

behavior, and the sausages are suggestive of natural symbols. Godfathers, brothers, and friends have special ritualistic roles. The individual designated as the head butcher is not the host but a guest, suggesting to Minnich a reversal of social roles. Thus the celebration acts to emphasize rules as well as to provide liminal releases, and accordingly it functions to cement social and kin ties, imparting feelings of solidarity. However, it is not clear from this study that symbols of the supernatural are conveyed unless the rite is seen as an echo of sacrifice; nor is it clear that categories of classification of reality are inscribed in this event in a more marked way than would be expected of all such major events. Finally, it is not clear that the *furež* provides an integrative world view which significantly helps us to see what the culture is really all about.

These difficulties may be attributable to various factors such as the following: the decline of some of the polysemic and multifunctional dimensions of the rite itself; the separation, in this work, of theoretical discussion of approach and methodology from the descriptive material; and the tendency by the author to generalize rather than particularize the actual observations, which distracts from the immediate vitality of the material. On the other hand, one can only welcome ethnographic treatments of Eastern European folk materials which depart from the particularistic, descriptive methodologies predominant for decades and longer, a situation which is partly due to Eastern European national traditions and partly due to the obvious fact that folk societies or peasantries are not characterized by the so-called homogeneous traditions of tribes which can be more easily cast into integrated symbolic moulds. Clearly, in the study of peasantries the task today is to go beyond descriptions formulated in universal categories, and to strive for new methods to enable us to conceptualize differences. What are the meanings of the various distinctive features of an ethnic unit and how are they structured and communicated? Such an obligation is becoming all the more urgent in a world in which ethnic variations are less and less understood, as uniformities are impressed upon humankind. If we achieve, as I think we do, a richer perception of the peasantry of West Haloze through interpretations of the rituals embedded in the *domača gruda* and the *furež*, rituals which symbolically impart the value and meanings of family and ceremony within the world view of these people, we have an added insight that a symbolic approach can uniquely provide.

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Aleksij Pregarc, *jedra - nuclei - kerne - jezgra - magvak - les noyaux - nuclei*. Trieste, 1987. Pp. 261.

This is a selection from the previously-published poems of Aleksij Pregarc, furnished with translations into six languages. The book actually requires two reviews: one, for its multilingual intent; the other, for the realization of that intent. The present notice fulfils both duties, and therefore falls into two distinct parts. Firstly it praises the imagination,



the initiative, and the perseverance that saw this undertaking to its fruition; and secondly it reviews the translations, and discredits one of them. There is no attempt at an assessment of the quality of the poetry.

**0. Introduction.** Aleksij Pregarc, born 1936, has lived his life in his native village of Ricmanje, near Trst/Trieste. The poems are selected from the following collections: "Poesie - pesmi" (1974), "Moja pot do tebe" (1982), "Temelji mojega vrta" (1985), "Tri podobe - tri pesme," and "Duh po apnencu" (1986). In *jedra* there are in all about 15 poems. Following every one or two pages of original poetry is a translation thereof into Italian, German, Serbo-Croatian, Hungarian and French; this pattern is repeated throughout; and then at the end of the book all the poems are repeated in their English translation. The reason for this inconsistency is not made clear.

**1. The 'international' intent.** The seven languages represented here are (coincidentally, for this volume of *Slovene Studies*, cf. the first group of articles herein) the official five languages of the Alpe-Adria Working Group, plus two major international languages. Pregarc's general aim is implicit in the dedication of the book: "V poklon pokojnemu očetu, Evropejcu-utopistu;" and it is set out explicitly in Josip Tavčar's introductory remarks (7-13, also translated into all seven languages): "Današnji čas terja, da se narodi, ki jih je zgodovina združila, združijo tudi kulturno." Specifically, the nations between the Adriatic and the Danube (two of which, Slovene and Italian, provide the cultural base for Pregarc's poetic work) have lived alongside each other for over a millenium, but with coexistence and cultural cooperation hindered by the ever-present barriers to linguistic communication—barriers that this book shows how to overcome. However small the gesture that it represents, the book is thus nonetheless a gesture of communicative goodwill; and in presenting its text in seven languages, it treats them all equally, each as being worth the trouble and the care that good translations require. The whole project required imagination in its inception, and great initiative and care in its execution; the fact that all of these were exerted in the cause of international communication can only be applauded.

Moreover, the volume itself speaks to a great deal of editorial care: there are apparently very few misprints; the layout is impeccable; the printing excellent; and the hard binding attractive. The editorial decision with respect to the ordering of translations may be faulted: indeed, it is easier to read the English versions of the poems (all of them together) than any of the other five translations (all of which necessarily recur every six or twelve pages). The index is especially useful.

**2. The translations.** Given the editorial thoroughness, it was imperative that adequate translators be involved in this work: translators who would not only be able, more or less, to rewrite Pregarc's poetry in each of the six other languages **as if Pregarc himself were a native speaker of each**, but also who would be modest enough not to let their own poetic inclinations invade their translations, and in addition realistic enough to admit that only the rare genius does not make any mistakes in translating. Pregarc's poetry does not involve phonetic devices such as regular meter or rhymes and other sound-repetitions; the translators were thus able to concentrate their efforts on capturing the meaning. One must also assume that each translator was able to consult with colleagues, and/or with the poet himself, when doubts arose: when, for example, an ambiguity (perhaps, a deliberate ambiguity) in the original had to be resolved in the translation (for examples, see below).

My remarks, below, refer to the English version of Pregarc's poems: for only native speakers of the other five languages can properly judge those translations. I did however briefly spot-check all of the latter with competent speakers of the languages concerned, all of them attending the Seminar slovenskega jezika in Ljubljana; and in only a very few



instances did they/we detect any dubious translations (e.g., *na razkošni postaji* (66) “in einer grossen Station” (68); *nalokaj se ga* (98) “trink ihn” (100)—cf. the closer French and English versions, “bois-en ton soûl” (103) and “gulp it down” (236)) or misprints (e.g., Hungarian “bírod” for “bírosz” (113)). Instances such as these are very infrequent; and even less frequently do they involve any great alteration of the meaning—in other words, the reader of the versions in any of these five languages can be expected, in general, to appreciate Pregarc’s poetic intent throughout. To the best of my knowledge, therefore, we must applaud the work of Jolka Milič (the translator into Italian), Anna Ferk-Gasser and Janko Ferk (German), Gojko Janjušević (Serbo-Croatian), Báti Zsuzsa (Hungarian), and Viktor Jesenik (French).

I can not however be altogether positive about the translations into English. Critics of translations must be cautious: after all, translating poetry is an art, and any one translation may have a “poetic feeling” which approximates that of the original and which thereby outweighs a number of inexact renderings. Nevertheless, given Pregarc’s slight reliance on form and great emphasis on meaning, his poems are not such a challenge to the translator that an abundance of mistakes may be excused; and there are, unfortunately, too many mistakes in Anne Čeh’s English versions. Most if not all translators make mistakes: when these mistakes (a) are very numerous, (b) are avoidable, and (c) so change the meaning that the poet’s original intent is blurred, then attention must be called to them; and that is the case here. For brevity, I cite only some examples, restricting myself to the more **serious** errors.

First: some of the English words chosen by the translator are extremely unusual (e.g., “villous” (235) for *kosmat* (92), “extemporary” (244) for *izvenčasoven* (150)); some renderings reflect either a weak command of the language or poor proofreading (e.g., *v treh mesecih razcefram strune* (28) becomes “flay the strings within three months”, where “fray” is required (225).) Others show a disregard for English homonymy, and thus go beyond style into misdirection. The best example of this is in the translation of the poem *Ozemlje ob meji*: the lines *zavojevalec / ki bi ne smel dvomiti / in se med pohodi bližal / . . . / smrti* (195) are rendered as “the invader / who ought not to doubt / and who **in the marches** drew close / . . . / to death” (252). In any other poem, perhaps, the choice of “march” for *pohod* may not matter; but in a poem whose title is translated as “Border tract,” the word “march” is likely to be understood in its meaning “a tract of land on the border of a country.”

Second: there are omissions; and sometimes they too have a misleading effect. One such: *krik nekdanj ponižanega ljudstva* (188) becomes “the cries of a humiliated people” (250). (Here, “cries” instead of “cry” exemplifies the kind of error that (though unnecessary) is trivial and does not seriously alter the poet’s message—the kind of error that the critic should ignore.) The omission of a translation for *nekdanj* is however a serious error, as defined here; for the context **requires** this word: *vizija / kamna in ostrih trav / kriki upora / krik nekdanj ponižanega ljudstva / krik zmage*. . . : a “cry of victory” means something different if the “people” are still being, or if they are no longer being, humiliated.

Third, there are what can only be called plain errors, and there are—simply—too many mistakes which misrepresent the poet and which mislead the reader. Examples: *razgreti škržati / . . . / skačejo / po mršavih prsih / željnih rose* (34) becomes “agitated cicadas / . . . / jumping / on the meagre breasts / of desirous dew” (226), rather than “breasts / desirous for dew”; for *žaltave ptice ljubezni / se krmijo z ostanki moje slane strdi* (84) we read “rank birds of love / feed upon the remains of my saline stiffening” (234), rather than “honey”; and *morda bi ti v vlogi spremljevalca vedel / za Svita Janeza in Boruta in še koga*



(156) is rendered as “perhaps in the role of companion you’d know / of Svit, Janez and Borut and everyone else” (245) instead of “and someone else.”

Finally, occasions arise in all translation where there is no one-to-one semantic equivalence, where e.g. one language uses two words where another uses one. (For instance, a perennial problem for translators from Slovene to English, French and German, is *pesem*: it is not always clear from the context whether “poem/poème/Gedicht” or “song/chanson/Lied” is meant.) There are excellent examples of this problem here, where—I must emphasize—Čeh’s translations are acceptable. The word *sen* has two meanings, *spanje* and *sanja*, and it is not immediately apparent which of these Pregarc has in mind (if he does not have both in mind!) in *v enem kotu smreka za zadnji sen* (124). The German and French translators choose the second meaning (“traum” (126), “rêve” (129)), and the Italian and English versions have the first (“sonno” (125), “slumber” (240)).—The word *strašilo* has both the archaic meaning *prikazen* and the more common modern meaning *priprava za odganjenje ptic*. Pregarc uses this word in *zdaj je to od strele ubito strašilo*, in a context (the poem *Moj vrt*) where the archaic meaning is unlikely and “scarecrow” the obvious choice. Here again the German and French versions take one path (“gespenst” (144), “fantôme” (147)) and the English and Italian take the other (“spauracchio” (142), “scarecrow” (243)).—In neither instance is Čeh is to be faulted for her choice of word; but the question comes to mind: did she take the trouble to check? The poet can, after all, be questioned, by mail if necessary; if an ambiguity is apparent, a translator who resorts to guesswork is at fault.

This is no idle question, for there are other instances where any competent translator would have noticed potential ambiguity, and where Čeh’s version is either very unlikely or is downright incorrect. One of these is a grammatical instance: *sad tvojega telesa bega molitvenik tvoj* (150)—is *sad* or *molitvenik* the intended subject of *bega*? The Italian, German and French translators have the prayerbook confusing the fruit (“il tuo breviario turba il frutto del tuo corpo,” (151); “dein gebetbuch verstört die frucht deines leibes,” (152); “le fruit de ton corps est troublé par ton livre de prières,” (155)). Čeh chooses the other reading: “The fruit of your body confuses your prayer book” (244), which is, especially in the given context, a less probable reading. Another instance is more of a lexical ambiguity: *jaz ki bi moral biti po ukazu / brezizrazen / top* (195). Now *top* does have two dictionary entries; but Čeh’s reading (“I who ought by command to be an expressionless cannon,” (252)) is obviously not what Pregarc intended, (and what the other translators read), viz., “I who ought by command to be expressionless, blunt” (or perhaps “unfeeling.”) In all instances such as these, the translator has a duty to check with the original poet (if available and approachable) or at least with knowledgeable colleagues.

All these criticisms are presented in detail to emphasize one point: that translation should be done properly. Only translators of genius, or those with enormous experience, can afford to translate without assistance, without a second opinion. In the instance at hand, where so much care was taken in the preparation of this volume, the obligation was all the greater. We must deplore the fact that the English translations are not of the same standard as the others, and not suitable for a volume such as this where so much trouble was expended in such a worthwhile cause.

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