

A MAGYAR IRODALOM FOGADTATÁSA A VIKTORIÁNUS ANGLIÁBAN, 1830–1914. By Lóránt Czigány. Irodalomtörténeti Füzetek, 89. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1976. 287 pp. 29 Ft., paper.

John Bowring's *Poetry of the Magyars*, published in 1830, was the first English-language anthology of Hungarian verse to appear in print. A significant segment of Hungarian literary opinion held that the work represented a general interest in and awareness of Hungarian literature in Western Europe and that Hungarian authors, therefore, were at long last writing for a European audience. The truth was different: the book appealed primarily to English interest in the far-away, the exotic. Lóránt Czigány's exhaustive study, based upon evidence from a wide range of Victorian periodicals, newspapers, anthologies, and encyclopedias, lays to rest the still prevalent notion (in Hungary) that some of Hungary's literary "greats" entered the mainstream of English literature the way, say, Pushkin, Tolstoy, Ibsen, or Heine did—to say nothing of Dante or Goethe.

Bowring's anthology contained a study of Hungarian literary history, from the seventeenth century to the 1820s, as well as English versions of Hungarian folk songs and poems. Since Bowring himself knew very little Hungarian, he translated not from the original, but from the German translations he found in his German-language originals. Though the work received wide notice—some twenty-five English periodicals reviewed it—it was only in 1848–49, following the political upheaval in Hungary, that it achieved the height of its brief popularity. In 1866, Bowring published an anthology of selections from Sándor Petőfi, who was also widely reviewed, but coldly received. As in his earlier work, Bowring's English versions tended to be only vague approximations of their originals, both semantically and stylistically. As literature, they were stillborn.

Hungarian fiction fared somewhat better than did Hungarian poetry. József Eötvös's *The Village Notary*, translated and published in 1850, owed its relatively large success to English interest in the political and social world depicted in the novel, again, as a result of the revolution. It was left to Mór Jókai to achieve a genuine, albeit temporary, popularity. Beginning with the 1890s, many of Jókai's novels were published in English, satisfying the demand of a large reading public for complex, romantic tales with exotic settings. A few of Jókai's novels were being reprinted as late as the 1920s. Though some of these translations were based directly on their Hungarian originals, most of them were done from German versions; all of them were subjected to heavy editorial excisions and even interpolations to suit English tastes. Such "improvements" notwithstanding, there were a few eastward-looking English critics who put Jókai in a class with Tolstoy and Turgenev.

Czigány's remarks on various English translations of Petőfi are applicable, alas, to virtually all other attempts of this kind. For want of good translations, Hungarian literature remained (and, perhaps, continues to remain) almost unknown. Moreover, in the absence of good translations, no competent translator thought it worth his while to learn Hungarian. A vicious circle.

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FIVE MODERN YUGOSLAV PLAYS. Edited and with an introduction by *Branko Mikasinovich*. New York: Cyrco Press, Inc., 1977. xii, 339 pp.

The number of works translated into English from contemporary Yugoslav literature is relatively high; both poetry and prose are well represented. Basically, this can be attributed to three factors: the high quality of literary works, a larger number of qualified translators, and, finally, an increased interest in Yugoslavia as a country

with an intriguing political system, which has led to a heightened interest in its literature. The only genre of contemporary Yugoslav literature which seems to be poorly represented in English translation is drama. Qualitatively, it is not inferior to either Yugoslav poetry or prose; thus, one can only speculate about the possible reasons for its underrepresentation in English translation.

Branko Mikasinovich's book, *Five Modern Yugoslav Plays*, may be viewed as an attempt to end this "discrimination" against Yugoslav drama. It provides English-speaking readers with five representative samples of this genre. The "Yugoslav" character of the book is emphasized by the fact that the authors represented are of Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, and Macedonian ethnic backgrounds.

Mikasinovich is not the translator of any of the plays published in this book; translations were done by Nikola Koljevich, Elliot Anderson, Tomaž Šalamun, David Mladinov, Roberta Reeder, Ilija Čašule, and Daša Drndić. Nevertheless, Mikasinovich's contribution to this book is both important and manifold. In his introduction, he presents a survey of the history and development of Yugoslav drama, from its beginnings until the present. Although necessarily brief, the survey does register major authors and works in this genre.

Another contribution by Mikasinovich is the competent selection of plays. Written in the 1955–62 period, they adequately reflect the characteristic trends, literary techniques, and the basic quality of contemporary Yugoslav drama. Furthermore, the themes treated in these five plays are also characteristic of modern drama in Yugoslavia. Djordje Lebovič's *Hallelujah* portrays the psychology of former inmates of prison camps affected by their past experiences. Primož Kozak's *An Affair* is concerned with the problem of freedom and responsibility. The conflict between reality and illusion is presented in Ranko Marinković's *Gloria*. Kole Čašule's *Darkness* handles the favorite theme of early post-World War II literature: the revolution and national identity. Finally, Aleksandar Obrenović's *The Bird* examines some existential conditions and digressions of the "common man." The text of each play is preceded by a short biography of its author. There is no indication as to who prepared the biographical sketches, but one assumes that they were written by Mikasinovich.

One criticism of the volume concerns inconsistency in transliteration and spelling. On the same page (p. 87) one finds both Salamun and Šalamun. In spite of the fact that "A Note on Pronunciation and Spelling" is provided (p. xi), the proposed system is disregarded and the arbitrary use of *š* and *sh*, *j* and *y*, *ć* and *ch* is evident.

Nevertheless, *Five Modern Yugoslav Plays* is not only a credit to contemporary Yugoslav drama, but to Branko Mikasinovich as well.

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LIFE IN THE TOMB. By *Stratis Myrivilis*. Translated by *Peter Bien*. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1977. xxii, 329 pp. \$13.50.

Life in the Tomb is one of the major novels of modern Greece by one of that country's most important writers, Stratis Myrivilis (1892–1969). Born on the island of Lesbos (Mytilene), Myrivilis began publishing in 1914 with a collection of short stories, entitled *Red Stories*, and, following a modest publishing career (that included four novels), was nominated for the Nobel Prize in the 1960s, an honor shared only by a handful of his countrymen.

Myrivilis is known primarily for his World War I trilogy, of which *Life in the Tomb* is the first and best-known volume. Ironically, the second and third volumes of the trilogy, *The Schoolmistress With the Golden Eyes* (1933) and *The Mermaid Madonna* (1949), were translated into English long before the first, the third book