

# UPDATING THE VASILY GROSSMAN DIGITAL DOCUMENTATION CENTER: NEW TRANSLATIONS AND THE SPANISH CASE STUDY

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The present paper aims at presenting the Vasily Grossman Documentation Center, from its evolution to its current state, a decade after its official launch in 2014 during the third and last conference organized by the Study Center under the theme “Vasily Grossman’s Heritage: The Originality of a XX Century Classic”. It describes both the outline of the function of the platform, which today aspires to be a benchmark research tool for Grossman studies, and the work of implementing the records, what has already been done and future prospects. As examples of research facilitated by the Documentation Center, an overview of the translations of the major works, *Life and Fate* and *Everything Flows*, into the main European languages is proposed, and the case study of Grossman’s publishing success in Spain is examined.

*Keywords:* Vasily Grossman, Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center, *Life and Fate*, *Everything Flows*

## 0. Introduction

The article examines the Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center, tracing the project’s evolution to its current state, its future prospects, and its potential for advancing research in Grossman studies. To illustrate the platform’s updates and its applicability, the article explores the reception and translation of two of Grossman’s works, *Zhizn’ i sud’ba* and *Vse techet*, into major European languages from the late 1980s to 2024. Furthermore, as an example of research enabled by the Documentation Center, it presents a case study on the reception of Grossman’s works in Spain.

The paper is structured into three sections. The first introduces the Digital Documentation Center, a multilingual, searchable platform that catalogues works by and about Grossman. Ongoing updates aim to complete the database, improve usability, and encourage scholarly engagement in expanding its resources. This section provides the foundation for understanding the platform’s functionality and its role in supporting Grossman studies.

The second section demonstrates how the platform enables users to trace the translation history of Grossman’s works into European languages through its available records, focusing on the translations of *Zhizn’ i sud’ba* and *Vse techet*. Initial translations into French, Italian, and English paved the way for successive waves of new editions in various languages.

es, reflecting Grossman's expanding international recognition. From the 2000s onward, renewed interest in Grossman's works has resulted in updated translations and widespread acclaim, establishing him as a central figure in twentieth-century literature.

The final section highlights the Documentation Center's potential to support research on the translation and reception of Grossman's works within specific national contexts. It focuses on the Spanish case, examining the impact of the 2007 edition of *Zhizn' i sud'ba*, a landmark publication that sold over 250,000 copies and was celebrated as a significant literary and historical event. This success mirrored both Spain's evolving intellectual climate and the broader global interest in Grossman's work, further cementing his reputation as a literary classic.

### 1. *The Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center: its aim and state*

The Digital Documentation Center (<https://dc.grossmanweb.eu>) has been created by the members of the Vasily Grossman Study Center with the aim of promoting and facilitating scholarly research. This goal has been pursued by developing a multimedia catalogue that continuously updates the materials collected by the Study Center and available in physical format at its headquarters in Turin. Established in 2008, the Documentation Center marked the beginning of systematic efforts to recover and catalogue these materials. Six years later, on the third and last conference organized by the Study Center under the theme "Vasily Grossman's Heritage: The Originality of a XX Century Classic", it was officially unveiled as the outcome of the initial material digitization effort up to that point. Since then, it has been continuously expanding, with the construction of the database and implementation of the digital user system according to international industry standards being overseen by Heritage srl. Among the many that have collaborated in different ways to the implementation of the platform its creator, Pietro Tosco, must be mentioned along with several young slavists, who contributed through their bibliographic research and the addition of new records.

The digital platform works in three different languages, English, Italian and Russian, and collects materials divided into two sections: works by Grossman, novels, essays and short stories, and works about Grossman. It aims at reflecting as accurately as possible the current state of Grossman studies by recording existing scientific contributions to facilitate mutual knowledge and collaboration between scholars and to provide useful orientation tools for readers and enthusiasts. Information and digital copies of the documents can be accessed, in compliance with copyright laws, through an advanced search system that offers a wide range of search options, allowing users to narrow down their searches by the following parameters: author, title of the work, Grossman's cited work, and subject. The catalogue can also be explored using filters like date ranges and keywords from the Grossman thesaurus.

In addition to the standard bibliographic data on the given publication, the notes provide more specific information, such as the foreword, footnotes, and the complete publication data in case of an extract. Whenever possible, the entry is also linked to a digital copy of the document, either the full volume or corresponding pages in the case of a chapter in a book or an article in a journal. Regarding works about Grossman, each entry is accom-

panied by the abstract, the subjects and a list of keywords in the three languages that make up the thesaurus, allowing users to identify fundamental topics and subjects in Grossman's works following their evolution and critical reception.

Aiming at offering as complete a mapping as possible, the Documentation Center is an ongoing project that must be constantly corrected and updated. To date, the platform contains 824 records: 331 works by Grossman and 493 works about Grossman.

Works by Grossman span the years from 1934, with the [first edition of the novel \*Glyukauf\*](#), to 2024, with the [Italian](#) and [French](#) translations of *Narod bessmertn*, and the German translation of *Dobro Vam!*. Pietro Tosco has catalogued and added to the platform the works published both in volume and in journals during Grossman's lifetime and posthumously. This includes publications in Soviet Russia and abroad by Russian émigré publishing houses and journals, as well as Russian editions from the first decade of the 2000s and major translations into Italian, English, French, and Spanish up to 2013. Over the past year, the catalogue has been expanded with the addition of 180 records: translations of Grossman's early works that appeared in the 1940s through Moscow's Foreign Languages Publishing House, as well as translations and new editions published in the West up to 2024<sup>1</sup>.

As for works on Grossman, the catalogue currently includes texts published from 1934 to 2023, ranging from articles and reviews of his early works published during his lifetime to the most recent articles dedicated to the writer. These encompass articles, memoirs, excerpts from letters, collections of biographical materials, chapters in monographs, and monographs dedicated to Grossman's life and work. They were first published in the Soviet Union and abroad in Russian émigré journals, and later in Russia and the West, accompanying the gradual publication of Grossman's works and marking the advancement of studies related to the writer. Thanks to the extensive work of Pietro Tosco, 304 records have been added, particularly focusing on secondary literature in Russian from the 1930s to the 1990s. This includes the first monographs dedicated to Grossman in Russian ([Bocharov 1970](#); [1990](#); [Lipkin, Berzer 1990](#)) and in English ([Garrard 1996](#)), as well as the volumes of proceedings from the three international conferences dedicated to Grossman ([2007](#); [2011](#); [2016](#)). In recent years, with the contribution of several young slavists, an additional 189 records have been added, 121 of them in the past year. These records comprise articles and monographs published predominantly in the last decade in Russian, English, Italian, French, German, Spanish, and Polish<sup>2</sup>. Although its extension, the work is still not complete, as some bibliographic titles have been identified, but are yet to be included, and the mapping of the editions of Grossman's works and secondary literature could still be expanded.

<sup>1</sup> The work of updating and expanding the Digital Documentation Center over the past year (January-December 2023) is the result of a project funded by a grant from the Vasily Grossman Foundation, in preparation for the fourth Grossman conference held in Milan in November 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Among the works that have been added it is worth mentioning the two most recent biographies devoted to Grossman, that have complemented the only existing one by John and Carol Garrard (1996), namely the works by Alexandra Popoff ([2019](#)) and Jury Bit-Junan and David Fel'dman ([2016](#)), which have made it possible for non-specialist readers to learn more about the writer.

More specifically, Grossman's works include texts that have appeared in volumes or periodicals, either in Russian or in translation, and for primary literature, the updating of the project covers new translations and editions featuring expanded or revised introductions, thus excluding reprints and unaltered reissues. To facilitate scholarly research, particular attention is paid to the collections of short stories, the index of which is available in the notes and through the citation filters. The sorting of the collections is an ongoing effort, which is expected to be particularly valuable for bibliographical research and for tracking the reception of a given short story. Concerning secondary literature, the search and addition of new contributions encompasses monographs, conference proceedings, articles and reviews published in scientific journals or in the press.

Starting from primary literature, it is essential to note that translations are categorized based on a linguistic criterion, clearly reflected in the call number assigned to each record within the platform.

Translations of Grossman's works have been included in 23 languages – namely Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Latvian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish, Swedish, Turkish, Ukrainian – and bibliographic research has been conducted mainly through the catalogues of national libraries. Of course, the platform presents some notable limitations that users must be aware of, since not all languages have yet been covered in the project, and a more comprehensive search is needed, which should encompass works or excerpts from works published in journals as well as potential school editions, currently only considered for the Italian language.

Although the work of collecting and recording the editions is still ongoing, it can already provide some valuable insights. It could help answer questions such as in which languages Grossman's works were translated first, which works were and in which years they appeared, which ones have not yet been translated<sup>3</sup>. Also, by comparing the recorded translations in the various languages, one may wonder whether it is possible to recognise translation waves concerning individual countries and, more generally, common European trends in the editorial history and reception.

Having outlined the initial goal, development, and current state of the Digital Documentation Center, it seems appropriate to discuss directions for further refinement. Firstly, it is fundamental to complete and enhance the bibliography of works by and about Grossman. On the one hand, it will be necessary to keep the Documentation Center updated with new works as they are progressively published; on the other hand, efforts should be directed towards the bibliography from 1934 to 2024 by filling in any remaining gaps. Secondly, digital copies of the earliest editions should be integrated where possible, and the sorting of the collections of short stories should be finalised. New subsections in the secondary literature should be created to categorize monographs, scientific articles, pro-

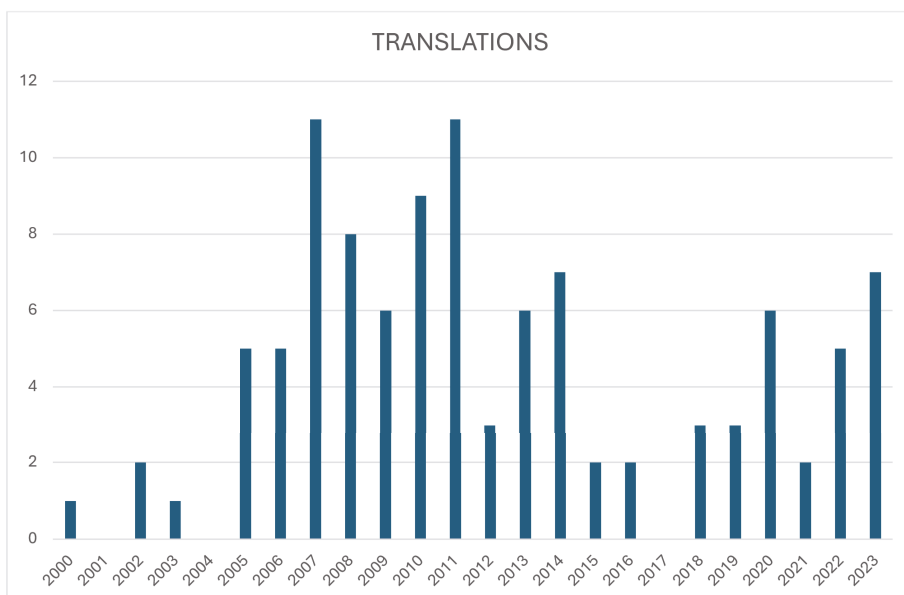
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<sup>3</sup> When representing the total number of translations of all of Grossman's works by country, as currently on the Documentation Center, one should be aware of the fact that the classification allowed by the site is based on linguistic criteria and it does not distinguish the place where the edition was released, which is specified in the given record, but cannot be inferred by the call number or searched through any parameter.

ceedings, press articles, reviews, and PhD theses. Finally, optimizing and standardizing the Grossman Thesaurus with keywords would make digital searching more effective.

Because of its nature and purpose, the Grossman Digital Documentation Center must be constantly expanded and reviewed. Notably, every scholar can contribute to its expansion through bibliographic recommendations, error reports or advice.

Table 1 - *Histogram of the translations of Grossman's works included in the Documentation Center that were published between 2000 and 2023*



<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of translations</i>
2000	1
2001	0
2002	2
2003	1
2004	0
2005	5
2006	5
2007	11
2008	8
2009	6
2010	9

<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of translations</i>
2011	11
2012	3
2013	6
2014	7
2015	2
2016	2
2017	0
2018	3
2019	3
2020	6
2021	2
2022	5
2023	7

## 2. Some preliminary observations on Grossman's publishing history and reception

Focusing on two of the major works by Grossman, *Zhizn' i sud'ba* (1950–1960) and *Vse techet* (1955–1963), a simple search on the Documentation Center allows the users to identify which were the first countries to translate them and to gather some initial information about their publishing success. The first versions of Grossman's final testament and novel were published in 1970 in Frankfurt am Main by Posev (Grossman 1970) and in 1980 in Lausanne by L'Âge d'Homme (Grossman 1980), respectively, and were immediately translated into many European languages.

*Vse techet* was first translated into Italian in 1971 by Pietro Zveteremich (*Tutto scorre*), then, one year later, into French by Jacqueline Lafond (*Tout passe*), English by Thomas P. Whitney (*Forever Flowing*)<sup>4</sup>, and Serbian by Milan Čolić (*Sve teče...*), and in 1977 into Swedish by Lars Erik Blomqvist (*Allt flyter*). Later came the Polish and German translations, respectively in 1984 by Olga Sijanowa (*Wszystko płynie...*) and in 1985 by Nikolai Artemoff, head of the Russian Orthodox parish in Munich (*Alles fließt...*). In Italy the first Mondadori edition was followed by a new translation by Gigliola Venturi for Adelphi that was published in two collections, *Fabula* in 1987 (reissued in 2005), and *Gli Adelphi* in 2010 (with 12 reissues), and in e-book format in 2015. As for English, the 1972 edition was reissued in 1986 (New York: Perennial Library) and in 1997 (Evanston, III: Northwest-

<sup>4</sup> Reviewing the translation, Gleb Struve comments on the translation of the title as follows: "Mr. Whitney's English version reads well. But it is regrettable that he did not retain the Heraclitean flavor of the Russian title and render it exactly as *Everything Flows*" (Struve 1972).

ern University Press), until in 2009 Robert and Elizabeth Chandler's translation became established with the title *Everything Flows* (New York Review Books). For French readers, Lafond's translation remained a reference and went through several editions all preceded by Efim Etkind's foreword (Juillard-L'Âge d'Homme, 1984; Presses pocket, 1986; Librairie Générale Français, 1993), until the most recent edition published in 2023 for Calmann-Lévy with the notes, chronology and glossary taken from Chandler's translation. On the contrary, new translations came out in German: *Vse techet...* was translated in 1990 by Renate Landa, and twenty years later it was published by Ullstein Verlag in a translation by Annelore Nitschke, with an epilogue by Franziska Thun-Hohenstein (this edition was reissued in 2019). Poland also saw a second edition, six years after the first, thanks to Wiera Bieńkowska, whose translation was republished in 2010 with Chandler's foreword.

Regarding the translations in the other languages recorded in the Documentation Center so far, *Vse techet...* was translated primarily in the early 1990s and in the first decade of the 2000s. Between 1990 and 1999 it appeared in Estonian (*Kõik voolab*, in 1990 by Virve Krimm), Hungarian (*Pantha rhei*, in 1990 by Enyedy György), Finnish (*Kaikki virtaa*, in 1991 by Esa Adrian), Dutch (*Alles stroomt*, first translated by Anne Stoffel in 1993 and reissued in 2009), and Czech (*Panta rhei*, in 1999 by Věra Kružiková).

In other countries, the short novel was translated following the success of *Life and Fate* and Grossman's establishment as one of the major voices in 20th-century Russian literature. In Spain, Marta Rebón translated it in 2008 (*Todo Fluye*) and this edition saw three reissues in 2010, 2017, and 2023. *Vse techet* was published in Croatian by Fikret Cacan in 2010 (*Sve teče*), in Turkish by Ayşe Hacıhasanoğlu in 2013 (*Her şey geçip gider*), in Romanian by Janina Ianoși in 2014 (*Panta rhei*), in Greek by Giōrgos Blánas in 2016 (*Ta pánta rei*), and in Bulgarian by Deian Kiuranov in 2018 (*Vsichko teche*).

On the other hand, the first translations of *Life and Fate* came out in the 1980s. The novel was first translated into French in 1983 by Alexis Berelowitch (*Vie et Destin*, with the collaboration of Anne Coldefy-Faucard and a preface by Efim Etkind), having an "enormous impact" on a whole generation of French readers and being widely admired by the critics<sup>5</sup>. A year later, in 1984, translations appeared in Italian, German, and Finnish, respectively by Cristina Bongiorno (*Vita e destino*), Elisabeth Markstein (*Leben und Schicksal*), and Esa Adrian (*Elämä ja kohtalo*). These were followed in 1985 by Robert Chandler's *Life and Fate*<sup>6</sup> and Rosa María Bassols's *Vida y destino*, and later by the Serbian two volumes

<sup>5</sup> "Grossman a eu aussi un impact énorme sur toute une génération de lecteurs français qui n'ont découvert *Vie et Destin* (dont la rédaction débute dès la fin de la guerre) qu'en 1983 aux éditions Julliard/L'Âge d'Homme" (Pachet 2023).

<sup>6</sup> A second edition was published in 1986 in New York by Harper & Row. "Thanks are due to Robert Chandler for providing a clear account of the novel's history. [...] Mr. Chandler's long labors have made available a work that substantially justifies his own description of it as 'the most complete portrait of Stalinist Russia we have or are ever likely to have.' It is, at very least, a significant addition to the great library of smuggled Russian works by Pasternak and his many successors, works written in the Soviet Union but destined almost exclusively for the un-Kremlinized reader". (Hingley 1986). *Life and Fate* was included in the list of best sellers of 2006 according to NY Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/03/23/books/best-sellers.html?searchResultPosition=13> (Last accessed August 23, 2024).

version *Život i sudbina*, by Milica Glumac-Radnović and Ivana Sekicki, and the Swedish version by poet and translator Hans Björkegren (*Liv och öde*). These translations were based on the Lausanne edition from 1980, the only one existing until then. After the 1989 Russian unabridged edition, that amended the shortcomings of the earlier, a wave of new translations emerged, although it is worth noting that a significant number of these are still based on the previous version, as the two editions of the translation by Alexis Berelowitch (1995 Editions l'Âge d'Homme), the two reissues of the Italian translation published by Jaca Book (1998; 2005), the Ukrainian from 1991 (*Zhittia i dolia*, by Vasil' Stefak), the first Czech edition from 1993 (*Život a osud*, by Milan Horák and Jiří Honzík).

Indeed, Grossman's widespread international recognition dates to the first decade of the 2000s, when new revised translations appeared in English (authored by Chandler for New York Review Books, NYRB) and French (a revision of the first edition by Berelowitch) in 2006, in German (by Madeleine von Ballestrem, Elisabeth Markstein, Annelore Nitschke und Arkadi Dorfmann)<sup>7</sup> and Spanish (by Marta Rebón) in 2007, in Italian (by Claudia Zonghetti for Adelphi) and Dutch (*Leven en lot*, by Froukje Slofstra) in 2008, in Polish (*Życie i los*, by Jerzy Czech), Czech and Bulgarian (*Zhivot i sŭdba*, by Zdravka Petrova) in 2009, in Portuguese (*Vida e Destino*, by Nina and Felipe Guerra) and Croatian (*Život i sudbina*, by Fikret Cacan) in 2011, in Turkish (*Yaşam ve yazgı*, translated in three volumes by Ayşe Hacıhasanoğlu) and Hungarian (*Élet és sors*, by András Soproni) in 2012, and in Greek (*Zoē kai peprōméno*, by Giorgos Blánas) in 2013.

The most recent editions include the reissue of Claudia Zonghetti's translation, published by Adelphi in 2022 as 'Nuova edizione ampliata' (New Expanded Edition), which features an index of characters and is also available as an e-book, the French translation by Alexis Berelowitch and Anne Coldefy-Faucard published in 2023 by Calmann-Lévy, that chose to offer five of Grossman's works in a single series (*Pour une juste cause, Vie et Destin, Tout passe, Carnets de guerre 1941–1945, Souvenirs et correspondance*)<sup>8</sup>, and, in the same year, the Turkish reissue of the 2012 edition in one single volume.

From the publishing history and editorial reception of two of Grossman's major works, it can be reasonably inferred that, after being discovered in the late 1970s and early

<sup>7</sup> From Karl Schlögel's review in "Die Welt", October 2007: "Dass der Roman nun in einer neuen Ausgabe vorliegt, ist ein großes Ereignis, das seine Wirkung über die Literatur hinaus haben wird". A year later, on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2008, Ulrich M. Schmid remarked on the significance of the reissue of the novel: "Wassili Grossman (1905–1964) gehört nicht zu den bekannten Namen der modernen russischen Literatur. Und doch stammt aus seiner Feder ein atemberaubendes literarisches Werk, das bisher erst unzulänglich wahrgenommen wurde. Mit «Leben und Schicksal» verfasste Grossman in den fünfziger Jahren ein Stalingrad-Epos, das mit schonungsloser Offenheit alle schmerzlichen Themen der sowjetischen Kriegserfahrung anspricht. [...] Die ergänzte und überarbeitete Neuauflage von Grossmans epochalem Roman ermöglicht nun dem deutschsprachigen Leser die Wiederentdeckung eines Autors, der nicht nur über die Verstrickungen der Macht, sondern auch über die moralische Selbstaufklärung des Individuums Gewichtiges zu sagen hat" (Schmid 2008).

<sup>8</sup> "Parce qu'elles prennent la mesure de l'importance de cet auteur pour comprendre le XXe siècle jusque dans ses répercussions les plus contemporaines, les Editions Calmann-Lévy font le pari de publier cinq volumes de Vassili Grossman d'un seul jet. Une audace rare, qui mérite d'être saluée" (Morard 2023). A sixth volume is being published: *The People Immortal*, announced for September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2024.



1980s, Grossman's work experienced a second wave of translations in the 1990s, also due to changing historical circumstances, and has garnered significant success in the Western world only from the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A few key dates marked the definitive recognition of Grossman as a major 20<sup>th</sup>-century writer and a classic of Gulag literature: the first editions of *Life and Fate* according to the 1989 version of the novel (Grossman 1989), the centenary of his birth in 2005, which led to new translations and to the first international conference dedicated to *Life and Fate*<sup>9</sup>. Organised by a group of researchers from the Pier Giorgio Frassati Cultural Center in Turin, the conference marked the establishment of the 'Vasily Grossman Study Center' in January 2006<sup>10</sup>.

In 2006, the prestigious volume *Œuvres* was published in France, edited by Tzvetan Todorov and released by Éditions Robert Laffont in the Bouquins collection. It included *Life and fate*, *Everything Flows...*, nine short stories<sup>11</sup>, Grossman's letters to Khrushchev and to his mother, the notes from the conversation with Mikhail Suslov, and a bibliography of works by and about the writer. This new edition had a significant impact on Grossman's global reception contributing to the emergence of new translations.

In the same year, as previously mentioned, the new edition of *Life and Fate* received immediate attention in the translation by Robert Chandler. Two years later, in 2008, Italian readers enthusiastically welcomed Claudia Zonghetti's new translation of *Life and Fate*, which represented a significant publishing success, with 90,000 copies sold over 10 years (2008–2018) and 22 editions in two collections to date (Calusio 2023). It also paved the way for the translations of *Treblinsky ad (L'inferno di Treblinka)* in 2010, *Dobro Vam! (Il bene sia con voi!)* in 2011, and *Sobaka (La cagnetta)* in 2013.

On the centenary of Grossman's birth, in 2005, the book *A Writer at War*, edited by historian Antony Beevor and researcher Luba Vinogradova, was released, offering a wide selection of the notebooks that Grossman had written as war correspondent during the Second World War while accompanying the Red Army as reporter for the popular newspaper "Krasnaya Zvezda" [Red Star], recovered and shaped into a narrative, enriched with articles and letters by the writer and other contemporary testimonies. Published in London and New York, this edition offers an eye-witness account of "the ruthless truth of war" and

<sup>9</sup> The conference was preceded by the international exhibition *Life and Fate. The Novel of Freedom and the Battle of Stalingrad*, translated into 5 languages and shown in Europe, New York, Jerusalem, Buenos Aires, and Russia.

<sup>10</sup> In 2009 a second conference was organised, under the title *Vasily Grossman: Between Ideologies and Eternal Questions*. The third took place in Moscow in September 2014, for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the writer's death, with the title *Vasily Grossman's Heritage: Originality of a XX Century Classic*. See the Editors' Introduction in *Grossman Studies* (Calusio, Krasnikova, Tosco 2016, XI–XII). The latest conference to date was held at the Catholic University of Milan in November 2023, titled *Fourth International Grossman Conference*.

<sup>11</sup> According to the French translation: *Abel; Le six août; Tiergarten; La Madone sixtine; Repos éternel; Maman; La route; Le phosphore; À Kislovodsk*.

played an important role in bringing Grossman to the centre of readers' attention<sup>12</sup>, having been translated into eleven languages between 2006 and 2018<sup>13</sup>.

As can be seen from the histogram (Table 1), considering the number of translations per year included in the Documentation Center – excluding unchanged reissues and reprints – there was a steady increase from 2007 to 2014, reflecting a renewed interest in Grossman's work in the Western world<sup>14</sup>. This is not an isolated peak, but rather signifies the beginning of Grossman's reception and his establishment among the classics of 20<sup>th</sup>-century literature.

### 3. A case study: the Spanish reception of Grossman's *Life and fate*

As can now be easily verified by consulting the Spanish translations recorded in the Documentation Center, Spain represents a real literary case in Grossman's fortune in Europe. Despite an anonymous earlier translation appeared in Moscow in 1946 at the Foreign Languages Publishing House (*Años de guerra [1941–1945]*) and the earliest edition of *Life and Fate* translated from the French by Rosa María Bassols in 1985, Grossman's work went completely unnoticed in Spain until the early 2000s (Montes Doncel 2009).

La novela tuvo una enorme repercusión en Europa, pero pasó sin pena ni gloria en España, donde, como dijo Muñoz Molina, se produce una “posición paradójica, porque en la cultura literaria española este libro es como un Everest que casi nadie ha visto”. (Agencia Efe 2007)

Preceded by the 2006 translation of Beevor and Vinogradova's work (*Un escritor en guerra: Vasili Grossman en el Ejército Rojo, 1941–1945*), a new edition of *Life and Fate* was published in September 2007, marking the beginning of what the Spanish press described as a remarkable literary phenomenon and a “cultural accomplishment”. Coming twenty-two years after the first Spanish version, it turned out to be an unexpected publishing sensation and in less than a year it saw seven reprints and a paperback edition DeBolsillo (Doncel 2009, 41).

<sup>12</sup> “In the west, his reputation has soared in recent years, thanks in part to the 2005 publication of the writer's wartime diaries” (Harding 2010).

<sup>13</sup> It was translated into: Dutch (*Een Schrijver in oorlog: Vasili Grossman en het Rode Leger, 1941–1945*, 2006), Spanish (*Un escritor en guerra: Vasili Grossman en el Ejército Rojo, 1941–1945*, 2006), French (*Carnets de guerre. De Moscou à Berlin. 1941–1945*, 2007), German (*Ein Schriftsteller im Krieg: Wassili Grossman und die Rote Armee 1941–1945*, 2007), Czech (*Spisovatel ve válce, Vasilij Grossman s Rudou armádou 1941–1945*, 2007), Hungarian (*Író a háborúban. Vaszilij Groszman a Vörös Hadseregben, 1941–1945*, 2007), Greek (*Enas sungraféas ston pólemo: O Vasily Grossman me ton Kókkino Strató 1941–1945*, 2007), Portuguese (*Um escritor na guerra. Vassili Grossman com o exército vermelho 1941–1945*, 2007 and 2008), Turkish (*Savaşta bir yazar: Vasili Grossman Kızıl Ordu'yla 1941–1945*, 2013), Italian (*Uno scrittore in guerra: 1941–1945*, 2015), and Polish (*Pisarz na wojnie: na szlaku bojowym Armii Czerwonej 1941–1945*, 2018).

<sup>14</sup> “*Life and Fate* still seems to me to be a grossly under-read book. [...] The upshot is that *Life and Fate* has never quite had the global readership it deserves. Now, when people are so keen to read about the Second World War – on the basis, I suspect, that it was the last time we in the West felt comprehensively and unequivocally in the right – would be a good moment for that to change” (Lanchester 2007).

The novel, spanning 1,200 pages, was published at the beginning of September by Círculo de Lectores-Galaxia Gutenberg, translated directly from Russian by Marta Rebón. During its presentation, the writers Antonio Muñoz Molina, Luis Mateo Díez, and Xavier Antich described it as a “monumento de ficción” and “la gran novela del sufrimiento humano” (Agencia Efe 2007).

Rebón’s translation – which in March 2009 was awarded the ‘Russian Literature in Spain’ prize, organised by the Boris Yeltsin Foundation – was immediately welcomed by the Spanish press, reflecting the enthusiasm of readers, captivated by the “human and literary quality” of Grossman’s novel<sup>15</sup>:

Una obra maestra, sin embargo, casi desconocida en España. En los años ochenta se tradujo del francés y se publicó en Seix Barral, pero pasó inadvertida (en la reseña del libro que se publicó entonces en este diario, Valentí Puig señalaba que Grossman muestra Stalingrado como “el espejo” donde Hitler y Stalin se asemejan). La nueva versión de Marta Rebón que aparece ahora se convierte así en un acontecimiento. (Rojo 2007)

The following day the return of *Life and Fate* to the Spanish publishing scene was defined a long-awaited literary and a historical event: “En el caso de *Vida y destino*, sí se sabe: su publicación ha sido un acontecimiento en otros idiomas, empezando por el propio, y lo es en español. Es un acontecimiento literario y es un acontecimiento histórico” (Vázquez-Rial 2007)<sup>16</sup>.

The same day the literary critic Rafael Narbona enthusiastically greeted the Spanish translation of the “monumental novel”, as “a true luxury for the reader who longs to understand the violence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still believes in literature as a form of knowledge and social transformation” (Narbona 2007).

On September 22<sup>nd</sup> Luis Fernando Moreno Claros introduced Grossman’s life to the readers of *El País*, who could finally delve into the “immense Russian novel” thanks to Rebón’s “magnificent” translation:

Seix Barral ya publicó esta novela en 1985, aunque la versión se hizo del francés en vez del ruso original. Apreciada por un puñado de selectos lectores desde entonces, no traspasó este pequeño círculo. Es ahora cuando esta inmensa ‘novela rusa’ podrá valorarse en todo su esplendor, pues la traducción es magnífica y la edición, superior. (Moreno Claros 2007)

<sup>15</sup> Introduction to the volume *Sobre Vida y destino* on the Galaxia Gutenberg publishing house page: “de una novela cuya calidad humana y literaria ha cautivado a miles de lectores y nos acercan a la aciaga biografía de su autor”. <https://www.galaxiagutenberg.com/producto/sobre-vida-y-destino/> (Last accessed August 23, 2024).

<sup>16</sup> The same day, critic Rafael Narbona wrote in ‘El Español’: “De vez en cuando, la literatura y la historia rescatan a sus protagonistas, revelando que el olvido sólo es un destino provisional. Vasili Grossman no regresó a la actualidad hasta finales de los 80, cuando la URSS comenzó a desintegrarse. Su reaparición no añadió un autor más a las letras rusas, sino que situó en un lugar de excepción *Vida y destino*, una novela monumental, que recobra el papel testimonial de la literatura. [...] Nos encontramos con la primera traducción del texto íntegro en castellano, cuidadosamente editado, un verdadero lujo para el lector que anhela comprender la violencia del siglo XX y aún cree en la literatura como forma de conocimiento y transformación social” (Narbona 2007).

The Spanish translation of *Life and Fate* represented an authentic editorial success, as the digital newspaper El Confidencial noticed in January 2008: “Esta siendo todo un éxito en España. El libro que muchos medios especializados han señalado como uno de los mejores publicados durante el año 2007 sigue su ascenso de ventas imparable: se han vendido 125.000 ejemplares de la misma”.

In only four months, approximately 70,000 copies were acquired in bookstores and an additional 55,000 copies were distributed among Círculo de Lectores members, according to Joan Riambau, the company’s deputy director, who did not hide his astonishment: “Nosotros somos los primeros sorprendidos por el alcance del éxito, porque sabíamos que era una novela esperada en España – dado que aunque había sido publicada por Seix Barral en 1985, en una edición traducida del francés – era prácticamente inencontrable” (Agencia Efe 2008). By March 2009 Rebón’s translation had sold more than 250,000 copies in total to date between its Spanish, Catalan and paperback editions, and was ranked first in the selection of the best books of 2007 by Babelia, the cultural supplement of the newspaper El País<sup>17</sup>. In December 2008, on the release of the Spanish translation of *Everything flows...*, Rafael Narbona described *Life and Fate* as a symphonic poem on a par with the great classics and the later novella as chamber music: “Si *Vida y destino* es un poema sinfónico con la altura de los grandes clásicos, *Todo fluye* es una pieza de cámara que anticipa las transformaciones experimentadas por la novela en las últimas décadas” (Narbona 2008). A year later, he ranked Grossman alongside Primo Levi and Albert Camus as essential authors of the 20th century. It was the Barcelona-based Galaxia Gutenberg publishing house that made available most of Grossman’s major works. The 2007 best-seller *Vida y destino* – republished in various formats over the years – was followed by the Catalan version (*Vida i destí*, 2008), and new Spanish editions: *Todo fluye* (2008, reprinted in 2010, 2017 and 2023), *Años de guerra* (2009), *Por una causa justa* (2011), *Eterno reposo y otras narraciones* (2013, the Catalan translation *Repòs etern i altres narracions* appeared in 2014), *El infierno de Treblinka* (2014); *Tiergarten, Berlín 1945* (2018); *Que el bien os acompañe* (2019), *Stalingrado* (2020); *El pueblo es inmortal* (2023)<sup>18</sup>. In 2008, the anthological volume entitled *Sobre Vida y destino* was published, which features two articles by Tzvetan Todorov and Efim Etkind, respectively, an article for the given Spanish edition and the preface to the first Russian edition of the novel (Grossman 1980), along with excerpts from Grossman’s correspondence, including the letters to his mother and to Nikita Khrushchev, and the notes from his conversation with the Soviet statesman Mikhail Suslov. With the Spanish translation of Todorov’s French preface the book *Pamjat’ i pis’ma: kniga o Vasili Grossmane* (*Cartas y recuerdos: un libro sobre Vasili Grossman*) was published in 2019 by Galaxia Gutenberg. Translated by Jorge Ferrer Díaz and Noemí Sobregués, it collects ma-

<sup>17</sup> [https://elpais.com/diario/2007/12/29/babelia/1198888753\\_850215.html](https://elpais.com/diario/2007/12/29/babelia/1198888753_850215.html) (Last accessed August 23, 2024).

<sup>18</sup> The original Spanish edition of this work was published by the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Moscow in 1946. This edition recovers that revised and corrected translation, as well as an update by Andrei Kozinets that is based on the author’s original manuscript and includes the previously censored and deleted text.

terials about Grossman's life, assembled and commented on by Fedor Guber, the writer's adopted son<sup>19</sup>.

Inez Rodrigo was right in 2013, when reviewing the collection *Eterno reposo y otras narraciones*, in predicting that Grossman's fortune would continue to grow, as within 10 years, six more editions of his works would be printed by the same publishing house<sup>20</sup>. Several factors contributed to Grossman's recently acquired popularity and belated circulation in Spain, where he is now ranked among the classics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century literature. These include the fact that *Life and Fate* had not been previously translated from the original Russian, but from French; the interest generated by the publication of Beevor and Vinogradova's work in 2006<sup>21</sup>; the promotional efforts of the publisher Galaxia Gutenberg; and the changed ideological climate among Spanish intellectuals, better inclined now than then to the objective reception of a book denouncing Stalinism, as noted by Muñoz Molina (Doncel 2009).

La novela no tuvo la resonancia debida en España “por una razón ideológica: no había voluntad de que ese libro fuera leído, porque en los medios culturales españoles no había debates sobre el totalitarismo. [...] Un difuso estalinismo cultural ha influido profundamente en lo que hemos leído y en los temas sobre los que hemos reflexionado. Eso tiene que hacernos pensar”. (Agencia Efe 2007)

As evidenced by the latest updates to the platform and the examples discussed throughout the article, the Vasily Grossman Digital Documentation Center is a project designed to reflect the current state of Grossman studies. It serves as a valuable resource for supporting research and fostering collaboration among scholars worldwide. Continuously developing, the platform allows research framed by chronological and linguistic criteria, enabling users to trace the reception of Grossman's works over time and across various languages.

As mentioned earlier, the section dedicated to secondary literature – i.e. studies on Grossman – has been enhanced, with the addition of 189 new records, including articles, conference proceedings, and monographs. Of these, 113 are studies from the past decade (2014–2024). As highlighted by the updates on Grossman's translations and the case of his reception in Spain, this expansion reflects a shift from a predominantly Russian-centric to a more international perspective. It also demonstrates a growing interdisciplinary interest in Grossman's works, with emerging fields such as philosophy, twentieth-century history, and linguistics, underscoring the increasing relevance of his writings across diverse academic disciplines. This growth in secondary literature emphasizes the need for a more comprehensive and inclusive mapping system, one that is open to contributions in multiple languages and encompasses less-explored research directions.

<sup>19</sup> The collection was published in Polish in 2011 by WAB, edited by Jerzy Czech, and in French in 2023 by Calmann-Lévy, with Todorov's preface and translated by Luba Jurgenson.

<sup>20</sup> “Hoy en día, la URSS es historia y la figura de Grossman no para de crecer” (Rodrigo 2013).

<sup>21</sup> “El reciente libro de Antony Beevor y Luba Vinogradova: *Un escritor en guerra* (Crítica) ha reavivado en España la casi extinta memoria del escritor judeosoviético Vasili Grossman” (Moreno Claros 2007).

Ultimately, the breadth of translations and languages considered, coupled with the expansion of critical literature beyond Russia and the émigré intellectual elite to Europe and the Western world highlights Grossman's rightful place as one of the most significant figures in twentieth-century Russian and world literature, now firmly recognised as a classic.

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