

## REVIEWS

**Harold B. Segel.** *The Columbia Guide to the Literatures of Eastern Europe Since 1945.* New York: Columbia UP, 2003. 776 pp., \$100.00 (cloth). ISBN: 0231114044.

A squad of Slavicists, as well as Albanian, German, Hungarian, and Romanian specialists, would be necessary to provide a full and fair review of Harold Segel's latest and truly monumental contribution to Slavic studies, a dictionary of the best post-World War II writers of "Albania (and Kosovo), Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, [the] Czech Republic, [the] German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia (and Montenegro), Slovakia, [and] Slovenia" (iii). A brief chronology arranged by country (with "Czechoslovakia" and "Yugoslavia" covering all the now independent nations formed from them, xi–xxii), a list of the most important journals of each nation (xxiii–xxxii), and a lengthy introduction on the literatures of Eastern Europe from 1945 until about 2000, especially in their historical-political contexts (1–34), preface the more than six-hundred-page dictionary, and a selected bibliography of English translations and critical studies follows it (627–33), as does an author index. Segel counts "almost 700 author entries" (viii) in his dictionary: of these, 37—a generous five percent of the total—are accorded to Slovene writers. The following review covers only these.

The typical entry records the place and date of birth (and death, if applicable), education, employment, and pertinent biographical details (such as prison sentences and literary awards) of each author. It lists the

author's preferred genres, principal publications (and translations into English where available), typical themes, and stylistic proclivities. A few of the entries are quite brief, less than a column (e.g., Peter Božič or Lela B. Njatin—who, along with Saša Vegri, given a bit more than a column, are the only two women writers in the Slovene list). But most of the Slovene entries are relatively lengthy, covering a full page or page-and-a-half (2–3 columns, e.g., Dimitrij Rupel and Tomaž Šalamun). And they are rich with detail and with the insights Segel's extensive reading can provide. The bulk of writers covered here can be found in no other English-language reference books (I am thinking specifically of Vasa D. Mihailovich's excellent volumes in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* series, *South Slavic Writers Before World War II* [Detroit: Gale, 1995] and *South Slavic Writers Since World War II* [Detroit: Gale, 1997]; in all there are only ten overlaps between Mihailovich's and Segel's volumes), and there is a definite preference in Segel for the younger generation (e.g., Andrej Blatnik, Aleš Debeljak, Jani Virk) and for the peripheral (Marko Kravos and Florjan Lipuš, who represent not a Slovene "diaspora" [20] but instead indigenous Slovene communities in Italy and Austria respectively). At the same time all the "important" names can be found in the dictionary as well: Evald Flisar, Branko [better than Brane] Gradišnik, Andrej Hieng, Drago Jančar, Dušan Jovanović [not Jovanovič], Edvard Kocbek, Ciril Kosmač, Boris Pahor, Tone Partljič [not Partljić], Ivan Potrč, Alojz Rebula, Rudi Šeligo, Gregor Strniša, Veno Taufer, Dane Zajc, and Vitomil Zupan, among others.

As is only to be expected in a work of this size and complexity, there are some errors in the Slovene entries, mostly (I suspect) caused by a misreading of those "false friends of the [Slavic] translator" with which Slovene abounds (e.g., *beseda* [xxxi] is not 'conversation' in Slovene as it is in Russian, but 'word'). For the sake of future users of the *Columbia Guide*, I would like to suggest corrections for some of them here (I will skip, however, the very few typographical errors):

- Debeljak: *Fotografije s poti* should be *Photographs from the Road* (138).
- Dekleva: *Narečje telesa* is *Dialect of the Body* (139); *Odjedanje božjega* is something like *Gobbling Up the Divine* (140); *Preseženi človek* is *The Beaten Man* (140); *Jezikava rapsodija* is *The Loquacious Rhapsody* (140).

- Filipčič: The correct title is *Ujetniki svobode* (*The Prisoners of Freedom*) (172).
- Flisar: The correct titles are *Umiranje v ogledalu* and *Jutri bo lepše* (176).
- Gradišnik: The correct title is *Mistifikcije* (*Mystifictions*) (192), and better translations for *Nekdo drug* and *Nekaj drugega* might be *Someone Else* and *Something Else* (193).
- Hieng: A better translation for *Usodni rob* might be *Fateful* (or *Fatal*) *Edge* (217); *Gozd in pečina* is *Forest and Crag* (217); and the painter is Petkovšek (218).
- Jančar: A better translation for *Veliki briljantni valček* is *The Great Diamond Waltz* (after Chopin) (240); and the correct spelling of the book of interviews with Jančar (a variation of the ending of his short story "Augsburg") is *Ko se nasanjamo, bomo spali naprej* (241). In the US Joanna Labon's book is entitled *Balkan Blues: Writing Out of Yugoslavia* (Evanston: Northwestern UP, 1995), a title missing from the bibliography.
- Jesih: *Pupilija, papa Pupilo, pa Pupilčki* should probably be translated *Pupilija, Papa Pupilo, and the Pupilčeks* (249).
- Kocbek: The Catholic journal Kocbek worked for was *Križ* (286); the correct translation of *Slovensko poslanstvo: Dnevnik s poti v Jajce* is *The Slovene Mission: Diary en route to Jajce* (287).
- Kovič: The correct spellings of his poetic collections are *Prezgodnji dan* and *Improvizacije* (306).
- Kravos: The correct spelling of his collection is *Krompir na srcu* (311).
- Mikeln: The correct translation of *Zaradi inventure odprto* is *Open Because of Inventory*; and the chapter translated in *The Imagination of Terra Incognita* is not from *Petrijin venac* but from *The Great Bear* (361).
- Novak: *Stihožitje* is a made-up word comprised of *stih* 'verse' and *tihžitje* 'still-life', so together something like 'metrical still-life'; the correct spelling of the Zajc collection is *Interpretacije 4* (396).

- Pahor: The correct translation of *Parnik trobi nji* is *The Steamship Signals Her* (403) and of *Odisej ob jamboru* is *Odysseus Against the Mast* (404). “Pirjevec” is the correct spelling of that surname (404).
- Partljič: *Na svidenje nad zvezdami* is best translated *Till We Meet Above the Stars* (410); the correct title of his play is *Ribe na plitvini* and the correct translation of *Za koga naj še molim* is *Who Else Should I Pray For* (411).
- Potrč: *Imel sem ljubi dve* is *I Had Two Loves* and *Ko smo se ženili* is *When We Got Married*; the family name in his dramatic trilogy is “Krefl” (448).
- Rebula: *Vrt bogov* is *Garden of the Gods* and the former archbishop of Ljubljana spelled his last name Šuštar (464).
- Rupel: *Tajnik šeste internacionale* is *Secretary of the Sixth International*; *Skrivnost države* is *State Secret*; *Branje* is *Reading*; *Poskusi z resničnostjo* is *Experiments With Truthfulness* (476).
- Strniša: *Odisej* is *Odysseus* and *Žabe ali prilika o ubogem in bogatem Lazarju* is *Frogs or the Parable of Lazarus and Dives* (537–38).
- Vegri: Here as elsewhere it would be useful to know whose translations are being cited.

These truly minor errors notwithstanding, Segel’s contribution to a better knowledge of contemporary Slovene (and indeed all of Eastern European) literature is both unique and invaluable. Much information and many insights can be mined from the concise, well-written entries of the *Columbia Guide*.

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