

Andrej Kokot, *Silence of Stone [Kamen molka]. Selected Poetry*. Translated by Franc Šehovič. Introduced by Ivan Dolenc. Toronto Ont.: Yugoslav Canadian Publishers, Inc., 1987. 109 pp. US\$ 12.00; available from Mr. Ivan Dolenc, 10 Shallmar Blvd., PH 4, Toronto, Ont. M5N 1J4, Canada.

This is the second volume of Carinthian Slovene poetry published recently in a bilingual Slovene-English edition (for the first, see Henry R. Cooper's review of Feliks J. Bister & Herbert Kuhner, eds., *Koroška slovenska poezija / Carinthian Slovenian Poetry* (Celovec, 1984), in *Slovene Studies* 7/1-2: 96-97. The subject of this volume is Andrej Kokot, born in 1936. The thirty-five lyrics in this tiny volume, with its symbolic title *Silence of Stone*, are divided into thematic cycles as follows: "Drops of Stinging Awareness," "Loyalty's Reward," "Dew of My Morning," "Songs for My Wife," "Night of Glacial Signs," "No Longer a Poem," and "Captivity-Solitude." They speak in general of the poet's deep personal disillusionment and sorrow, for not being understood in his own homeland, a poet native among natives and strangers, alien and tragically alienated among his own people. Kokot's poems on this theme, which is central to the volume, are terse, bitter and tragic. Much more chromatic are his poems on the theme of the first love, and of his mature love for his wife; of these latter, the "Sixth" in the cycle "Songs for My Wife" may be offered as an excellent example of his style:

Kdo
ve za skrivnost
najinih
sanj,
kdo za pelin
najin vsakdanji?

Who
knows
the secret
of our dreams,
bitterness
of routine?

Kaktusov cvet
vztrajno
bode v okno pomladi.
Kdo ve
za njegov
nežni dotik
s soncem vetra?

The cactus bloom
stubbornly
prods at the window
in spring.
Who knows about its
tender encounter
with the evening sun?

Perhaps what has been said about Kokot's poems (as Matjaž Kmecl states on the book's jacket) is true: they are among the saddest in Slovene literature to date. We would however like to add a qualification: their sadness is impregnated with the tragedy of a generation of idealists, faithful to the splendid Slovene cultural tradition of their homeland, and far from ready to die off, one by one, until all are gone.

Andrej Kokot is introduced in this volume by Ivan Dolenc. The translation, by Franc Šehovič, is in general good, and sometimes exquisite. The reader may however be disturbed by some misprints.

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