

## Slovak language (UDC 811.162.4)

DOI: 10.18454/RULB.4.22

Князькова В.С.

Санкт-Петербургский государственный университет  
СЛОВАЦКАЯ ДЕТСКАЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРА В ПЕРЕВОДАХ

Аннотация

В данной статье рассматриваются основные вехи формирования словацкой детской литературы и то, как она представлена в переводах на иностранные языки. Называются имена писателей, внесших наибольший вклад в развитие литературы для детей, а также имена переводчиков, способствовавших продвижению словацкой литературы за рубежом.

**Ключевые слова:** словацкая литература, детская литература, художественный перевод.

Kniazkova V.S.

Saint-Petersburg State University

SLOVAK CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN TRANSLATIONS

Abstract

The article considers the main milestones of Slovak children's literature and how it is represented in the translation into foreign languages. The work of writers who have contributed to the development of children's literature most of all is analyzed in the article, as well as the work of the translators who have contributed to the promotion of Slovak literature abroad.

**Keywords:** slovak literature, children's literature, literary translation.

Slovak children's literature begins with tales from the collection of **Pavel Dobšinský** (1828-1885), teacher, translator, editor, journalist, anthropologist and folk tales collector. The first translations from the collection of Slovak fairy tales appeared in the post-war period in the Soviet Union in Russian (1949, 1950, 1955, 1956), Belarussian (1956, 1958), Ukrainian (1957, 1963, and in Prešov in 1960), Estonian (1956), Lithuanian (1955), Latvian (1955), Kyrgyz (1959), Ossetian (1960), Finnish (Petrozavodsk, 1958). In the 1960s it was followed by a German translation, published in Hanau, a French one, published in Paris, and an English one, published in London. From 1950s to the end of the 1990s P. Dobšinský's tales were the most popular Slovak books for children to be translated. In many countries, more than one edition were published (for example, three in Bulgaria, three in France, three in the Netherlands, four in Germany, two in Poland, and in Yugoslavia five in Slovenian and one in Croatian) [1], [2], [3].

New publications of Slovak fairy tales adapted by modern Slovak writers newly translated and illustrated have been published nowadays. A new translation into English, published in Trnava in 2004 *Slovak Folktales* stands out of the recent ones. In this joint work a Slovak translator Jana Babirátová-Judinyová aimed at following the original as closely as possible, while an English teacher in Slovakia Francis Xavier Luther and an American researcher Jean Shofranko-Olexy, both having Slovak roots, sought to Americanize the stories making them easier to understand for a native English-speaking child [4]. From the point of view of the American assistants, translation difficulties were mainly associated with Slovak history and proper nouns. Being sold in both, Slovakia and the United States, the book has a dedication: "The book is in memory of our Slovak forefathers and dedicated to their descendants and to all the children of the world" [5].

Children's writer **Mária Ďuričková** (1919-2004), a P. Dobšinský's literary tradition follower of the 20th century chose folklore as the key point of her work. She approached it from different aspects: as a folklore collector, as an editor of folktales collections as well as an author of her own fairy tales based on folklore. Mária Ďuričková's numerous fairy-tales have been quite extensively translated, most of them into German (twelve fairy-tales), Czech and Hungarian (ten each), the total number of languages being fifteen [6]. Six fairy-tales have been translated into Russian, and the latest publication in Russian, a tale *Danka a Janka v rozprávke*, came out in 2015. The majority of all translations were published in the former socialist countries. This, however, not diminishing the importance of her work for Slovak children's literature, which is reflected in the numerous awards and honours received by the author in her home country. Apart from that in 1975 the writer was awarded the Province of Trento European Award For Children's Literature for the book *Zlatá brána*, while her books *Dunajská kráľovná* and *Krásna nevidaná* were entered in the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Honour List.

**Klára Jarunková** (1922-2005), M. Ďuričková's contemporary, was the most translated Slovak writer for children in 1960-70s, her

books still being the best known Slovak children's books abroad. Her works reflect an innovative approach to the period of adolescence, a turning point of physical and mental maturity, her characters have to undergo. Her debut book, published in 1960, a collection of short-stories about schoolchildren called *Hrdinský zápisník*, became a literary event. Over the next few years, the book was translated into Bulgarian (1963), Estonian (1963), German (1963, 1972), Russian (1962, 1965), Hungarian (1965) and Polish (1982).

Three years later the novel *Jediná* (1963) came out, and it was immediately sold out in Slovakia [7]. One of the first translation was published in the US under the name *Don't cry for me* [8], which for two years was among the bestsellers in the country [9, 40]. This was also due to the work of a talented translator George (Jiří) Theiner, who succeeded in emphasizing the ideas, which were easier to understand for the American audience. Thus, the Slovak name — *Jediná*, 'the only one', stresses that many events in the life as well as attitudes of the protagonist, Olinka, took place because she was the only child in the family, which is very unusual for Slovak traditions. As to the English translation, Olinka's relationships with neglected neighborhood children become the most important. One of the children has to go to an orphanage at the end of the story, and asks Olinka not to cry for her. The novel was altogether translated into 14 languages [10].

The secret of K. Jarunková's success is that she was never afraid to touch upon the most sensitive and painful topics, many of which were an absolute taboo not only in the socialist Czechoslovakia, but also in Western countries. In West Germany K. Jarunková was awarded Deutscher Jugenbuchpreis, having astonished German readers with "Slavic sensuality" [11] of her works. Speaking of her own work, K. Jarunková wrote: «It is really important to reveal courage to raise difficult universal issues such as the process of growing up» [12]. Foreign publishers found her on their own initiative, foreign translators used to come to her in person to discuss the problems of translation, concerning mainly the youth slang and archaisms in the speech of grandmothers in K. Jarunková's works.

One of contemporary Slovak literary critics Vladimír Petrík wrote: "Her works, especially novels *Jediná* and *Brat mlčanlivého Vlka*, came out <...> in 87 editions and 32 languages. If we compare these figures with those of other authors, they are almost unbelievable. Therefore, it can well be stated, that Klára Jarunková introduced Slovak literature to foreign readers and, thus, undoubtedly helped to break down the wall of isolation, which always divided Slovakia from the rest of the world. <...> Klára Jarunková helped Slovak literature to develop, bringing in original values and inspiring other authors" [13]. However, the researcher notes, that the Slovak audience is unaware about the position of K. Jarunková's books abroad.

Klára Jarunková, together with some other Slovak writers, belongs to the so-called "generation of childhood aspect" [14], [15]. In the end of 1950s – beginning of 1960s they created a new model of literature for children, based on respect for childhood and considering the depiction of children's diversified attitudes to life

the most important aspect of their works [16, 12]. These authors (Lubomír Feldek, Miroslav Válek, Vincent Šikula, Jaroslava Blažková, Krista Bendová etc.) proclaimed that the purpose of children's literature was to not only educate, but also to play, entertain and develop imagination [16, 9]. The focus shift from normative education to aesthetic freedom was introduced by **Lubomír Feldek** (1936) in his article *Bude reč o literatúre pre deti* [17] published in the journal *Mladá tvorba* in 1958. This focus shift was immediately demonstrated by the author in his debut work *Hra pre tvoje modré oči*, published in the same issue of the journal. A game, a fantasy, an association, an allusion, a nonsense, a travesty, autobiographical motifs are the main features of the L. Feldek's poetics embodied in his poems, tales and plays for children. The name of L. Feldek, who is considered to be the founder of modern (and according to some observations post-modern as well) children's literature [18], is hardly known abroad. As almost all the languages his works were translated into are Slavic: Apart from the most popular language of translation, which is Czech, there are also translations into Russian, Slovenian, Macedonian, Serbian, Croatian, Bulgarian, Polish [1].

Such a difference in the ranges of interest to his works at home and abroad has been well explained by the author himself in one of his recent interviews: "The most translated one is the *Blue Book of Tales*. However, I am afraid, my books cannot rouse the interest of anyone in the world, because even the books that have been translated, do not sell, as, firstly, in my era few Slovak writers, except perhaps Klára Jarunková, could break through the Iron Curtain, and, secondly, because I, personally, was not seeking to break through. On the contrary, I intentionally tried to write in an untranslatable way. I wrote poetry mainly for children and the Slovak language itself did most of the work, as the Slovak is an amazingly helpful partner of a poet. I have always written things mostly for a Slovak reader to enjoy. Sociologists claim that self-consciousness cannot have attributes. I am afraid, it can't be applied to poetry for children. Slovak children poet's self-consciousness is a Slovak poetic self-consciousness" [19].

Whether **Miroslav Válek** (1927-1991) has similar self-consciousness, is probably well known to his long-term translator into English Ewald Osers. Ewald Osers, an Englishman with Czech roots, shares his impressions about translating Miroslav Válek's children's poetry: "Poetry translation is a specific aspect of literary translation, of which I have enough experience after translating forty books of poetry. Meanwhile, when I was offered to translate Válek's poems for children by the Slovak publishing house *Modrý Peter*, I had serious doubts. I had never translated children's literature before. Is the fantasy world of a Slovak child similar to the same of British or American children? Is it possible to preserve the Slovak children's games and rhymes background in the English-language culture? Those were my main questions. However, when I got a grasp of Válek's poetry, I felt that the translation is possible; I even was attracted by the challenge. Therefore, I accepted the offer. Some psychologists of childhood argue that Western children grow up earlier than those in Central and Eastern Europe, and thus that poems meant for a ten-year old Slovak child are more appropriate for an English eight-year old. That is the case, but this is not a problem for a translator to solve, but rather for a publisher or a bookseller. Válek's poems hardly contain anything specifically Slovak; I was under the impression that such poems could be written by an English author as well"[20].

Two more important names of "generation of childhood aspect" are worth mentioning: **Vincent Šikula** (1936-2001) and **Jaroslava**

**Blažková** (1933). Although their poetic manners are quite similar, their literary careers, as well as their books popularity abroad turned out to be very different. They both started in the period of political liberalization in the late 1950s and their debut works date back to the beginning of the 1960s. However, while the peak of J. Blažková's creative activity, the popularity both at home and abroad, accounted for the early to mid-1960's, Vincent Šikula faced recognition in mid-1960s and it only increased and strengthened throughout the socialist era. In 1968 Jaroslava Blažková emigrated to Canada together with her family. Right until the exile, she was the center of attention in Slovakia. And although her debut book *Nylonový mesiac* (1961) and children's book *Ohňostroj pre deduška* (1962) immediately brought her several national and international awards, she was forgotten soon after she left the country.

The two novelists' works were perceived absolutely differently abroad as well: while V. Šikula was translated mainly in the socialist states, J. Blažková was much more popular in Western countries, such as Germany. Then, the same year of 1968, when J. Blažková emigrated, brought the first success to V. Šikula with his translations published abroad: his novel *Prázdniny so strýcom Rafaelom* was translated into Czech, Russian, Bulgarian and Hungarian; while the novel *S Rozárkou* was translated into Czech and Hungarian the same year. These two of V. Šikula's novels are the most translated ones being published in twelve languages altogether, mostly Slavic [21].

In 1990s, there appeared new bright and talented authors of children's literature. They were Dušan Dušek (1946), Peter Glocko (1946), Erik Jakub Groch (1957), Daniel Hevier (1955), Jana Juráňová (1957), Ján Uličiansky (1955), Gabriela Futová (1971) Although there has been few translations of their works so far, those who had their debuts back in the 1970-80s were translated into Russian, Polish and Slovenian [22]. Others, who started writing later, in the new economic environment, have been trying to gain popularity in Western countries, such as Italy, France, Austria and Germany. The majority of the authors published their works with the support of the Commission SLOLIA LIC (which stands for Commission Slovak Literature Abroad of the Literature Information Centre), an organization that funds translations of the Slovak literature abroad. From 1996 to 2015, there were realized 483 translation projects with the support of the Commission SLOLIA [23]. Almost all of them had their works translated into Italian as the result of SLOLIA's efforts. These activities date back to the International Children's Book Fair in Bologna of 2010, where Slovakia became the guest of honor, and it was a highly significant event in Slovakian literary life. Umberto Eco was among the guests of the Slovak stand, and richly illustrated Slovak books aroused his admiration: «Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic make really beautiful illustrations for children's books. It is very rewarding environment for book-publishing. The land that gives birth to wonderful books for children with a long tradition of creating posters and illustrations has been blessed. And this exhibition of illustrations is excellent» [24].

Nowadays translating Slovak literature for children and young people is a two-way process. On the one hand, it is the work of literary centers and institutes in Slovakia, that seek to promote national literature in the world. On the other hand, it bears personal interest for experts and translators of Slovak literature abroad, often immigrants from Slovakia or having Slovak roots, thus being the result of their personal desire to introduce unique and talented Slovak literature to their compatriots.

#### References

1. Index Translationum. URL: <http://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsresult.aspx?lg=0&a=Dob%C5%A1insk%C3%BD&fr=0> (дата обращения: 03.03.2014).
2. Prehľad vydaní Dobšinského v iných jazykoch . URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/40998> (дата обращения: 10.02.2014).
3. Kovtun G. J. Czech and Slovak Literature in English. A Bibliography. Washington, 1988.
4. Kániková M. Dobrodružstvo prekladu. Pavol Dobšinský: Slovak Folktales. URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/clanky/dobrodruzstvo-prekladu> (дата обращения: 15.02.2014).
5. Dobšinský P. Slovak Folktales. URL: <http://www.shsnepa.org/Catalog/Catalog-Slovak%20Folk%20Tales.htm> (дата обращения: 03.03.2014).
6. Mária Ďuríčková. URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/slovenski-spisovatelia/maria-durickova> (дата обращения: 30.11.2015).
7. Václavková V. Potomkovia slávných: Klára Jarunková písala len ceruzkou. // Život. Vydanie: 15/2010. URL: <http://zivot.azet.sk/clanok/7342/potomkovia-slavnich-klara-jarunkova-pisala-len-ceruzkou.html> (дата обращения: 07.03.2014).
8. Jarunková K. Don
9. Pánisová L. Slovenská literatúra v anglickom preklade – história a súčasnosť (1832 – 2013). Nitra, Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa

v Nitre, Filozofická fakulta, 2014. 164 s.

10. Klára Jarunková // Literárne informačné centrum URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/slovenski-spisovatelia/klara-jarunkova> (дата обращения: 07.03.2014).

11. Andrejčáková E. Ako vzniká hit: Jediná Klára Jarunkovej // SME. 17.01.2013. URL: <http://kultura.sme.sk/c/6669870/ako-vznika-hit-jedina-klara-jarunkovej.html> (дата обращения: 07.03.2014).

12. Klára Jarunková. Spisovateľka // Piešťany: MsK, 2006 - Ev.č. 14/2006. URL: [http://www.kniznica.sk/fileadmin/kniznica/edicna\\_cinnost/tvorcovia\\_deti/jarunkova.pdf](http://www.kniznica.sk/fileadmin/kniznica/edicna_cinnost/tvorcovia_deti/jarunkova.pdf) (дата обращения: 10.03.2014).

13. Petřík, V. K nedožitej deväťdesiatke Kláry Jarunkovej. IN: Knižnica. Roč. 13, Č. 4, 2012. S. 58.

14. Miko F. Aspekt výrazu. Výrazové zvláštnosti súčasnej prózy pre mládež // Estetika výrazu. Teória výrazu a štýl. Bratislava: SPN, 1969. S. 229–252.

15. Sliacky O. Kontúry periodizačného procesu slovenskej literatúry pre deti a mládež // BIBIANA, revue o umení pre deti. V. 1997. Č. 2. S. 1–7.

16. Stanislavová Z. Kontexty modernej slovenskej literatúry pre deti a mládež. Prešov, 1998. Feldek Ľ. Bude reč o literatúre pre deti. In: Mladá tvorba, 3, 1958, č. 4, s. 9 – 10.

17. Feldek Ľ. Bude reč o literatúre pre deti. In: Mladá tvorba, 3, 1958, č. 4, s. 9 – 10.

18. Stanislavová Z. K systému obraznosti v rozprávke Ľubomíra Feldeka In: Slovo o slove : zborník Katedry slovenského jazyka a literatúry Pedagogickej fakulty Prešovskej univerzity. - Prešov : Pedagogická fakulta PU, 2003. S. 8-12.

19. Bábiková M. Ľubomír Feldek hovorí o tvorbe pre deti : Veľký tresk – začiatok slobodnej fantázie // Knižná revue 2010/3. URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/rozhovory/lubomir-feldek-hovori-o-tvorbe-pre-deti> (дата обращения: 11.03.2014).

20. Osers E. Prekladanie Váľkových básní pre deti // Slovo a svet. Perspektívy prekladania slovenskej literatúry/ Kolektív autorov. 2004. URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/36168> (дата обращения: 11.03.2014).

21. Benciová K. Vincent Šikula : personálna bibliografia : vydaná pri príležitosti nedožitého 70. výročia narodenia. Pezinok : Malokarpatská knižnica v Pezinku, 2006.

22. Slovenskí autori v preklade. URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/slovenski-autori-v-preklade> (дата обращения: 30.11.2015).

23. Komisia SLOLIA. URL: <http://www.litcentrum.sk/slovia> (дата обращения: 30.11.2015).

24. Belková Z., Kepštová Ľ. Detské knihy v Bologni, 15. 4. 2010. URL: <http://kultura.sme.sk/c/5320995/detske-knihy-v-bologni.html> (дата обращения: 13.03.2014).