

with the English translations, which are the work of a whole team of translators. On the whole, most translations fulfill one's expectations. They are basically true to the spirit of the original and read well as poetry in English. But some instances of mediocre translation do occur. For me, the translations of Neumann, Šrámek, and Toman do not convey the moods of the originals, though at least some of them are well rendered as English verse. Fortunately such lapses are few. Among undeniable achievements I would count French's translations of the medieval aubades (incidentally, French takes a lion's share of the total translating task, and his versatility and competence are beyond doubt), Harkins's witty, inventive, and effective translation of Havlíček's satirical *Baptism of Saint Vladimir*, and Spender-Brušák's translation of the demanding second canto of Mácha's *May*, which compels one's admiration by its sophistication and skill.

The texts are accompanied by many black and white illustrations reproduced from a variety of sources. They reflect the changing aspects of Czech history—cultural and political—from the twelfth century on. Some of them are quite fascinating, such as the public poster from 1621 bearing the names of the Czech Protestant noblemen who were executed that year in Prague for insurrection against the Habsburg emperor. Viewed as a backdrop for the literary story, these reproductions give a touch of local color and enhance the aesthetic appeal of the volume as well. However, I found myself wondering why several items of Slovak origin are among them. After all, there are no Slovak poems in the book. But of course that does not matter very much, because they are so beautiful to look at.

Finally, a remark on oversights and misprints. I noticed a number of misreadings and minor factual errors, yet they are insignificant and have little bearing on the literary integrity of the translations. Misprints, on the other hand, abound. They are largely confined to the Czech poems and are, for the most part, trivial. Still, they are everywhere and distract the reader. If the printer could with impunity Scotticize Ian Kollár and Germanize Karl Macha (to add insult to injury, in Czech *macha* means "hack work"), won't he be tempted to Gallicize Vitězslav Nerval? Who knows? He may even try to convince us, or at least some of us, that *strč prst skrz krk* is bona fide Czech poetry.

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KAZANTZAKIS AND THE LINGUISTIC REVOLUTION IN GREEK LITERATURE. By *Peter Bien*. Princeton Essays in European and Comparative Literature, no. 6. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972. xi, 291 pp. \$9.00.

This is one of the most fascinating and best-written books on Modern Greek literature that I have ever read. Some might construe this as a backhanded compliment, since I am a linguist, and most linguists I know don't read many books on literature. It is emphatically not meant as one.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 gives "The Historical Background" to the Greek language question (pp. 13–146), and part 2 deals with the main topic, "The Demoticism of Kazantzakis" (pp. 149–264). There is a brief preface, a prologue (pp. 3–10), a bibliography (pp. 265–77), and an index. Despite Bien's conscientious and not unreasonable efforts to remind us every now and then in part 1 that what is being said is relevant to part 2, I sometimes felt I was reading

two separate books. The author himself must have been aware of this problem when he wrote that part 1 “may be skimmed or skipped by those already familiar with the situation, or who find themselves depressed by philological minutiae” (p. 10). He warns such blasé or lazy readers, however, that their skimming or skipping will be done at their own risk. For it is in part 1 that the “many figures associated directly or indirectly with Kazantzakis” are introduced. The result may well be what Bien himself calls a “tiny and perhaps eccentric history of the language question”—eccentric because of the emphasis placed on those who affected Kazantzakis the most. This reviewer toyed with the idea that the author could have left out the first part of the book and still have an opus of monographic size and scope, consisting of the second part moderately revised. This possibility is all the more conceivable since the book almost requires a knowledge of Greek, which usually entails some familiarity with the language question. Although several Greek words and passages in Greek are translated, many are not. Moreover, I doubt that someone with no knowledge of Greek would be able to savor much of Bien’s discussion of stylistic matters. Still, I for one am grateful for one of the most informative accounts in English of the Greek linguistic muddle.

In part 2 the author provides us with a well-reasoned and superbly sensitive account of the linguistic side of the complicated man that was Nikos Kazantzakis. Bien’s verdict, partly shared by other students of the subject, is that Kazantzakis was at his best in prose, not poetry. He was a relatively minor figure in the struggle for the triumph of demotic in Greek literature. In Bien’s words, “In the long run, the significance of his demoticism will most likely appear to be more private than public, more artistic than cultural—namely, the way in which it expressed the excessive and intransigent soul of a man whom fate had thrown right into the eye of an extraordinary linguistic storm. Kazantzakis’ continuing importance for the development of the Greek language may perhaps be questioned; the importance of the Greek language for the development of Kazantzakis may not” (p. 264).

The book is attractively printed and almost free of errors and infelicities.

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BYZANTINE AESTHETICS. By *Gervase Mathew*. New York: Icon Editions, Harper & Row, 1971. xii, 188 pp. 25 black and white plates. \$2.95, paper.

In this fascinating book, originally published in 1964, the author has produced in extraordinarily brief compass a penetrating summary of Byzantine culture as a whole. Although he emphasizes the visual arts, Mathew gives what amounts to a chronological outline of Byzantine civilization with remarkably incisive references to literature, philosophy, science, and general history. It is one of the great merits of this book that he makes a special and remarkably successful effort to relate the arts to other aspects of Byzantine intellectual and political life.

Following a suggestion of André Grabar, he makes a good case for holding that Byzantine art in general was based on the view of Plotinus that the artist does not merely reproduce the objects he sees but also exercises creativeness in going back for inspiration to the ideas that lie behind the material object. Thus Phidias’ statue of Zeus, as Plotinus had said, was not based on a physical model