

relationship in its larger social and spiritual perspective with the urgency of a great master. His poetry is, however, by no means political. On the contrary: it is precisely in his subtle manipulation of images, more often than not drawn from peasant folklore, that the tragic social dynamics of his country come effortlessly to life. He is indeed a great poet in a tradition of narrative folk poetry where an account of important happenings and troublesome events is presented through a personal revelation or, at times, an inspired confession disguised as a sermon. Kocbek has of course a strong spiritual bent.

Regardless of his allegiance to Roman Catholicism, I dare say however that his more cosmological than religious longing permeates his poetry in a way not unlike the mythological consciousness in the writings of the late Vasko Popa. That is, it offers a frame of reference within which his poems become a true witness: the courage to be himself beyond all ideologies, political parties and historical projects; the courage to pursue his own sense of being at one with the world, even if it strays from the beaten path. Herein perhaps lies the reason why his poetry is considered a standard among Slovene *literati*, a poetry to be emulated and struggled with, but whose esthetic and metaphysical power is never seriously called into question. His dark sentiments of melancholy, depression and nostalgia for the time when man was not a stranger in paradise do not prevent him from keeping in sight a commitment to the harmony of the individual and the world, even if this commitment becomes directed against the dominant mode. It is this rebellious and deeply intimate writing that has made Kocbek a poet of "extraordinary originality and vision who deserves a place in the pantheon of modern literature," as Charles Simic points out in his preface to this collection (5). Kocbek's poetry is a moving account of the times when limitations of all kinds reigned supreme because its departure-point is the conviction that, for poetic liberty to tell the story of the world as it was, as it is, and as it always will be, there are no limitations.

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Jože Pogačnik, *Twentieth century Slovene literature*, translated by Anne Čeh. Ljubljana, Milan Simčič. [= *le livre slovène*, no.1, 1989]. 189 pp.

The current upheaval in Yugoslavia, and the political disintegration of this country as we have known it, constitutes a vivid explanatory background for the kind of book written by the well-known historian of Slovene literature, Jože Pogačnik. It reflects on the part of the nations which constituted the Yugoslav federation an ardent desire to assert their cultural identity. This intention is clearly formulated in the opening sentence of Pogačnik's introduction: "Every national literature — he declares — ceaselessly endeavours to shape what is today designated by the modern and fashionable concept of *identity*." Indeed, the advantages of this tendency are obvious. To date, various literary developments of ethnic character have been lumped together as one under the common term of "Yugoslav literature." In this sort of generalization or presentation, smaller literatures

such as, for example, Slovene or Macedonian, were obviously disadvantaged because they were outweighed by the quantitatively larger and chronologically older literatures of the Croats and Serbs. This point can be easily proven by a few comparisons. In the last part of his history of Yugoslav literature¹ (see "The Most Important Representatives of Yugoslav Literature Between the Two Wars"), Barac mentioned only five Slovene writers. Similarly, a relatively marginal place was assigned to Slovene literature in T. Eekman's *Thirty Years of Yugoslav Literature (1945-1975)*.² It is particularly true of the newer period: the disproportion in representation of Slovene literature, if compared to that of Serbian or Croatian, seems to grow the closer we come to the present. Another weak aspect of these surveys is the fact that they often blurred the linguistic and cultural diversity typical of Yugoslav historical evolution. Suffice it to mention that even among the quite well-educated strata of Western nations, one can still encounter individuals who speak of "Yugoslav" language without realizing that no such language exists. There always loomed the danger of oversimplification and of the wrong perception of Yugoslav culture as a homogeneous and not heterogeneous entity.

These questions, that is, the existing disproportions within a more comprehensive discussion of Yugoslav literature and the possible imbalances that inevitably arise from such presentations, are addressed and corrected by Pogačnik's book, which is comprised of an introduction and five chapters. In addition, it also contains a useful bibliography of recently published histories of Slovene literature, a short dictionary of writers who are discussed in this volume and a list of the most important literary journals. In the first chapter, Pogačnik traces the origins of contemporary Slovene literature. In so doing, he points to modernism as the main source and the beginning of new currents and tendencies in the XXth Slovene literature. According to him, the predominant style within modernism was symbolism, which leads him to a detailed discussion of two major figures of this movement — Ivan Cankar and Oton Župančič. However, Cankar and Župančič represent two different streams of symbolism. While both of them posed the question about the role literature and art should play in society, the answers they offered differed considerably. Cankar took on and defended an activist approach; Župančič, on the other hand, exposed a more contemplative attitude, often thematizing the act of writing itself. If Cankar believed in the possibility of the external implementation of artistic ideas and in their merger with life as a social phenomenon, Župančič drew a distinct demarcation line between artistic creativity and life; at the same time, he perceived the writer as a mediator between the high ideals of literature and pedestrian, everyday life. This dichotomy came to the fore most vividly, according to Pogačnik, in the works of Josip Stritar; because

¹ Barac, Antun, *A History of Yugoslav Literature*. Tr. by Petar Mijuskovic. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, no year, 266 pages.

² Eekman, Thomas, *Thirty Years of Yugoslav Literature (1945 - 1975)*. Ann Arbor, Michigan Slavic Publications, 1978. 328 pages.

of his conviction that writers should present an ideal world, he can be viewed as a forerunner of Slovene symbolism. The chapter strikes us with Pogačnik's excellent command of the material under discussion, with his ability to reveal the surprising richness of Slovene symbolism and its affinity to its broader European counterpart. To be sure, these characteristics typify the subsequent chapters of the book as well.

The period following modernism and its most important variant — symbolism — can be defined in most general terms as avant-garde, which developed in Slovenia under the banner of expressionism and constructivism, reflecting both German and Russian influence, respectively. For Pogačnik, expressionism “continues to investigate and probe the fall of the middle-class image of the world.” As a rule, the direct linkage of social conditions with artistic phenomena is a rather risky enterprise and such is the case with the above statement. Pogačnik is much more convincing when he keeps expressionism within the parameters of artistic criteria and tries to find its distinct features on aesthetic grounds. To comprehend expressionism, it is necessary to realize that this movement never acquired a homogeneous artistic form. Still, it originated from the same conviction about the disintegration of hitherto established values and at the same time from a desperate attempt to find a unifying absolute which could be laid down as a new foundation for humanity. Out of the existing contradictions Slovene expressionists tried to create a synthesis which would stand above them. Srečko Kosovel became not only the spiritual leader of this movement but also the writer who was able to approximate this goal. In general, the author of *Integrali '26* played, one could say, a key role in shaping the initial stage of Slovene literary avant-garde. Shortly before his death in 1926, he began working on developing a new literary trend — constructivism — which paralleled an artistic phenomenon existing at that time under the same name in visual arts. This switching of allegiance from one aesthetic set of values to another in a relatively short span of time is quite interesting but Pogačnik does not try to explain it. As a rule, it occurs in smaller countries known for their belated artistic cycles of evolution in relation to so-called major literatures (e.g. French, English and so on) and is known under the name of accelerated development of literature. In their eagerness to catch up with external advances of new artistic realizations, writers of smaller nations try to assimilate in their own creative endeavour as many of these realizations as possible in order to become “up to date” and to make up for their cultural “backwardness”. Kosovel is a case in point. As a result of this specificity, these countries rarely developed fullfledged and strong literary groupings or movements; rather, they produced a conglomerate of qualitatively distinct formal elements. This by no means, however, prevented these countries from having strong creative individualities, that is, writers who achieved broad recognition. In fact, this free and extensive borrowing from the experience of others freed artistic development in countries like Slovenia or Bulgaria from a certain rigidity and orthodoxy typical of, for example, surrealism in France or futurism in Italy.

Besides Kosovel, other writers and poets have enriched the avant-garde movements of the twenties, among them Miran Jarc, Anton Vodnik, Stanko Majcen and Ivan Pregelj, the latter particularly as a prose writer.

The early thirties witnessed a gradual decline of the high wave of the avant-garde and subsequent rise of the so-called "new reality", a term directly translated from the German "neue Sachlichkeit" (discussed in the third chapter). "New reality" marked a transition to a realistic type of literature, dominated by the genre of prose, particularly the novel. It was an obvious reaction against the preceding abstractionism, inclination towards deformation and expressiveness. Instead, "new reality" fostered objectivity, scepticism and "lucidity of form." This tendency in Slovene literature brought about a variety of generic sub-species such as a critical realism (reviving the tradition of the XIX C. realism), "diegetic" type of prose and socially committed literature. Surprisingly, with regard to the last variant ("committed literature"), Pogačnik is not very precise in explaining the term. He seems to confuse two terms (or is it, perhaps, the failure of the translations): "social realism" and "socialist realism." and the result is that a reader unfamiliar with the subtleties of terminology may fail to realize the difference. There are writers who followed the Soviet example after the All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers was held in 1934 (evident in some works of Juš Kozak), and those who were genuinely concerned with social issues without being motivated by the ideology of Marxism.

The war period, or "literature of resistance and rebellion" is discussed in chapter four. After the fall of Yugoslavia in 1941, the National Liberation Front declared a policy of "cultural silence," which meant a refusal to print in publications tolerated by occupational forces. At the same time, however, the National Liberation Front encouraged underground creative activity. It flourished throughout the whole war and today constitutes quite an interesting literary heritage. Basically, literature of "resistance, rebellion and liberation" is devoid of literary experimentation and subjected to the call of serving the immediate needs of the nation, struggling for its survival. This literature is directed against "the contemporary barbarism" in its fascist form and defends both national and universal human values. It is interesting to note that in spite of the fact that the national liberation struggle was led by the communist party, war poetry (probably the most popular genre during this period) and literature in general do not contain many works motivated by class consciousness.

The last chapter is devoted to the postwar period, the richest and most complex if compared to the earlier ones. It began with the introduction of the short-lived Soviet-style concept of literature. In 1949, Yugoslavia broke away from the eastern bloc which had been forcefully created by the Soviet Union after World War II. In literature, this change was sanctioned by the Ljubljana Congress of Yugoslav Writers held in 1952. As in other parts of the country, in Slovenia this event marked a transition towards a much more liberal cultural policy. On the whole, however, the postwar evolution of literature and arts in general was characterized by a zig-zag progression. At times the party and the government tried to intervene by cracking down

on what was considered to be too much deviating from the official policy and not in the interests of the regime. At times this affected, as Pogačnik demonstrates so eloquently in his book, Slovene literature as well. After providing a general characterization of the postwar Slovene literature, Pogačnik analyzes it by genres. This is undoubtedly the most detailed and informative chapter of the book.

On the whole, Pogačnik's history of twentieth century Slovene literature deserves high praise for its competent and lively presentation of the material. The author avoided tediously overloading his account with unnecessary details and exaggerated shows of erudition. He knows how to preserve a balance between relating some concrete happenings, facts or contents of works he wants to bring to our attention, and their "philosophical," so to speak, or ideological background.

At the same time the book contains a few shortcomings which could have been easily avoided. It is obvious that *Twentieth Century Slovene Literature* is not addressed to foreign readers. One can infer this from the way Pogačnik discusses the concept of modernism. The term is, of course, broadly used in Anglo-American criticism but it means something different from what Pogačnik has in mind. In England and America this term encompasses literary events between, more or less, World War I and World War II and is also known in other countries (including Slovenia) as the artistic avant-garde. The Slovene term "modernism" covers a period of literary and artistic evolution prior to the outbreak of World War I, and leaving this specificity without explanation may usher in confusion. Although the author time and again refers to this term in his first chapter, he never attempts a definition. In fact, on a few occasions the reader might get the impression that it is identical with symbolism. I am not suggesting that an elaborate explanation should have been included. A concise footnote could have done away with possible misunderstandings. Apart from the above, one more critical comment: strange as it may seem, Pogačnik does not relate the Slovene cultural scene to its Yugoslav ambience. The book could have benefited from a short analysis of the relationship between Slovene literature and its Croatian and Serbian counterparts.

The above-mentioned drawbacks wane, however, in comparison with the translation: it can be assessed only as being below any criticism. Obviously Anne Čeh is not a native speaker of English and she should have consulted someone with an impeccable command of English before submitting her translation for publication. It would take too much space to enumerate mistakes from even one chapter; on some pages the translation is so bad that the text is rendered incomprehensible. Needless to say this does not invite reading, no matter how important the text may be. It is a pity that this aspect of the publication under review turned out to be a failure. *Twentieth Century Slovene Literature* is the first volume in the series entitled *le livre slovène*. Let us hope that future volumes in this series will find better translation.

These critical remarks notwithstanding, it is to be expected that Pogačnik's book will serve as an useful, valuable and needed introduction of Slovene literature to the western reader. It reveals to the family of European cultural diversity a new voice which can speak for itself, without being part of the Yugoslav historical and literary context as we have known it so far. For many unfamiliar with the richness of the South Slavic ethnic tradition, this will come as a surprise.

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Terence R. Carlton, *Introduction to the Phonological History of the Slavic Languages*. Columbus: Slavica, 1991. 461 pp.

The book under review is the first major textbook in English on the phonological history of the Slavic languages in more than two decades. Readily available at a reasonable price from Slavica, it is likely to be considered as a standard textbook for courses in comparative Slavic linguistics in anglophone universities. The book fills an important gap in the instructional material on Slavic linguistics for the English-speaking audience, focusing on the disintegration of Common Slavic into its various dialects. In this respect, it complements Shevelov (1965), which focuses more on the early stages of Common Slavic. This review aims to judge its value primarily by focusing on one of the more complex and often misunderstood subsections of Slavic material, that of Slovene, which may be considered the acid test of a textbook on the prehistory of Slavic.

Carlton's book consists of eight chapters of narrative (1. The Slavic Languages Past and Present; 2. The Slavic Writing Systems; 3. The Beginnings of Slavic Literacy; 4. Slavic as a Member of a Larger Family; 5. The Reconstructed Phonology of Proto-Indo-European; 6. From Indo-European to Proto-Slavic; 7. Phonological Developments in the Period of Disintegration; 8. The Prosodic Features of Late Proto-Slavic; chapter 9 is a summary of the major differences in the Slavic languages, followed by appendices. More than half of the book (222-452) is devoted to the summary and appendices (vocabulary lists, parallel texts, dialect maps, glossaries, bibliography, index). Nothing new is proposed, since the "purpose of an introductory textbook such as the present one [is] to summarize the achievements of Slavic historical linguistics" (8). This caveat apparently justifies the author's heavy reliance upon other major handbooks (acknowledged in the Foreword), such as Shevelov 1965, Stang 1957¹ and Trofymovyč 1960. Other than this there are only occasional (almost haphazard) references to the others' writings, though the experienced reader will frequently recognize formulations that are taken from well-known works. Presumably, the absence of scholarly apparatus is intended to simplify the text for the beginning reader.

¹ Carlton lists Stang's *Slavonic Accentuation* as having been published in 1965 both in the Foreword and in the Bibliography. In fact it was published in 1957.