

Slovene Literature in English Translation:¹ Anthologies, by Whom, for Whom?

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If the world has become a global village where people of different cultures and origins easily communicate their values to one another, the question remains of how a small country may ever achieve some visibility when competing for attention with the established and traditionally dominant languages and cultures. A country the size of Slovenia might become a somewhat exotic destination for world travelers who will not necessarily explore its cultural riches, especially its literature, possibly because of the difficulties in understanding the language. When small portions of this literature are translated into some major world idioms, the question remains of how they may reach a larger audience, how they have been distributed, and what efforts have been put forth to make this literature appear less marginal.²

These questions may be posited from yet another angle—namely, how can a country of about two million, regardless of its long history of identifying with strong literary values, not appear as a dwarf when trying to impress the dominant cultures of today’s world through sample translations of its leading authors? How can it not come across as somewhat exotic and dismissible? What strategies does such a country need to develop to help promote its literary tradition and keep it as intact as possible, without adaptations to the target mentality? Which will be the obstacles any attempt at such a promotion will encounter? Once the obstacles are removed, in which venues will shorter excerpts or eventually complete works be accepted for publication?

It appears that Slovene literature and culture may serve in a larger context as a rather typical example of translation policies or attitudes in the contemporary world. The general concern that may be elucidated through this example relates to the methods by which foreign literature has made its

¹ We should note that both terms, “Slovene” and “Slovenian” are used, to refer to the language of Slovenia and to its inhabitants. Although “Slovene” has become the recommended term, some organizations in the country itself use the other term, and so do some Slovenists who write in English.

² These reflections have been developed in the context of a 2012 bilateral research project involving the author and Slovene colleagues from various departments within Faculty of Arts (Filozofska fakulteta) of the University of Ljubljana. Alojzija Zupan Sosič contributed valuable input to this essay about the efforts to make Slovene literature more visible in international settings.

way mainly in the United States. In this regard, the best way to introduce a number of authors from a particular country appears to be a collection of shorter excerpts. An anthology may be prepared in the country itself or by foreign specialists, as well as by enthusiasts who wish to share their discoveries in the target language. An anthology is by its nature a well-balanced and possibly unbiased sum of the most representative writers, poets, or even philosophers from a particular cultural context. It may serve as a starting point for further explorations of a style, a genre or a literary trend. Rising beyond personal ambitions and individual attempts at self-promotion, an anthology may best serve as a general introduction to the variety of literary expressions within a chosen culture. It certainly does not preclude the possibility for a particular author to be translated directly, without an initial introduction through an anthology. Among the translations of contemporary Slovene literature, the same names nevertheless often appear both in anthologies and in monographs.

A more comprehensive anthology of Slovene literature published in English, one that would include various genres and cover a more extensive time period, most probably remains a goal that is not easy to achieve. The most recent to date, published in the U.S., is an almost four-hundred-page volume edited by Henry R. Cooper (who is also its translator). *A Bilingual Anthology of Slovene Literature* (2003) is particularly valuable for a number of reasons. First, it covers over five centuries of main trends in this literature, starting with a hymn by Primož Trubar and ending with a contribution by the poet and translator Branko Gradišnik (born in 1951). Second, it juxtaposes texts in both languages, Slovene and English, which allows for comparisons and stylistic analysis that might lead to expanded or new translations of selected material.

To celebrate its sixty-fifth anniversary in 2004, the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts commissioned an anthology, spanning over a century (1900–99), of poets and prose writers, members of the academy. Edited by Drago Jančar and Kajetan Kovič, the Slovene-language volume (2004) includes introductions and presentations of each selected writer by Helga Glušič. These are omitted from the English translation (2007). WorldCat indicates that only twelve libraries worldwide own this 469-page volume, nine of which are in the U.S.

Doubtless, both the Cooper and Academy volumes help to highlight major representatives of Slovene literature, which has proven its variety and continuously innovative spirit. To emphasize the latter, the Center for Slovene as a Foreign Language at the University of Ljubljana also prepared a number of anthologies in Slovene, the latest one being the 2010 *Antologija sodobne slovenske literature* (An anthology of contemporary Slovene literature), edited by Alojzija Zupan Sosič, Mojca Nidorfer Šiškovič, and Damjan Huber. It features sixty-six authors and is

aimed in particular at students abroad and those who participated in the international week of Slovene studies in fall 2010.

Keeping in mind these various efforts, the present article nevertheless focuses on yet another set of anthologies of Slovene literature in English, *The Imagination of Terra Incognita: Slovenian Writing 1945–1995*, prepared in 1997 by Aleš Debeljak, and Andrew Zawacki's 1999 continuation of the former, *Afterwards: Slovene Writing 1945–1995*. Their titles clearly indicate that they both concentrate on a more contemporary period. The rationale for analyzing these two volumes lies in the fact that they are quite obviously attempts to validate a new mentality linked to the establishment of the new, independent Slovenia in 1991. As they return to 1945 and the beginning of the post-WW II “new” Yugoslavia, they insist on authors who were definitely not promoters of the regime. As such, they could be perceived as the intellectual elite that led to the new openings and new awareness. The question remains whether the selected authors continue to be important in the culture, and also which names from before 1945 and after 1995 should make the list when it comes to translating Slovene literature into larger languages and cultures.

For the present moment, the most detailed source that regularly updates the translations of Slovene literature in foreign languages is provided by the Slovenian Book Agency (Javna agencija za knjigo, or JAK) (Stergar 2012).³ Founded in 2009, the agency aims at supporting and promoting writers both at home and abroad. During these years, JAK has provided funding for translators and researchers in both directions, for publications of foreign literature in Slovenia as well as for projects that seek international recognition of Slovene literature and culture. The general financial crisis has already had a major impact on continuation of cultural exchanges.⁴

A search of JAK's database reveals that almost three hundred titles have been translated from Slovene to English. This number surpasses all other translations into other languages. Regardless of whether a specific portion of these translations is destined to the British market, and more

³ Besides describing JAK's activities, Stergar introduces a young writer, Tadej Golob.

⁴ An example of non-subsidized promotion of Slovene culture abroad is the Slovene actor and director Ivan Rupnik's (from Mladinsko Theater in Ljubljana) English-language recreation of one of the most poignant satires in Slovenian literature, Ivan Cankar's *Scandal in the St. Florian Valley* (*Pohujšanje v dolini šentflorjanski*), freshly translated by Rawley Grau and performed by the Chronos Theater in San Diego (14–30 September 2012). It should be noted that both the director and the translator volunteered their time and energy for this project and that neither received any financing from Slovenia. (For details about the production, see www.chronostheatre.com).

rarely to Australia, the largest numbers are prepared for the U.S. market.⁵ In itself, this phenomenon proves the importance that writers attribute to their visibility in the Anglophone context, especially in the U.S. It also points to certain hegemony of North American values in Europe and particularly in Slovenia. The desire to be recognized in this environment necessarily leads to some misconceptions about reception abroad, especially about the place a writer may occupy in the host context. It should be noted that in Slovenia, writers continue to be public figures, part of the common talk of the town, although books remain rather expensive, due to the size of the market.

On the other hand, it is believed that in the United States, translations account for less than three percent of the literary market.⁶ This means that Slovene authors represent a fraction of the three percent. How might they achieve greater visibility if not a recognizable presence in the host context? Who are the partners in this endeavor, who are the featured authors, and how are the decisions made in terms of titles selected?

Among the American English translations listed in the JAK database,⁷ it is quite obvious that the titles do not necessarily mean that approximately three hundred Slovene authors have been introduced in the North American context. Rather, some writers or poets appear much more frequently than others on this list. Tomaž Šalamun, considered the most important contemporary Slovene poet, leads the listings with twenty-three books published in the United States.⁸ Among novels, five by Drago Jančar have already found their way into published translations, three of them in English (see details below). Jančar won the 2011 European Union prize as the novelist of the year for the entirety of his work, which in itself is a proof of its high literary value. Regardless of this recognition, his 1999 novel *Zvenenje v glavi* (Voices in the head), in its 2011 French translation by Andrée Lück-Gaye (*Des bruits dans la tête*), received very limited critical attention in France. As a result, the writer and the translator both received the somewhat ironic 2012 prize given to an “illustrious unknown” that had less than five book reviews that year. Most recently, in fall 2014, yet another book by Drago Jančar, *To noč sem jo videl* (I saw her that night),

⁵ In his assessment of past and current options for Slovene literature in English translations, Michael Biggins (2012) astutely recapitulates the problems that continue to affect the situation.

⁶ As quoted on a site that aims at promoting foreign authors and cultures, “in terms of literary fiction and poetry, the number is actually closer to 0.7%” (www.rochester.edu/college/translation/threepcent/index.php?s=about).

⁷ www.jakrs.si/nc/baza_prevodov

⁸ Šalamun’s *On the Tracks of Wild Game* (2012, *Po sledeh divjadi* 1979) appears to have been among the best-selling titles on Small Press Distribution site. Michael Biggins (2012) explains the standing of these publishing houses, while he also emphasizes Šalamun’s contributions and his importance for new generations of American poets.

again translated by Andrée Lück-Gaye as *Cette nuit, je l'ai vue*, was recognized in France as the best foreign book of the year.

The cases of the two most widely recognized Slovene authors serve to illustrate the challenges Slovene literature faces in trying to find a (better) place on foreign markets. Let us now return to the two anthologies which will interest us here, as they appear to be quite comprehensive in their attempts to promote Slovene literature in English.

The U.S. publisher White Pine Press issued the volumes within two years of one another. The 1997 *The Imagination of Terra Incognita. Slovenian Writing 1945–1995*, was edited by Aleš Debeljak, a Slovene poet, cultural essayist and a frequently published scholar.⁹ The second anthology, *Afterwards: Slovenian Writing 1945–1995*, with a similar title and concentrating on the exact same time period, was published in 1999 and edited by Andrew Zawacki, a renowned American poet, creative writing specialist, and essayist. In some sources, White Pine Press appears as the publisher, while some others cite Consortium, based in St. Paul, Minnesota. A consolidation of the publishers may be the reason for this apparent discrepancy. Let us consider the purposes behind the publication of these two anthologies, their distribution, and their potential readership. Recalling our initial hypothesis, we might also wonder whether the two volumes achieved their stated goals of synthesizing a particular Slovenian mindset in the forty years covered in the anthologies.

Debeljak had previously edited an anthology of Slovene poetry entitled *Prisoners of Freedom: Contemporary Slovenian Poetry* (1994) after Slovenia achieved its independence. The introduction was written by the American poet Charles Simic, who may surely be counted among Slovene literature's leading promoters in the U.S. It is possible that Debeljak was chosen as the editor of the 1997 *Terra Incognita* anthology because of his former contacts in the U.S. Yet, the search for this anthology in American libraries, where such publications usually find a place, unfortunately yields no results. Nevertheless, copies abound at various Slovene locations, from the national and university libraries in Ljubljana and Maribor to smaller city libraries and even high schools. Are Slovenes thus invited to read excerpts of their own literature in translation? What then is the connection between the two books?

It is obvious that Slovene cultural institutions were involved in Debeljak's first anthology, with the Slovene Ministry of Culture as the possible commissioner and the Slovene Writers' Association as the usual partner in international endeavors. Debeljak's anthology was thus part of

⁹ For information on Debeljak, see in particular http://www.blesok.com.mk/avtor.asp?lang=eng&id=189#.UA_hqI6kqWc_

“gift editions” prepared specifically for an international event. Tom Lozar,¹⁰ himself one of the contributing translators, explains in his review of Debeljak’s *Terra Incognita*, “The volume appeared for Ljubljana’s turn at the European Cultural Month, a boondoggle, in my opinion, that needed poetry for perfume” (1996: 84). Lozar does not mince words when he states that the results were disappointing because of the typos and frequent awkward passages he found in the translations, “The book was rushed for a special occasion. The editors sent out e-mails scant weeks before publication, asking for permissions. Translators did not see proofs” (1996: 84). Lozar recognizes that the publishers were indeed not to blame, but as he quite sarcastically points out in a footnote, “The fault is in the gratitude of Slovenians to anyone who notices them... And what does that tell us, who are still going to Fredonia, New York, and subsidizing them for the honor?” (1996: 84). Here Lozar refers to the choice of the publisher and most probably to the fact that Zawacki’s anthology was again published by White Pine Press, “It is, by the way, unfair to ask a Slovenian writer to make up an anthology that includes the living. Debeljak has wisely handed over the next anthology to an outsider. After all, he has to meet half of Slovenia’s writers every day on his way to market” (1996: 86). Yet Zawacki may not be the editor Lozar had in mind when he concluded, “It is time for another kind of book” (1996: 88). We still await a model anthology that will possibly expand into the twenty-first century and reevaluate the list of authors to be included.¹¹ In the meantime, Zawacki’s adaptation of previously gathered excerpts will probably continue to serve as the main introduction to Slovene literature in the North American context.

Zawacki is nevertheless not an outsider, as Lozar calls him. He has frequently visited Slovenia, has contributed to various periodicals such as *Književni listi*, *Nova revija*, *Literatura*, and *Večer*, and read his works at international poetry festivals held in Slovenia, such as the renowned Vilenica (the Slovenian Writers’ Association largest international festival) and Dnevi poezije in vina (Days of poetry and wine). He has also often collaborated with Debeljak.¹²

In order to better understand the relationship between the two anthologies, so similar and in some points quite different, it is important to look over Debeljak’s selection and subsequently discuss Zawacki’s own

¹⁰ The name “Ložar” sometimes appears with the diacritical mark in the last name, and sometimes without; we chose to use it as it is being quoted in various publications (see further in the text).

¹¹ The 2007 Texture Press volume, edited by the prolific and internationally recognized Slovene novelist, playwright, and essayist Evald Flisar, *From the Heart of Europe: An Anthology of Contemporary Slovenian Writing*, concentrates uniquely on short stories in English translation. It includes thirteen authors, some from the younger generations.

¹² For more information on Zawacki, see www.andrewzawacki.com.

choices and rearrangements of the materials borrowed from various sources. Debeljak's *Terra Incognita* contains 468 pages, but includes only one Slovene woman writer, Berta Bojetu-Boeta, whom Debeljak highly respects. It should be noted that he was allegedly the first one to accept her novels for publication, at Wieser (bilingual, German and Slovene) publishing house in Klagenfurt, Austria, where he served as one of the collection directors. We should note that Bojetu chose to take her novels to a publisher outside of Slovenia, even in the new independent state, quite possibly because Slovene series directors collaborated with Wieser and had a major say in its editorial policy.

Debeljak's anthology is divided into several sections (essays, poetry and prose). The introduction is followed by the editor's own essay, "The Imagination of Terra Incognita: Slovenian Writers and Styles of History" (16–44). This is where Debeljak delineates the historical framework, emphasizing the transformations that lead to Slovenia as an independent state. He insists on the role the intellectuals and in particular the writers played in the visionary process of self-definition and breaking away from Yugoslavia. Debeljak analyzes various literary trends in post-1945 Slovene literature and draws the connecting lines between the authors in the anthology. Interestingly, Debeljak's essay,¹³ together with the entire anthology, is available on line since 2001, thanks to the initiative of the Institute for Slovenian Studies of Victoria (Australia).¹⁴ Even if the volume may not be easily available in a printed version, the Internet allows for easy access to the material. The site also includes authors' biographies and useful links to other possible resources.

In the first portion of Debeljak's *Terra Incognita*, the ten essays are by writers who have been marked by various events during the period (1945–95) and who themselves influenced these forty years, from the post-

¹³ www.thezaurus.com/?/literature/imagination_the_slovenian_writers_and_styles_of_history/

¹⁴ www.thezaurus.com. There is an explanation on the site, Literator.net, Slovenian Literary Cartography, of the bold project that

was introduced as the platform for the first web anthology of contemporary Slovenian literature in Melbourne during the Slovenian Writers' Australian Reading Tour in 2001. For the practical demonstration of the scope and possibilities of a content-drive database, the first works came from the anthology of Slovenian poetry and prose in English translation, selected by the poet, Dr. Aleš Debeljak, Head of the Centre for Cultural and Religious Studies at Ljubljana University. The work is *The Imagination of Terra Incognita: Slovenian Writing 1945 - 1995*, published in the USA in 1996 [*sic*].

World War II Yugoslavia to the new conditions in an independent country. The opening text in this section, Edvard Kocbek's considerations "On Poetry" (47–56, translated by Andrew Wachtel of Northwestern University, one of the foremost American Slovenists), does not even mention the word "Slovenia," as also noticed by Tom Lozar. The generalization of poetic concerns was one of Kocbek's goals and his basic intellectual position. Next, Kocbek's self-reflecting analysis deals with "My Three Poetic Phases" (56–59, translated by Andrew Wachtel). Literary history comes to light in two contributions by Marjan Rožanc, "Essay on Protestantism and Slovenians" (80–95, translated by Henrik Ciglič), and "The Neoplatonic Cosmos" (96–102, translated by Erica Johnson Debeljak), while Dane Zajc approaches the "Game of Words and Silences" (69–78, translated by Erica Johnson Debeljak). Andrej Inkret dwells upon "Melancholy Meditations on Slovenian Literature" (104–108; "Slovenian Literator" of the "Thesaurus" web page lists this essay, translated by Anne Čeh, both under Inkret and under Rožanc). "Memories from Yugoslavia" (110–38, also translated by Anne Čeh, here inscribed as "Ceh") come from Drago Jančar. Debeljak's "Brush Me with Your Knee beneath the Table" (140–55, translated by Michael Biggins, another prominent Slovenist in the U.S.) is the only text that contains the date when it was written, July 1993. In the anthology, dates would have been very useful for a better overall perception of time and of specific ideas born out of a particular historic condition. The last essay is by Ivo Štandeker, "The Summer Battle" (157–66), which references the moments during the breakaway crisis in 1991 and is closely connected with Debeljak's own reflections on the changes that occurred in early 1990s.

In the poetry section of the book, Kocbek again appears in the first position, certainly because of his major role in post-1945 Slovene literature. Tom Lozar in his review takes issue with the selection (1996 [1999]: 85) and claims that not the best or the most convincing (and less self-important) Kocbek (neither in prose nor in poetry) was included in this volume. Starting with the well known and often anthologized "The Lippizansers" (168–71), thirteen poems by Kocbek are featured (the first two translated by Sonja Kravanja and the remaining poems by Michael Biggins). Nine poems by Jože Udovič are included (185–93, translated by Michael Biggins), eleven by Dane Zajc (194–205, translated by Erica Johnson Debeljak), three longer ones by Gregor Strniša (206–11; translated by Tom Lozar and Michael Biggins), eleven by Kajetan Kovič (212–19, all in his own translation), and three by Venko Taufer (220–28, translated by the author with Michael Scammell and Milne Holton). There are ten poetic works by Niko Grafenauer (229–37, trans. Jože Lazar), a selection of seven poems by Tomaž Šalamun (238–47, translated by Chris Merrill and the author, the author himself, and Michael Biggins) and ten by Milan Dekleva (248–55, translated Boris A. Novak and Richard Jackson, Jože Žohar, and Mia

Dintinjana). Milan Jesih contributed one, long poem “Volfram” (256–63, translated by Sonja Kravanja), as did Boris A. Novak (264–73, translated by the author and Richard Jackson).¹⁵ Brane Mozetič follows with nine poems (274–80, translated by Michael Biggins).¹⁶ Aleš Debeljak is again in the next-to-last position, this time with eight poems (281–88, translated by Chris Merrill and Aleš Debeljak, and by Andrew Wachtel). The youngest poet, Uroš Zupan, appears last, with five texts (289–300, translated by Mia Dintinjana, Nikolai Jeffs, with Andrew Wachtel, and by Mia Dintinjana with Phyllis Levin). Sometimes a longer text occupies the space destined to a particular author, which amounts to roughly eight pages in print. Poets are evidently often involved in the translation of their works.¹⁷

Debeljak chose to start the prose section with a segment from “The Eagle and the Roots” by Louis Adamič (303–307, author’s translation), followed by twelve other Slovene writers. As in this case, the other featured texts are mostly excerpted from novels, with the exception of one complete short story. The names of translators, as in the whole volume, are only given at the end of each segment. “A Day in Spring” comes from Ciril Kosmač (309–18, translated by Fanny Copeland), followed by “Minuet for the Guitar” by Vitomil Zupan (320–30). As a topic to be explored further in another context, the translations of this novel exist in French, Albanian, Serbian and also in English. The latter, in Henry Leeming’s rendition (from which the featured segment is taken), entitled *Minuet for a 25-shot Guitar*, came out in 1988 in Slovenia, under the auspices of the Writers’ Association and the Mladinska knjiga publishing house. Similar situations might be found in some other cases, with authors already showcased in Writers’ Association’s journal *Le livre slovène*, which was published twice a year between 1963 and 1990. The publication was replaced that same year by a similar new venue, *Litterae slovenicae*.¹⁸

Andrej Hieng’s (his name misspelled “Heing” in the table of contents in the book and then on thesaurus.com web page) “The Fatal Boundary” is featured (332–50, translated by Mia Dintinjana). He is among the Slovene writers who may be highly respected abroad, since he has been amply translated into other Slavic languages, yet, together with his colleagues, he has yet to find his way into the North American cultural space. A similar fate befalls Lojze Kovačič, who has been well translated into German and also French. His novels are of great interest to Michael Biggins, who is certainly the optimal translator into English. His endeavors to familiarize the U.S. literary sphere with Slovene poets and writers have

¹⁵ There is yet another long poem available within the Australian document on line.

¹⁶ Only seven poems are published on line.

¹⁷ See Biggins (2012) for an interpretation of this phenomenon.

¹⁸ www.culture.si/en/Litterae_slovenicae

been remarkable, yet the U.S. publishers only engage in such projects when funding is available in Slovenia.

In Debeljak's anthology, two texts of Kovačič are featured, "Silence" (352–68, translated by Margaret Davis) and "Story of the Dead" (369–72, translated by Miriam Drev). The next writer is Miloš Mikeln, presented by "The Great Bear" (374–92, translated by Martin Creegan). "On the Flower of Jericho" comes from Rudi Šeligo (394–99, translated by Tamara Soban). From Florjan Lipuš comes "The Day of the Country Wake" (401–10, translated by Dušanka Zabukovec). A member of the Slovene ethnic community in Austria, Lipuš has understandably been most often translated into German and gained vast international recognition with Peter Handke's translation of his novel *The Mistakes of a High School Student Tjaz* (1972).

"Executioners" by Evald Flisar (412–23) is a text translated by the author himself; as a world traveler, Flisar has resided in English-speaking countries and has accounted for his experiences in a lively prose between testimony and fiction. One of the most powerful (and quite disturbing) Slovene women writers, Berta Bojetu-Boeta is included in this anthology (425–44) with a short portion of her novel "Filio is Not at Home." Translated in full by Sonja Kravanja, the book is still awaiting an American publisher willing to commit to the project.

Drago Jančar, here presented with his text "Augsburg" (446–54, translated by Alasdair Mackinnon), may be one of the most frequently featured Slovene novelists abroad, with many international accolades for his opus. In the U.S., Michael Biggins translated three Jančar's novels, all of which—*Northern Lights*, *Mocking Desire*, and *The Galley Slave*¹⁹—

¹⁹ This is what Michael Biggins kindly shared in a personal email to Metka Zupančič of 28 May 2012:

Jančar, *Mocking Desire* (Northwestern). This was primarily the project of Lea Plut-Pregelj (Washington, D.C.), working with a Slovene-American woman who wanted to fund the translation of a worthy contemporary Slovene novel into English. It was thought that the American setting and theme of the book would help make it more readily assimilable by American readers.

Jančar, *Northern Lights* (Northwestern). This was a tie-on project to *Mocking Desire*, driven primarily by the editor in chief of the Northwestern series in which it appeared, *Writers from an Unbound Europe*, whose name is Andrew Wachtel (professor of Slavic literature at Northwestern U.). Wachtel's series produced some 50+ English translations of major works from throughout East Central Europe, and Wachtel himself was well-networked with writers in all of the countries.

received excellent critical responses, thus helping promote not only the writer but also a certain style in Slovene or generally European novelistic tradition. Among other Jančar's novel in Biggins's translation, *The Tree with No Name*, has now been published (2014), while *I Saw Her that Night* appears to be forthcoming.

The last three short stories come from the youngest among these writers, Andrej Blatnik. His stories "Billie Holiday," "His mother's voice" and "The Day Tito died" (456–68, translated by Tamara Soban) exemplify the writing approaches and preoccupations of a younger generation. Some fifteen years after this anthology, Blatnik continues to be very active in literary circles, especially in the journal *Literatura*, with projects that help the new generations hone their writing skills.

Zawacki's 1999 anthology is far from being a direct reproduction of Debeljak's volume.²⁰ It certainly borrows from the latter, as we read it in "Acknowledgments": "Portions of this anthology were originally printed in an earlier version distributed solely in Europe as *The Imagination of Terra Incognita: Slovenian Writing 1945-1995*, edited by Aleš Debeljak (Fredonia, NY: White Pine Press, 1997)" (1999: 4). Three other sources are quoted toward the end of the anthology (242): Debeljak's anthology of Slovene poetry, *Prisoners of Freedom: Contemporary Slovenian Poetry* (1994); an anthology prepared for the festival City of Women, by Zdravko Duša; *The Veiled Landscape: Slovenian Women Writing* (1995); and a book of Tomaž Šalamun's poetry, edited by Christopher Merrill, *The Four Questions of Melancholy* (1997).

With the introduction of new names, especially a number of Slovene women writers, and with the reduced number of pages (compared to Debeljak's volume), Zawacki obviously had to narrow his scope. This is how he explains his choices,

Jančar, *Galley Slave* (Dalkey Archive Press). This was also timed to coincide with Jančar's selection as writer in focus for the 2011 Vilenica. Dalkey Archive is a respected publisher of world literature in English, which "discovered" Slovenia a few years ago and was smitten. Dalkey specializes in the offbeat, noir, slightly bizarre and rather grotesque, so Jančar suits their publishing philosophy ideally.

²⁰ This is how Zawacki's anthology is presented on Small Press Distribution web site: "Literary Nonfiction. Poetry. Fiction. An instructive essay by poet and literary-social critic Aleš Debeljak opens this introduction to the rich post-World War II literary tradition in Slovenia. Writers include Edvard Kocbek, whom Charles Simic called one of the truest witnesses of our new dark ages and Tomaž Šalamun, who is, according to the *New York Times*, a major Central European poet; Drago Jančar and Berta Bojetu-Boeta. Also included is a riveting piece by Ivo Štandeker, a journalist killed by a Serbian sniper in Sarajevo in 1992." www.spdbooks.org/Product/1877727970/afterwards-slovenian-writing-19451995.aspx

I have included what I believe American readers might find interesting or provocative... these dual considerations of representation and delight... in the interest of privileging what “works best” in translation. Among those writers regrettably omitted are Louis Adamic,²¹ Evald Flisar, Herbert Grün, Andrej Hieng, Lojze Kovačič, Florjan Lipuš, Neža Mauer, Mira Mihelič, Iztok Osojnik, Marjan Rožanc, Rudi Šeligo, Ifigenija Zagoričnik Simonovič, Ivo Svetina and Saša Vegri..., Dominik Smole..., Slavoj Žižek.... (16)

We see from this list that some of the authors privileged by Debeljak (Adamic, Flisar, Hieng, Kovačič, Lipuš, Rožanc, and Šeligo) did not make it the cut. If Zawacki in the late 1990s did not consider Kovačič, for example, as interesting or provocative (to repeat the words cited above), we understand how difficult Biggins’s work may be in discussing the choice of translations with prospective publishers. Yet, besides his work on authors such as Šalamun, Biggins managed to introduce other writers who fully deserved their place in English, such as Mate Dolenc and Vladimir Bartol.²²

²¹ As we see, Louis Adamic, one of the most prominent “American Slovenians,” is here cited without the diacritical mark in his last name; he is obviously part of the immigrant generation that could not claim its “otherness” with the “correct” spelling of his name.

²² Again, quoting from Biggins’s e-mail of 28 May 2012:

Šalamun, *The Four Questions of Melancholy* (White Pine) was pushed largely by the book’s editor, Christopher Merrill, working with the publisher, White Pine Press. Chris Merrill is now at U. of Iowa English department and head of Iowa’s prestigious and highly influential International Writers’ Program... Tomaž had a large quantity of poems that I had translated over the previous decade and that constituted over 1/2 of the contents.

Šalamun, *Ballad for Metka Krašovec* (Twisted Spoon). The publisher, in Prague, was (and still is) producing a series of major Central European writers in English translation, and Šalamun had been brought to his attention as a candidate.

Bartol, *Alamut* (Scala House Press). This independent Seattle press came into existence in 2002, in large part to provide a vehicle for English translations of Slovene literature. The owner of the press, Mark White, had traveled to Croatia and Slovenia and become acquainted with a number of writers and their work, and produced two or three books by Miha Mazzini. Mark asked Mazzini for his recommendations of great 20th-century Slovene novels that had not yet been translated, and first on Mazzini’s list was *Alamut*. I remember the day in 2002 when Mark stopped by my office at UW to ask if I knew of anyone who translated from Slovene into English and might be interested in this novel *Alamut*. Needless to say, his quest ended that minute.

Since this writer is of an earlier generation, he probably could not be included either in Debeljak's or Zawacki's volume; his novel *Alamut* was nevertheless a mandatory text for the high school diploma in Slovenia.

Among the authors added to Debeljak's list, there is Boris Pahor, born in 1913 and thus a witness to many upheavals in the twentieth century. This remarkable thinker has often been translated in French. Zawacki chose a portion of *Pilgrim among the Shadows* (translated by Michael Biggins),²³ the title becoming *Necropolis* in the edition that was reissued in a gift collection of representative Slovene books. Quoting from the dust jacket of Pahor's *Necropolis*, "The *I read Slovenia* collection offers an insight into the modern Slovenian literature. The project was initiated by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, University of Ljubljana, Slovene PEN Center, and the Slovenian Book Agency." In 2011, *Necropolis* (*Nekropola*, 1967) was the first book reprinted in this new gift collection. An interesting phenomenon occurred with this edition: the English version is but half the size of the translation in French. What liberties American publishers have been taking, to render a foreign book more "acceptable," and who considered it appropriate to truncate a fine literary text?

Dolenc, *Sea at Eclipse* (Litterae Slovenicae [the series of translations published by Slovenian Writers' Association]). I had been contacted by the editor of LS, Alenka Jovanovski, the previous year about possibly translating Pahor's *Spopad s pomladjo* (The Conflict with Spring) for the 2009 Vilenica. I declined due to other obligations, but some months later in 2009 wrote back to Alenka to ask if the book was still available. It wasn't, but she offered Dolenc's book instead, since Dolenc was scheduled to be the Slovene writer in focus for the 2010 Vilenica. I completed the translation in June 2010, just in time for that September's Vilenica—but it turned out (as I was told) that Dolenc, who lives in Dalmatia and is a deep-sea fisherman, decided he could not leave the Adriatic at the height of fishing season, so he was dropped as writer in focus and Tomaz Šalamun was put in his place. (LS was supposed to publish the Dolenc translation in 2011.) [N.B.: in September 2014, neither the Slovene National Library online catalog (nuk.si) nor WorldCat contain any information about this possible publication.]

²³ Continued from Biggins's e-mail of 28 May 2012:

Pahor, *Necropolis* (Harcourt). The back story behind Harcourt's decision to publish an English translation of *Nekropola* remains a mystery to me to this day. Drenka Willen wrote me in 1993 to ask if I would translate it for their Helen & Kurt Wolff book series. I believe its account of the non-Jewish holocaust was primarily what drew the publisher to it, after they discovered the book in its French translation (*Le pèlerin parmi les ombres*—a title that Pahor deplored in either language, but that Harcourt was set on using).

Besides the excerpt from Pahor's riveting text added to the initial list, Zawacki's anthology only kept five essays from the source material, Debeljak's introduction to the history of Slovene literature, Inkret's "Melancholy Meditations," Kocbek's "On Poetry," Jančar's "Memories from Yugoslavia," and Štandeker's "The Summer Battle." The translators remain the same as in Debeljak's *Terra Incognita*.

In the section devoted to poetry, all Kocbek's poems are now in Biggins's translations; seven remain from Debeljak's list and two are added. Poems by Jože Udovič (translated by Michael Biggins and Igor Maver) are reduced from twelve to four and their order is modified. Erica Johnson Debeljak translated five poems (from the initial thirteen) by Dane Zajc. After the three poems by Gregor Strniša (translated by Tom Ložar and Michael Biggins) come five selections from Kajetan Kovič (translated by Igor Maver, Alasdair McKinnon, and Tom Ložar). Venko Taufer is included with five poems (translated by Elisavietta Ritchie, Michael Scammell, and Michael Biggins). Svetlana Makarovič, one of the most active and poignant Slovene women poets, appears with two poems (translated by Michael Biggins). There are three poems by Niko Grafenauer (translated by Jože Lazar). Tomaž Šalamun displays eight pieces to his name (some translated by Bob Perelman and Elliot Anderson in conjunction with the author; others by Charles Simic, Michael Biggins, Christopher Merrill and Mia Dintinjana). Milan Dekleva's five poems also bear the marks of various translators (Alasdair McKinnon, Boris A. Novak, and Mia Dintinjana). Boris A. Novak translated some of his (four) poems; Irena Zorko Novak and Andrew Wachtel provided other translations. Meta Kušar, another one of the women poets featured, is included with one longer text translated by Evald Flisar, with whom she has collaborated for many years in the *Sodobnost* literary magazine of which Flisar is the editor. Majda Kne's four poems (translated by Sonja Kravanja), just like Kušar's, have been borrowed from Zdravko Duša's anthology, *The Veiled Landscape*. From Debeljak's *Prisoners of Freedom*, besides Svetlana Makarovič, comes Maja Haderlap, with her three poems (translated by Tom Priestly). In the past years, this author from the Austrian Slovene community who also writes in German received a number of recognitions for her prose writing. The last name in the poetry section is Debeljak's; he is featured by seven poems (trans. in collaboration between himself and Christopher Merrill).

In the last, prose section, only five authors remain from Debeljak's selection. Ciril Kosmač, Vitomil Zupan, Miloš Mikeln, Berta Bojetu-Boeta, and Andrej Blatnik all appear with the same excerpts as in the first anthology and in the same translations (respectively by Fanny Copeland, Henry Leeming, Martin Creegan, Sonja Kravanja, and Tamara Soban).

In the United States, Zawacki's anthology received a number of rather favorable book reviews. None of the reviewers seem to have been

aware that another anthology had preceded and paved the way for this one. Ed Ifkovic provided his comments in the *Multicultural Review* of September 2000. Bert Beynen insists on its usefulness for library collections, in the February 2000 issue of *Library Journal* (84). Robert Murray Davis, in the Summer 2000 issue of *World Literature Today*, believes Debeljak's *Prisoners of Freedom* was "the first attempt... to give something like an overview of essayists, poets, and fiction writers after World War II" (672). An obvious collision between two Debeljak's anthologies must have happened here, since *Prisoners of Freedom* only include poetry; Davis must somehow have been aware of the Debeljak's *Terra Incognita*. In general, Davis seems to prefer Slovene prose (as better linked to history) to poetry (considered as too formal), although he praises Jože Udovič and Kajetan Kovič. He sees Kocbek and Šalamun as "the major voices" (672) in this anthology. He regrets the absence of some synopsis for prose excerpts and "dates of individual works, especially the poems," that "would have provided a much clearer sense of the history and development of Slovene writing during the period" (672).

Henry R. Cooper (2002) considers Zawacki's anthology to be carefully researched and "well done" (545). In his opinion, Zawacki's statement from the introduction

touches on important points: Slovene literature's "rich but not always nurturing heritage" (13), the surprising absence of women writers, the linguistic impediments to broader dissemination of Slovene works, and the slowly improving situation regarding translations into English. (545)

It is true that Zawacki wanted to balance predominantly male voice by including more women poets in his own anthology. Yet, there are other Slovene women authors, many of whom have been included in Duša's *The Veiled Landscape*, who remained out of the proclaimed canon and were discarded from potential inclusion in favor of their male colleagues.

In recent years, the Slovenian Book Agency has issued a number of promotional leaflets and booklets presenting a series of women poets and prose writers. As also stated by Katja Stergar (2012), JAK organized two translation seminars, in 2010 and 2011, both in Novo mesto, Slovenia, with selected translators from many countries. From the U.S., Michael Biggins attended in 2010 (hence his interest in the novels by Katarina Marinčič), and Timothy Pogačar in 2011. The first seminar resulted in the translation of a short story by Suzana Tratnik into thirteen world languages.²⁴ The 2011 seminar featured one other woman, Mojca Kumerdej, "a writer, philosopher, freelance dance and performance critic and cultural chronicler

²⁴ jakrs.si/prevajalski_seminar

for the daily newspaper *Delo*” (quoted from the “JAK” promotional leaflet). Similar information about a number of women authors is easily available.²⁵

Cooper’s review of Zawacki’s volume is very detailed. The author praises the inclusion of the six essays, “a genre completely new... to anthologies of Slovene literature in English” (545), “sixteen poets (four of whom are in fact women)” (545–56), and “five prose selections (four excerpts, one by a woman, and one complete short story)” (546). Although the notes about the writers help determine when their works were written, Cooper, similarly to Davis, suggests to future anthologists “that each item’s date of composition be indicated somewhere” (546). His favorite parts are the essays, while the poetry portion offers “the accumulative boredom of so much free verse” (546). In his view, the prose is well selected, yet he does not perceive a link to “a particularly Slovene literary tradition” (546). He admits that contemporary writers may have wished to rather distance themselves from such a connection. Altogether, Cooper finds “Andrew Zawacki’s volume attractive, thoughtful, and informative” (547).

All the reviewers were certainly aware that they have been evaluating translated material, but none has mentioned any of those who labored to make these texts available in English. We see a number of names that stand out: Michael Biggins, Andrew Wachtel, Tom Lozar, and Sonja Kravanja—all from the Americas. Many other translators have eventually worked directly with Slovene cultural institutions or were commissioned to provide the translations. Some authors continue to work on their own texts, together with their colleagues in the U.S. or in Slovenia—for instance, Aleš Debeljak, Evald Flisar, Boris A. Novak, as has also done the late Tomaž Šalamun. Charles Simic and Richard Jackson are among the proponents of Slovene presence in the U.S., and so is, of course, Andrew Zawacki. It is obvious that many efforts have been made to help promote various facets of this culture, especially its literature. But it appears that too many interests sometimes come into conflict and make a common translation and promotion strategy rather impossible. Collaboration between some publishing houses in the U.S. and Slovene funding agencies holds promise for a slow increase in the numbers of translations of contemporary works of Slovene literature. But even in such a small country, it is often difficult to find a common language and to agree upon the main components of a long-term plan. As Tom Lozar suggested more than fifteen years ago, another anthology may be needed, but who will be its editor and who will be the featured authors?

In conclusion, to answer some of the initial questions with even more queries, the issue remains whether existing anthologies of Slovene literature in English translation, published either in Slovenia or in the U.S.,

²⁵ jakrs.si/brosure_in_katalogi

manage to provide the potential audience with a sample that will be representative, honest, well-balanced, inclusive of various trends, genres and approaches, and still innovative and capable of producing enough ripple effects that will trigger a greater interest in the target culture. In the process of making Slovene literature and culture more attractive, it seems important to support language learning, also through anthologies produced by the University of Ljubljana's center for Slovene as a foreign language and used for the teaching abroad (see the mention above). In 2012–2013, only four universities in the U.S. offered this type of study: Cleveland State University, Lakeland Community College (in Kirtland, Ohio), the University of Kansas, and the University of Washington. The efforts, as we have seen, have been shared by translators, specialists of Slovene literature in the country and abroad, and financially most often supported by Slovene grants, allowing foreign publishers to engage in endeavors that unfortunately tend to remain risky.

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POVZETEK**Slovenska književnost v angleških prevodih: kdo sestavlja antologije, komu so namenjene?**

*Pričujoča razprava si zastavlja osnovno vprašanje o možnostih za vidljivost in mednarodno prisotnost izrazito majhne kulture, kakršna je slovenska, v angleško govorečem okolju. Osredotoča se predvsem na antologijske predstavitve sodobnejše slovenske književnosti, s poudarkom na dveh publikacijah. Pod uredniškim vodstvom Aleša Debeljaka je leta 1997 v ZDA izšla knjiga z naslovom *The imagination of Terra Incognita: Slovenian writing 1945-1995*, namenjena promociji slovenskih esejistov, pesnikov in pisateljev, ki pa se ni prebila v ameriški prostor. Že leta 1999, tudi v ZDA, ji je sledila knjiga *Afterwards: Slovenian writing, 1945-1995*, ki jo je na le delno spremenjeni osnovi in s podobnim gradivom uredil Andrew Zawacki in zanjo prejel več kritičnih ocen. Kljub podobnim promocijskim naporom se zdi, da do objave sodobnih slovenskih romanov ali pesniških zbirk v angleškem prevodu prihaja v precejšnji meri po zaslugi prevajalcev in ne nazadnje tudi samih avtorjev.*