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Bohuslav Mánek, *První české překlady Byronovy poezie* [The First Czech Translations of Byron's Poetry]. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae Philologica, Monographia CXII-1990*. Universita Karlova, Carolinum, Praha 1991, 149pp.

As the author has correctly pointed out in his Introduction to this monograph, while the relations of Czech literature to Byron have been studied by Czech literary scholars from various aspects, particularly those connected with Karel Hynek Mácha and the origin and growth of Czech romanticism, the possible role played by the translations of the poetry of the great English romanticist in the reception of his works and of those of the first and most outstanding Czech romantic poet in the Czech society and literature of the last century has passed almost unnoticed. His aim is to fill in this gap in our knowledge through a detailed analysis and assessment of the function these translations performed in the context of original Czech literary creation and in the development of Czech translation from the 1820s until the beginning of our century.

The monograph is divided into twelve parts including, besides the above-mentioned Introduction, seven chapters allotted to investigation, and four parts containing the scholarly apparatus (bibliographies of Czech Byronic translations and of critical contributions on Byron and Byronism, an editorial note, an English summary, and a list of secondary sources quoted or referred to in the text).

The first of the seven chapters (numbered Two) traces the main lines of the development of Czech (and in the period of the national revival also Slovak) translation from English and American poetry, as it was realized in the selection of authors and texts, the media of publication, the relations between the translation and the original text, and the main linguistic and prosodical features of the source and target languages. The author's investigation issues from a complete bibliography of these translations compiled by him in 1984 (and regrettably not yet published), and has its firm foundation in his extensive knowledge of secondary literature relative to the problems to be solved. The outcome of his being well oriented in the complex points at issue inherent in his ample material is a piece of solid research bringing several interesting discoveries. Of these worth special notice is the establishment of the basic stages in the development of Czech translators' interest in English and American poetry in the given period, as well as the definition of the most important change in this evolution as a shift from a topical literary interest serving the needs of Czech literature to an interest of a literary-historical character and finally to a critical and reappraising attitude. Two small details in this chapter, however, should be pointed out as erroneous - the wrong revivalist Czech translation of the title of Pope's *An Essay on Man*, *Zkouška o člověku*, is used in one reference to the original work (p. 13) and the period of the publication of *Poesie světová* [World Poetry] is limited only to the 1870s, when its final volume was issued in 1885 (p. 14).

The main part of the monograph is opened by the third chapter presenting a thorough investigation of five stages in the reception of Byron's personality and poetry in the Czech lands, at the definition of which the author has arrived by having studied Byronic translations from the point of view of the time of their publication, their poetics, the genres of the poems translated, and the personalities of the translators. This procedure has brought several positive results: a specification of the main trends of the Czech translators' interest in Byron's poetry against the background of general social and literary conditions, a productive investigation of the acceptability of their translations for the evolutionary needs of

Czech literature and its media of expression, and especially an assessment of the contribution of translations from Western literatures in general and from Byron in particular to the conception, orientation and future development of original Czech literary creation. Worth noting, too, is the author's well-informed account, the first in this country, of the Byronic apocrypha *The Vampyre* by J. W. Polidori, still in Czech bibliographies wrongly listed as Byron's work, his evaluation of the translations in the third volume of Pichl's *Společenský krasořečník český* [Czech Social Master of Rhetoric] as a significant contribution to the assertion of romanticism in the Czech lands in the first half of the 1850s, as well as one revealing conclusion from his critical analysis of Josef Durdík's monograph on Byron (which he intends to substantiate in a separate study) – that this aesthetician's 'practical activity as translator had a large share in the formation of his aesthetic opinions' (p. 78).

The core of the monograph is formed by the chapters numbered Four, Five, and Six, appraising all the Czech Byronic translations that appeared in the period under investigation (divided into these three chapters according to their genres). In this main part of his work the author preserves a uniform procedure – after an initial evaluation of that work of Byron's which is to be dealt with he presents a portrait of the translator or translators (of these worthy of positive comment is that of the so far undeservedly neglected E. B. Kaizl), and then quotations of selected passages from the works in question in their original versions and Czech translations. In the following critical analyses he pays detailed attention to the adequacy of the methods applied by individual translators in transferring the stylistic and formal qualities of Byron's verses into their mother tongue. It is commendable that these approaches to the originals translated are evaluated in relation to the given evolutionary stage of the Czech poetical language as well as to the literary conventions and ideological norms of the time. This unified method enables the author not only to define the characteristic features of the styles of individual translators and evaluate the consequences of the merits and demerits of their methods for the artistic value of their translations, but also to establish the place of these translators in the development of Czech translation in general, and to characterize the individual stages in the translation of Byron's works in the whole period dealt with in a manner both concise and accurate. Worth noting, too, are his parallel identifications and analyses of various allusions to Mácha's writings incorporated in some Byronic translations, and his assessment of their function at a time when the close connections between these two great poets were strongly felt in the Czech lands. Another positive contribution is his successful attempt at rectifying the current contradictory views on Sládek and Vrellický as translators, as well as his correction of one error in Czech bibliographies (the alleged translation of *Manfred* by F. Doucha), and his discovery of the real author hidden behind one previously unrevealed pseudonym (František Krsek writing under the pseudonym František Polepský).

In the seventh chapter Dr. Mánek defines his own conception of the specific approach to translation which developed within the framework of the 'great' poetical style created by the poets of the *Lumír* and *Ruch* magazines in the last decades of the 19th century and which survived approximately to the middle of the 1920s. As most of the translations characterized by this approach were published by the Czech Academy of Sciences, Literature and Art, he coins for them the term 'academic translations', not entirely felicitous in Czech, for it suggests a higher quality than his own analyses have revealed (as he has shown, this style was cultivated by philologists, historians and second-rate poets rather than by prominent poetical personalities, and the translations thus produced were predominantly of only an average quality and therefore, unlike their predecessors, no longer capable of intervening in the development of Czech literature). Praiseworthy, however, is the author's precise definition of the typical traits of this style, and particularly his discovery that in spite of its different variants it was in its substance of a homogeneous character. To acquire universal validity this revealing conclusion of this analysis would have to be supported, however, by the results of an investigation of the methods of those translators cultivating this approach who concentrated on other English poets besides Byron (of these he merely mentions F. Balej and J. J. David, pp. 53, 116).

Chapter Eight is dedicated to various aspects of the Mácha-Byron relationship which could not be included in the previous parts. Of the new pieces of knowledge presented here worth mentioning is the influence of this relationship on the intensified interest of Czech translators, at the time of the cult of Mácha (the 1850s and 1860s), in the work of Henry Kirke White, whose life and work offer certain analogies and parallels to those of the Czech poet, and the reflection of a general awareness of this relationship in the style of the Byronic translations by J. J. Kolár, E. B. Kaizl, and J. Durdík. Not negligible discoveries, either, are those of previously unnoticed similar motifs in Mácha's 'Jeruzalém zpusťla - ...'

['Jerusalem has become desolate - ...'] and Byron's 'The Wild Gazelle', and of possible intermediaries (J. N. Lhota and Jakub Malý) between Mácha, who could not read in English, and the original version of four verses from *The Siege of Corinth*, surprisingly well translated by him.

The scholarly apparatus in the last parts is carefully elaborated and fully reliable, but the author's work with it in the text (the use of abbreviated bibliographical data in brackets after the references instead of the more common provision of fuller information in foot-notes) forces the reader to an over-complicated search in the bibliographies.

This relatively small defect, as well as the scarcely more serious ones mentioned in the body of this review, are, however, more than outweighed by the general positive value of Dr. Mánek's monograph, which is, at least in my opinion, an important contribution to research in the given sphere of literary scholarship. The convincing and at places revealing and inspiring results of its author's analyses may be taken up with profit by scholars occupying themselves with the literary heritage of Mácha or with the Czech literature of the 19th century in general, by those interested in research in comparative literature, and particularly by those concentrating their attention on the theory and art of translation, especially as these have been elaborated and practised in this country.

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