

the Old Russian literary language and vernacular. A statement that the text is "full of grammatical errors and badly constructed sentences" (p. 141) cannot be accepted. The text is not without mistakes, but too often the translator does not understand constructions characteristic of the seventeenth century and misinterprets them. Tenses are changed at will; cases do not seem to have a function. Louria has read the works on the play written by André Mazon and Frédéric Cocron, B. O. Unbegaun, and I. M. Kudriavtsev, but apparently without sufficient scholarly understanding. For instance, on page 142 we find the statement "Artaxerxes, though both Russian culture hero and Persian despot, addresses Esther in the precious tones of a seventeenth-century courtly lover." However, Russia did not have courtly love poetry nor even customs that would have created this specific style. Kudriavtsev says in his introduction: "Eto obrashchenie i po forme sootvetstvuet tomu vremeni. Vmeste s tem predislovie neset v sebe sledy i zapadnoi predvornoi preuvelichennoi galantnosti" (p. 42). Louria does not point out the German authors' influence. There was no need to reproduce the variant spellings of names, since this translation cannot serve for linguistic studies. The translator's stage directions are also unnecessary: the author gives some, and the action of the play is sufficiently clear.

Louria has translated the entire play in prose, which would be acceptable if the translation were not so utterly pedestrian. A slight archaization of the English would have given the right perspective. In the often unnecessarily clumsy English the language and content clash and all poetic imagery is lost, as are all nuances, which the translator wanted to preserve "sometimes at the expense of simple or graceful English idiom" (p. 142). A clumsy expression or structure will never render anything but clumsiness. There are mistakes in translation for various reasons. Some are vocabulary errors: *Tsaritsa stol imeet* is not "the queen is feasting" (p. 149) but "the queen is holding court"; *polonen byl* is not "was crowded" (p. 177) but "was taken prisoner." Mistakes originating from the disregard of the function of tenses, cases, and other grammatical forms consequently alter the expression (see pp. 149, 154, 164, 174). Other inaccuracies stem from an incomplete knowledge of Old Russian: structures, phrases, forms, and their functions are misunderstood. And finally, some of the translations are too free.

Unfortunately this translation does not live up to the promises expounded in the preface. Louria cannot free herself from the twentieth-century idiom either in Russian or in English and does not see the text in the perspective of the seventeenth century. Of this play particularly, only a very good translation would be of value; otherwise a description would be sufficient, and perhaps more meaningful.

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THE MAJOR COMEDIES OF ALEXANDER FREDRO. By *Alexander Fredro*. Translated, with an Introduction and Commentaries, by *Harold B. Segel*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. xiv, 405 pp. \$12.00.

This book is a major event indeed. Considerably enriching a still rather poor stock of English translations from Polish literature, it presents in a competent way a great writer—the greatest Polish comic dramatist and perhaps one of the greatest on the extranational scale. It offers the largest existing choice of translations from Fredro's works, with the exception of the Russian edition (Moscow, 1956), which contains six items. Professor Segel's book, though one item smaller, surpasses the

Russian volume by a surer choice of comedies, by the fact that the plays are translated by one author, and by the exhaustive and reliable scholarly apparatus. It is, furthermore, very handsomely presented by Princeton University Press.

Inevitably Segel's attempt poses the eternal problem of the translation of poetic works. The problem is the more acute the greater the artistic value and originality of the works translated. Fredro was a wizard of the comic poetic idiom, unsurpassed in fluency, raciness, lightness, transparency, in verbal and prosodic invention, in wit and humor. That the translator is fully aware of this is demonstrated in his eight-page "Note on the Translations," which also shows his intimate knowledge of the Polish language of the nineteenth century. He confesses that he tried to save at least the rhythmic shape of Fredro's works but had to give up and content himself with straight prose versions.

His decision was the right one: better a prose version than none. And it lays the groundwork for future poetic versions. Such was the case with Adam Mickiewicz's voluminous epic *Pan Tadeusz*. Translated in prose with great philological care by George Rapall Noyes some forty years ago, it was at last given two poetic renderings in recent years (Watson Kirkconnell, 1962, and Kenneth Mackenzie, 1964). There can be no doubt that Noyes's pioneering effort paved the way for his successors, facilitated their work, and made their success possible. (Mackenzie's translation superseded Noyes's in the Everyman's Library.) The same may one day be true of Segel's Fredrian omnibus, but for the time being it will serve the student of Polish and Slavic literatures, the comparatist, the historian of drama, the enlightened reader, and perhaps also an enterprising director or producer.

Segel's selection is beyond dispute. It contains the best, artistically most perfect, and most lively of Fredro's plays (still produced and enthusiastically applauded in Poland). They represent almost the whole gamut of Fredro's comic vein: the erotic quadrangle drawing-room comedy *Husband and Wife*; the mock-romantic and at the same time romantic comedy of love, *Maidens' Vows, or The Magnetism of the Heart*; the comedy of manners heightened by poetic feeling, *The Vengeance*; the masterly comedy of intrigue and character, *The Life Annuity*; and a dashing farce, the only one in this selection, written originally in prose, *Ladies and Hussars*. Their English rendering is modest, sometimes pedestrian, but on the whole honest and correct. Mistranslations, which abound in earlier, separately published, translations (in *Maidens' Vows* and especially in *The Vengeance*) are relatively rare in proportion to the volume of pioneering work done. There is no need to point them out here, since Professor Mieczysław Giergielewicz did that with merciless, though useful, meticulousness in the *Polish Review* (Autumn 1969, pp. 92–103). His list of mistakes—some more or less serious, some rather insignificant—should not overshadow Segel's efforts and the results obtained.

There is a certain disputable lack of consistency in the handling of names, especially the "telling" ones. For example, in *The Life Annuity*, translated here for the first time, Segel leaves some names in their original form (e.g., Birbancki) but translates others—Łatka becomes Patch, Twardosz becomes Hardcoin (a very happy invention!). Similar doubts arise in the case of some toponyms. The spelling "Jatwięgy," the name of one of Fredro's country estates, memorable in his literary biography, is neither English nor Polish.

Segel is the pupil of Professor Wiktor Weintraub and represents the prime of the young generation of American Slavists and "Polonists." His early interest went to the history of drama, Russian as well as Polish, and it was this path that led him to Fredro. For the present edition he has mastered the entire literature

concerning the author. In addition to the mentioned "Note" and the useful "Guide to Polish Pronunciation," he has provided his volume with a general introduction and a separate preface for each play—together some ninety pages, the largest existing essay on Fredro in English. He seeks to establish the position of his literary hero in a deep Polish and European perspective. In the introduction, which gives a succinct survey of Polish comedy before Fredro, Segel enlarges upon the burgher comedy (more precisely, the lower middle class or plebeian comedy, called *komedya rybaltowska* or *sowizdrzalska*) of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but treats the satirical, didactic comedy of the eighteenth century, the Stanisławian period, rather perfunctorily. He is convinced that Fredro was the efflorescence of the first, which seems doubtful, as well as the culmination of the second, which is more or less generally accepted. He is thus taking sides in a controversy not yet definitely resolved by Polish scholars. Was Fredro a classicist or a romanticist? I am inclined to think that he was a romanticist of a very specific cast, and is perhaps best described as a "romantic realist." At any rate, Segel is right in stressing Fredro's unique position in the Polish literature of the romantic era, which was dominated by the monumental, prophetic, national-metaphysical drama (Mickiewicz, Słowacki, Krasiński, the early Norwid).

Even more binding is Segel's statement about Fredro's "uniqueness for European drama" (p. 52). He discards the hackneyed, oversimplified designations of Fredro as the Polish Molière, Goldoni, or Musset. He places him alongside Grillparzer and Kleist, Gogol and Griboedov. According to Segel, what was incidental with the others was for Fredro his exclusive vocation, fulfilled in a "substantial body of plays of considerable variety" (p. 51).

The explanatory text is here and there overburdened with biographical and historical data, with details irrelevant to a foreign student. Sometimes this is to the detriment of the aesthetic analysis. Even so, Segel has many interesting, illuminating things to say about the structure of Fredro's comedies, and especially their metric form. There are in this part some factual mistakes. For example, Segel equates the notion "Sarmatian" with "Saxon" (p. 277). Yet Sarmatian, designating the specifically Polish (and Slav) way of life, underwent in the course of time a marked evolution—from positive, appreciative, even exalted, to negative—and only after the era of the Saxon kings (the first part of the eighteenth century) was it branded by the Stanisławian writers as obsolete, backward, and pernicious. There are also some misprints in the Polish quotations (on pages 191–94 I counted as many as seventeen) and two omissions—one is a whole line (4.3.92). The epochmaking play *Cracovians and Mountaineers* by Wojciech Bogusławski, an undisputed predecessor of Fredro, was written and staged not in 1774 (p. 11) but on the eve of the Kościuszko insurrection in 1794. The name of the late Professor Stanisław Pigoń, the editor of the masterly critical edition of Fredro, to which Segel is greatly indebted, is spelled many times "Pigón."

All these are relatively small blemishes, almost *grains de beauté*, in an otherwise really beautiful scholarly and literary achievement.

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