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# Review Of "Cyclops" By R. Marinković, Translated By V. Stojiljković

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Review

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phrases. The Zapolje doctor warns Kačur against “flip-flopping,” another contemporary deems Kačur a “geek,” and Cox has him using the term “goof-ball” in a conversation with his wife. Similarly, to imagine a nineteenth-century Slovene intellectual telling a friend “it is what it is” strains credulity. On the other hand, this is often the most difficult question for a translator: how *should* a nineteenth-century Slovene, or Russian, or Pole address twenty-first-century readers, so as to keep them engaged and determined to read on? In the main, Cox has arrived at a workable compromise overall.

*Martin Kačur* is a great achievement, a gift to culturally savvy, but linguistically challenged speakers of English. It has given voice to a multi-faceted Slovene writer in a world in which he was heretofore unknown. One hopes that Cox and other gifted historians and linguists will produce many more translations from Cankar and other talented East European writers in the coming years.

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Ranko Marinković. *Cyclops*. Trans. Vlada Stojiljković. Ed. Ellen Elias-Bursač. A Margellos World Republic of Letters book. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2010. xi + 553 pp. \$35.00 (cloth; e-book).

This is the first translation of Ranko Marinković’s Modernist novel *Kiklop* [1965] into English, but it is worth the long wait. The volume emerges from the happy confluence of a new series of translations of international literature, a richly creative rendition into English by Vlada Stojiljković, and careful editorial intervention by Ellen Elias-Bursač. Marinković (1913–2001) was well known as a poet and dramatic author; *Cyclops* was his masterpiece, a largely autobiographical treatment of the eve of World War II, as the war raging in other parts of Europe moved inexorably closer to royal Yugoslavia.

The novel’s plot is filtered through and largely motivated by the consciousness of its protagonist, Melkior Tresić, a theater critic and intellectual born in Dalmatia but now living in Zagreb. Melkior is a Rodion Raskolnikov without the murder plot, half Leopold Bloom and half Underground Man, a flâneur who carries on mental conversations with authors he has read, constantly buttonholed and mortified by loquacious friends and strangers, preoccupied with art and sex. Melkior starves himself in hopes of evading the draft and dreads his army summons, which does not arrive until page 335. This novel’s length puts it in Russian company, and it frequently refers to Dostoevsky as well as Gogol and Tolstoy, plus other world authors from Cervantes and Shakespeare through Dickens into the novel’s present: Melkior’s brief experience of army service evokes Krleža, Hašek, and Heller. His thoughts are a tissue of literary allusions, and foreign words (Arabic, English, French, German, Latin, etc.) are sprinkled throughout the text. Melkior undergoes periods of very persuasively described madness (a camouflage of pretense, or a genuine psychological disintegration?), while other characters attempt to brainwash or manipulate him for their own mysterious purposes. The city of Zagreb, with its monuments, advertisements and popular culture, surfaces regularly from Melkior’s imagination to set the scene.

Translating Marinković’s richly ornamental, stylistically inventive text demands great linguistic virtuosity, and Stojiljković rises to the task. (Translator of numerous important works from English into Serbian, he died in 2002, one year after Marinković.) The translation comes strikingly close to the original text’s brilliance and verbal density. In some passages the translator could not convey the richness of the original, for example in this evocation of the city tram’s sounds: “Vozi, vozi... jedan *tram*, jedam *vaj*, *tram-tram*... *vaj-vaj tram-vaj*, na krovu mu lira svira *vaj*, a točkovi udaraju *tram-tram*,” with its dense onomatopoeia and the internal rhyme “lira svira,” is rendered in a more pedestrian way as “Rolling on, rolling on... one *tram*,

one way, tram-tram... busbus trambus, the lyre on the roof thrumming way, the wheels drumming tram-tram" (275). English does not use "tramway" for *tramvaj*; moreover, the English "way" cannot evoke the associations of the fragment "vaj," so close in sound to *avaj*, 'alas.' In other places, the English emerges as richer than the original: "Tu nas cijelu večer proučavate kao doktor-psihijatar neke male kretenciće! [You've been studying us all evening like a psychiatrist [studying] some little morons!]" becomes "You've been studying us all night like a shrink with a pack of pickled peckers!" (59); the "pack of pickled peckers" evokes at once a crowd of randy drunks and English folklore (Peter Piper), and it suits the vulgar verbal creativity of the speaker, Melkior's difficult friend Ugo. Occasionally the equivalent is a gift, as in the formation "Ugo-tistical." Sometimes the translation is equal to the original in its brilliance despite the difficulties. "A on je išao uz nju kao »drugo lice« u paradi, prinz-gemahl, lažni car, lažni čar, papu-čar, dimnja-čar, sav crn i nedostojan" [literally: But he walked beside her like the 'second person' in a parade, a Prinz-gemahl, a false tsar, a false charm, a slipper-maker, a chimney-sweep, all black and unworthy] is wonderfully rendered by Stojiljković: "And he walked at her side like a 'secondary personage' in a parade, the royal consort, a self-styled king, cuckoo-king, thin-king, sin-king, sunk in glom and indignity" (269). There are only occasional errors (as when "A raditi, doista... I zaboravio je da moramo raditi... obojica" has its person shifted in "Oh, to work... I forgot we have work to do... the both of us," though the original makes clear that the sinister fortune teller Mr. Adam is referring to Melkior in the third person, 84). On balance, the translation is truly *adequate*, showing how language not only mediates experience but creates it.

Elias-Bursač, an award-winning translator in her own right who edited Stojiljković's translation, contributes an informative and enjoyable introduction that sets the novel nicely in the context of its time and traces its roots in the literature and culture of Croatia and socialist Yugoslavia, its sources in writers like Miroslav Krleža or the larger-than-life persona of poet Tin Ujević, as well as its impact and significance from the mid-1960s on. Elias-Bursač has edited the translation with great tact, preserving the imprint of Stojiljković's personality. The text conveys the richness of the original and the inventiveness of the translation without jarring departures from English style; when a word choice draws the reader up short, it is meant to. The production is of high quality as well, with a trifling number of typographical errors for a long novel roiling with foreign words ("wretch" should be "retch," 197.)

This is a wonderful book and should make Marinković better known. Its handsome cover and reasonable price may well draw the attention of students of Modernism and twentieth-century comparative literature, and it should be recommended to libraries as well as scholars.

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Gabriela Zapolska. *The Morality of Mrs. Dulka*. Trans. Teresa Murjas. Chicago: Intellect Books / U of Chicago P, 2007. Illustrations. lxxxviii + 100 pp. \$25.00 (paper).

Gabriela Zapolska (1857–1921), the pseudonym of Maria Gabriela Stefania Korwin-Piotrowska, was an actress, dramatist, and short story writer. Together with Eliza Orzeszkowa, Zapolska represents the small but vigorous face of women's writing present during the artistic movement now generally known as *Młoda Polska*. The author of some thirty performance texts, Zapolska published her first short story in 1881. Her first collection, *Akwarele* [*Watercolors*], appeared in 1885, but was met coldly by conservative critics. *The Morality of Mrs. Dulka* [*Moralność Pani Dulskiej*], Zapolska's classic naturalist comedy written in 1906, remains the most popular of her plays and a staple of the Polish stage. In fact, the behavior of the character Pani Dulka spoke so strongly to the public that it engendered the pejorative term "*dul-*