organised an international conference on the translation of languages with limited circulation, in which translators of Slovak literature from various countries were invited to debate over the finer points of translating Slovak literature into other languages. Hermida de Blas participated in this conference and spoke of the challenges he had faced and those that confronted the translation of Slovak literature in

general, for example, the negative influence of certain political circumstances, the lack of Spanish translators having sufficient command of the Slovak language, as well as the scarcity of interest from the Spanish publishing industry motivated purely by commercial interests (Hermida 2004, 55).

Upon Slovakia's entry into the European Union, the publisher Centro de Linguística Aplicada Atenea published, *La novilla bermeja*, the Spanish translation of the novel by Martin Kukučín (1860-1928) *Rysavá jalovica*. The authors of this translation were the same as for *La Vicerregenta*, Salustio Alvarado and Renata Bojničanová. Neither did the appearance of this new work manage to awake the interest of Spanish publishers. In a letter to the editor published in the cultural supplement (*Babelia*) of the newspaper *El País*, and coinciding with Madrid's Book Festival on 1 June 2004, Hermida was critical of the lack of attention given to Slovak literature: "In the *dossier* on the literatures of the new member states, Slovakia's is the only one which doesn't merit a single paragraph". According to Hermida, this obscurity could not be attributed to a lack of interesting authors or competent translators, but rather to the Spanish publishing industry that, "except for very honourable exceptions, prefers to pretend does not exist that which it does not know" (Hermida 2004).

In 2005 the Centre for Information on Literature, in a new effort to contribute to the spread of Slovak literature in Spain, published an issue of *Slovak Literary Revue* — a publication whose end is to make known Slovak literature to foreign readers from all around the world— entirely in Spanish.<sup>13</sup> The issue included fragments of works from 18 authors,<sup>14</sup> some of whom were translated into Spanish for the first time (Dominik Tatarka (1913-1989), Monika Kompaníková (\*1978), Mila Haugová (\*1942) or Václav Pankovčín (1968-1999), for example). Experienced translators participated such as Hermida, Alvarado and Bojničanová, as well as other less experienced ones like, Patricia González Almarcha, Patricia Gonzalo de Jesús, Cristina Simón Alegre and the author of this study.

Despite this publication Slovak literature in Spain continued to attract very little recognition. This failure was elaborated upon in an article by Hernández, *Eslovaquia también existe* (Slovakia also exists), in which the recently publicised works of Rúfus, Jesenský and Kukučín were described as "abandoned luggage on a platform of some railway station", in reference to the secondary role assigned to Slovak literature in comparison with the much better known literature to Spanish readers of the Czech Republic (Hernández 2005).

Notwithstanding the efforts of the Centre for Information on Literature to awaken the interest of publishers and Spanish readers in Slovak literature, the lack of attention of Spanish publishers for literature

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<sup>13</sup> *Revista de literatura eslovaca*. XI, 2. Bratislava: Centro de Información Literaria, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> The full list is available here: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/3076>

in Slovak (and other languages of limited dissemination) continued to be highly evident. Since 2002, when the *La Vicerregenta* was published, the overwhelming majority of translations have arisen due to the initiatives of Spanish translators, who have been responsible for finding a publisher for their translations. With this undertaking, fortunately, they have been able to rely on the help, as we have seen, of the Centre for Information on Literature (LIC) as well as the Embassy of Slovakia in Spain, and the Club of Independent Writers (KNS). An example of this 'teamwork' in favour of the diffusion of Slovak literature in Spain was the organising of an International Slovak Language and Culture Day (Medzinárodný deň slovenského jazyka a kultúry) within the Philology Faculty of the Madrid Complutense University. At these events, that were held annually until 2013, specialists in Slovak literature, of both Spanish and Slovak nationality, were invited to present the latest translations into Spanish that were being released. To coincide with the academic event, the Embassy of Slovakia would organise an informal literary evening in which participants read fragments from Slovak literary works in the original and translation.

In 2007 a new title, *El silencio de los árboles en Hyde Park* was published, supported by the Centre for Information on Literature. It consists of a selection of poems by Milan Richter (\*1948) translated by Hermida de Blas and published by the publisher based in Barcelona, La Poesía, señor hidalgo. The work managed to attract the attention of the mass circulation national press, being reviewed in the cultural supplements of newspapers *ABC* and *La Vanguardia*.<sup>15</sup>

This was followed by a two year gap until the publication in 2009 of a poetic work and a drama. The first was a translation of the collection of poems, *Šialený mesiac*, by Ján Ondruš (1932-2000), by Alejandro Hermida de Blas entitled *Primera luna*. It was published by the publisher specialising in poetic works La Poesía, señor hidalgo in collaboration with the Literary Foundation STUDŇA. Secondly, in *ADE Teatro. Revista Trimestral de la Asociación de Directores de Escena de España* (magazine founded by the Spanish Association of Stage Directors) two theatrical pieces were published by Milan Richter, *Del ereboparaíso de Kafka* and *La segunda vida de Kafka (Z Kafkovho pekloraja. Kafkov druhý život)*, translated by Renáta Bojničanová and Salustio Alvarado. Both, the translation of Richter as well as that of Ondruš were presented at the evening event celebrated at the residence of the Slovak ambassador in Madrid on the occasion of the VIII Slovak Language and Culture International Day.

In 2011 a renewed impulse was given to the publication of Slovak literature in Spain. The Slovak philologist Valeria Kovachova founded a publishing company, which has published a total of four titles so far. The first of these was the novel by Rudolf Sloboda (1938-1995) *Nadie es un ángel, y sin embargo Uršul'a... (Uršul'a)*, translated from

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<sup>15</sup> References are included in the final list of references.



Slovak by Kovachova in collaboration with the young Slovakist Patricia González Almarcha. The novel was in fact the first contemporary Slovak novel that became known to the Spanish reading public.

In 2012 a collection of micro-stories by Peter Pišťanek (1960-2015) *Nuevos estropicuentos de Claudio para principitos y elefantes (Nové skazky o Vladovi pre malých aj veľkých)* was published by Ediciones Xorki. The translation was again done by the pairing of Valeria Kovachova and Patricia González Almarcha. This publication marked the first time that one of the works of Pišťanek, who was at this time a highly successful author in his own country and who was to die just three years later, had been published in Spanish translation in Spain. Ignacio González Barbero, writing in the digital magazine *Culturamas* in 2013, praised the publisher's efforts and defined the book — a hybrid of tradition and the contemporary, of popular tale and political critique — as a great delight for the reader (González 2013).

Additionally 2012 saw the publication of *Cuentos eslovacos de tradición oral* in which for the first time in Spanish 16 Slovak stories of the oral tradition, compiled in the nineteenth century by the famous scholar of Slovak folklore Pavol Dobšinský (1828-1885), were published. The selection of the stories was overseen by the Slovak Hispanist Bohdan Ulašin, and the translations of the texts into Spanish were the result of fruitful collaborations between students and professors from the Madrid Complutense University and the Comenius University of Bratislava. The work was published by Ediciones Xorki and the announcement of the publication was picked up by various cultural magazines such as *Culturamas* and *Tarántula*, which rated the Spanish edition of Dobšinský's stories as a valuable indication of the growing interest in Spain for the Slovak language and literature (Pacios 2013).

In 2013 Ediciones Xorki published what has proven to be up to now its last title of what can be considered Slovak literature in Spanish, the sonnet cycle, *Del agua – Seducciones*, by the poet and translator Miroslav Válek (1927-1991).<sup>16</sup> In the summer of this year the journal of the Fundación José Hierro *Nayagua* published an anthology of Slovak poetry, which included six of the most outstanding poets of Slovak contemporary lyrical poetry: Peter Milčák, Eva Luka, Nóra Ružičková, Ján Gavura, Peter Bilý y Pavol Garan.<sup>17</sup> In November 2013, three of these —Eva Luka, Peter Milčák and Pavol Garan— accompanied by the translator and specialist in Slovak poetry Hermida de Blas, participated in presentations of the anthology at the Madrid Cultural Centre of Fine Arts and the José Hierro Centre of Poetry in Getafe.

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<sup>16</sup> It was not the first time that Válek's work had been published in Spanish given that in 1987 the Slovak publisher Slovenský spisovateľ in collaboration with the Cuban, Arte y Literatura, published a book of his poetry aimed fundamentally at the Cuban public.

<sup>17</sup> *Poesía contemporánea de Eslovaquia* is the name of the special section included in issue 19 of the literary journal *Nayagua*.

With the publication of the translation of Válek and the poetry anthology included in *Nayagua*, it could be thought that Slovak literature, particularly poetry, was now well appreciated in Spain. In fact, the poet and translator Federico Ocaña, referring to the translation of Válek and issue 19 of *Nayagua* asserted the following: "Slovak poetry, from being unknown has proceeded to engage in contact, in an authentic exchange with Spanish poetry" (Ocaña 2013). Nevertheless, a year later Hermida de Blas in his review of the work of Válek once more lamented the lack of awareness of Slovak literature in Spain: "The literature of Slovakia continues to be one of the most unknown amongst the Slavic literatures (...). We hope that this book makes known to the Spanish public the work of this important European author that wrote in the language of a small country" (Hermida 2014, 129).

The year 2013, except for the two aforementioned publications, was not an overly positive one for the future of Slovak literature in Spain, among other reasons because this year was to witness the final edition of the Slovak Language and Culture Day. As Renáta Bojničanová noted in an article published in the Comenius University journal *Naša univerzita*, the encounter took place in an environment especially conditioned by the critical moment that Slovak studies were experiencing in Spain. Due to funding cutbacks, a consequence of the intense economic crisis, the Slovak Language Lectorate had been terminated in 2011, and the Philology studies, including the Slavic, suffered a profound restructuring (Bojničanová 2013, 19). In spite of such unfavourable circumstances, the seminar managed to gather a good number of specialists in Slovak literature who gave papers on the birth-centenary of the writer and publicist Dominik Tatarka (1913-1989), and the 1150th anniversary of the arrival of Saints Cyril and Methodios to the territory of Greater Moravia. At the traditional literary evening held at the residency of the Slovak ambassador, the most recent examples of works of Slovak literature translated into Spanish were presented, and the translators Renáta Bojničanová and Salustio Alvarado spoke of their experiences translating a series of texts in old Slavic about the life and work of Saint Cyril and Saint Methodios. These texts were published in 2014 with the support of SLOLIA by the publisher Ediciones Xorki.<sup>18</sup> In a review by the poet and translator Ján Zambor of these two monographs emphasised the importance of the publications, which provided Spanish speaking readers

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<sup>18</sup> *Hagiografías eslavas. Las vidas de los santos Cirilo y Metodio. Introducción, transcripción de los textos eslavos, traducción y notas.* Madrid: Ediciones Xorki, 2014.

*En los orígenes de la literatura de los eslavos. Textos apologéticos de la vida y la obra de San Cirilo y San Metodio: Proanafónesis del Santo Evangelio. Panegíricos de los Santos Cirilo y Metodio. Sobre las letras. Plegaria alfabética.* Madrid: Ediciones Xorki, 2014.

(the second most numerous group in the world) with greater understanding of the legacy of the two brothers from Thessalonica. Additionally, in 2014 the publisher Arrebato Libros published, *Una vida corriente*, a selection of poems by Štefan Strážay (\*1940) translated by Patricia Gonzalo de Jesús.

Following the translation of Strážay and the monographs dealing with the lives and works of Saints Cyril and Methodios, both published with the support of SLOLIA, there was a two year absence of newly published works. The only exception was the journal *Nayagua*, (issue 21, 2015), which included a selection of poems by Milan Richter and Ján Zambor. In 2017 the first work of Marek Vadas (\*1971), *iHuye! (Útek)*, one of the most translated contemporary Slovak authors, was published in Spanish, translated by Alejandro Hermida de Blas.

A year later, in 2018, the publisher Asociación Cultural Olifante of Zaragoza published, *Una pequeña gran ciudad*, a translation of the collection of poems by Katarína Kucbelová (\*1979) *Malé veľké mesto*. The translator was Lucia Duero, Slovak poet, translator and a resident of Mexico.<sup>19</sup> In October 2019, Kucbelová presented her work at Cosmopoética, International Poetry Festival of Córdoba. The festival's website (<https://www.cosmopoetica.es/autor/katarina-kucbelova>) contained information about the author and the publication of *Una pequeña gran ciudad*. Under the brief biography of Kucbelová appeared two of the poems included in *Una pequeña gran ciudad*, together with the details of the publisher and authorship of the translation in which oddly enough serious errors occurred: the year of publication (2018, not 2019) and the name of the translator (not María Duero, but rather Lucia Duero).

In 2019 only one work of Slovak literature was published in Spain. The novel by Milo Urban (1904-1982) *El látigo vivo (Živý bič)*, which received the backing of SLOLIA and was published by Ediciones Palabra – Ciudadela in the translation by Alejandro Hermida de Blas.

In October of the same year, the translator Monika Dingova – together with representatives of other literatures such as Czech, Polish Romanian and Hungary amongst others – participated in an act celebrated at the International Book Fair Liber 2019, where the SLOLIA system of grants and the Spanish translations of Slovak literary works were presented. Among the approximately fifty people that attended the event, there was a publisher that showed a particular interest in children's literature. Monika Dingová sent the publisher information about the publishing house Buvik, which specialises in children's literature. However, to the present date the Centre for Information on Literature has not received any applications requesting support for the translation of works of this publisher.

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<sup>19</sup> Lucia Duero is also the author of two published works in 2018 by the Mexican publisher La Argonáutica: *Nostalgia o Invierno en Bratislava*, a selection of poems by Michal Habaj (\*1971) and *Mantengan el pánico*, a selection of poems by Ivan Štrpka (\*1944).

The last title published hitherto in Spain is the translation by Patricia Gonzalo de Jesús of the work *Café Hyena. Plán odprevádzania*, by the poet, novelist and Slovak journalist Jana Beňová (\*1974). It was released as *Manual de despedidas* in August of this year (2020) by the publisher Sexto Piso. In November it was anticipated that the publisher Ginger Ape Books would publish the translation by Alejandro Hermida de Blas of the work by Peter Jaroš (\*1940) *Tisícročná včela. La abeja milenaria* (titled in the Spanish version), that received the support of SLOLIA in September 2018; however it now seems it will be published in 2021.

In 2021 *Anotaciones (Záznamy)*, a novel by Miroslav Spišiak which takes place in Andalucía will most likely come out. The translation was made by Viera Vongrejová Susanik, a Slovak resident in Andalucía who liked the novel so much that she decided to translate it herself with the help of writer and proof-reader, María José Barrios. In spite of the efforts of both to find a publisher, they have come up against the perennial problem experienced by Slovak literature in Spain. The result up to now has been negative and the possibility exists that finally the work will be published in Slovakia by its author —who is also a publisher— and later distributed in Spain.

It is currently known that Lucia Duero is working on a translation of two poem collections: *Canti... amore* by Mila Haugová (\*1942) and *Terče* by Jana Bodnárová (\*1950) and Patricia Gonzalo de Jesús is translating the novel *Večne je zelený* by Pavel Vilikovský.<sup>20</sup>

#### 4. Conclusion

Throughout this article we have succinctly traced the history of the translation and reception of Slovak literature in Spain. As has been described, translators, especially those educated at the Madrid Complutense University have played a crucial role above all since the 1990s. They, accompanied by institutions such as the Centre for Information on Literature, have virtually at all times taken the initiative to make known a literature so unfamiliar to Spanish readers. Their numerous endeavours have not always been rewarded, for the reason that the Spanish publishing market is not disposed to take risks with publications that barely yield a profit (although, as has been recorded, there exist notable exceptions). Even so, their enthusiasm and love for Slovak literature have made it possible that at present in Spain we can enjoy more than 40 titles published on paper and around a dozen works published on the internet. Furthermore, there are at least another 16 translations that to the present date have not been published. The majority of them were made at the request of the Centre for Information on Literature — and were used in presentations of Slovak literature at

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<sup>20</sup> Both translators obtained a stipend from the Centre for Information on Literature as part of the project TROJICA AIR (artist in residence) for translators of Slovak literature.

international book festivals such as LIBER and the Frankfurt Festival — or broadcasted in Spanish by Radio Slovakia International ([www.esrsi.rtv.slovakia.sk](http://www.esrsi.rtv.slovakia.sk)). Many of these translations despite not being published were well disseminated through radio and readings in the setting of the International Book Festival LIBER. Whilst it is true that in recent years there has been an increase in the number of published Slovak titles, the overall quantity when compared to neighbouring literatures of central Europe remains unsatisfactory. It is necessary that for a more optimistic future the efforts of translators, publishers and institutions be in unison. Additionally, a much closer collaboration between translators and Slovak institutions such as the Centre for Information on Literature, The Ministry of Culture, and the Embassy of Slovakia in Madrid (and in other Spanish speaking countries) would be very beneficial. Personally, I hope that the pages of this article contribute in some measure to strengthen cultural relations and literary ties between Slovakia and Spain, and that the literature of Slovakia ceases to be a great unknown for the Spanish.

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