

BOOK REVIEWS

Henry Ronald Cooper, Jr. *Francè Prešeren*. (Twayne's World Authors Series, 620). Boston: G. K. Hall, 1981. 169 pp.

Henry Cooper's *Francè Prešeren* is the first monograph in English on this leading Slovene writer. As a part of the Twayne series on Yugoslav writers, it helps in filling a longstanding gap in the scholarship concerning Yugoslav literatures in the English-speaking world. As such, it is indeed welcome.

The monograph is divided basically into two parts. The first half deals with Prešeren's life and the background surrounding his development and the intellectual life of Slovenia of his time. The second, and more substantial, part is devoted to the discussion of his works. It is hard to say which part is more pertinent or better executed; both are full of information useful to an outsider from a distant country, geographically as well as culturally. This informative quality is an important feature of the book, making it a valuable source for anyone interested in Slovene culture and in world literature.

The biographical part of the study is filled with material that is both informative and fascinating to read, so that the picture of Prešeren leaves little to be desired for anyone save the native expert on the poet. (Even he would find it interesting to see how a foreign scholar looks at Prešeren.) Cooper writes extremely well and engagingly, which points at another outstanding feature of the book. It should be pointed out that the biographical details chosen by the author substantially contribute to our understanding of the poet and of the nature of his works. The second part is written no less interestingly. In his thematic discussion of Prešeren's works according to genre (lyric poems, ballads and romances, various poems, the ghasels, sonnets, "The Baptism on the Savica," and German poems)—incidentally, a method chosen by the poet himself in preparing the 1845 edition of his works—the author is interested in the achievement, rather than just the development of the poet. He is selective in his discussion, yet he includes all, and only, the material necessary for our appreciation of Prešeren, keeping his focus on what is essential such as love, death, and poetry as the thematic nexus appearing most often in his poetry. The discussions of the sonnets and of "The Baptism on the Savica" are especially poignant. Dispersed translations of entire poems as well as excerpts bolster the author's

arguments and make the poet's achievements stand out in the reader's mind. Cooper utilizes the secondary sources copiously, integrating them well into the body of his study. The selected bibliography and index complete the overall picture of the poet.

The result of all these efforts is a skillfully written and expertly analyzed portrait of the greatest Slovene bard that is a pleasure to read. Cooper presents him without gushing idolation yet giving him his due as a poet "of great refinement and keen insight," finding his appeal primarily in the sounds of Slovene, in the purity, simplicity, and elegance of his vocabulary, and in the delicate but driving rhythm of his poems. At the same time, the author emphasizes time and again that Prešeren is unjustly little known abroad, a neglect that reveals him as both "the champion and victim of his language." The fact that he comes from a "small" literature should not relegate him to perpetual oblivion, however. With more expertly, and better publicized, translations and with critical studies such as this, Prešeren should eventually take the place he has at home—as a national bard comparable to Shakespeare, Goethe, Pushkin, Mickiewicz or Njegoš.

The only shortcoming I could find in this study is its brevity, but given the nature of the Twayne series that could not be avoided. And perhaps it is better that way because one should learn to crawl before walking. I could not think of a better introduction to Prešeren than this brief study. Both the author and the publisher should be commended for this highly satisfactory endeavor.

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Jože Toporišič and Velemir Gjurin, editors. *Slovenska zvrstna besedila*. Ljubljana: Seminar slovenskega jezika, literature in kulture, Katedre za slovenski jezik in književnost, Filozofska fakulteta, Univerza Edvarda Kardelja, 1981. 637 pp.

Instructors of graduate classes in Slovene take note: you now have a complete (perhaps, even, a perfect) collection of Slovene textual materials of all kinds. Whatever approach to exemplifying the language you wish to take, this book will provide you with what you need.

The first half of the book (9-321, "Funkcijskozvrstna besedila,") has four subdivisions: 1. "Praktičnosporazumevalna besedila," with examples of conversations, correspondence, advertisements, T.V. and radio schedules, recipes, etc.; 2. "Strokovna besedila,"—extracts from