Reviews

The book owes its success to two outstanding qualities. Julian Krasznaikowski has been a reader of Gargantuan appetite. Even when he writes on devotional treatises or penny-dreadfuls his knowledge of the texts is first-hand; thus his presentation of them is always personal, lively, the more so since he knows how to enliven it by an apt quotation or a telling detail. Moreover, he has at his disposal a matter-of-fact, pungent, and concise style, a rare knack of compression, a quality always most welcome in literary histories, and even more welcome nowadays when the reader of scholarly studies so often seems to be present at a competition in length-windedness. Thus one will find in the Historia a discussion of interesting literary phenomena, e.g., Smolik’s pastoral or Benislawski’s poetry, for which recent specialized books like Ziemek’s Kresnica and Kilimowicz’s Odrodzenie could not find space.

Of particular interest for the foreign reader should be the fairly large bibliography (80 pages printed in brevier) compiled by Maria Rokszczak. Not that Polish literary history lacks bibliographical compendia. On the contrary, few literatures are so richly blessed with them, and Polish scholarship can now boast, in addition to regular yearly bibliographies and a galaxy of special bibliographical studies, a huge reference work, Nowy Korbel, planned in 20 volumes, seven of which, all published, deal with the centuries covered by Krasznaikowski’s Historia. The trouble, however, is that all these bibliographies aim at completeness, and unless he is well conversant with the subject a researcher can be easily submerged in trivia. Here, however, he will find a judicious choice of relevant material.

One caveat is in order. Krasznaikowski’s Historia literatury polskiej should not be confused with the author’s more recent Dzieje literatury polskiej (first published in 1969), which covers the history of Polish literature from the beginnings until 1983 in one volume. Dzieje has outdistanced Historia as a bestseller; it went into three printings, 230,000 copies altogether. The presentation of pre-19th-century literature in Historia, however, is not only much richer than in Dzieje, but owing to the numerous quotations and evocative details it is also somehow livelier.

Witko Weinaub, Harvard University


This anthology is a welcome addition to the field of Yugoslav literature in English translation. Macedonian is the youngest Slavic literary language, and the short story is the youngest of its art forms. This collection presents one short story by each of 20 writers including Simon Drakul, Kole Sadek, Zirko Cinga, Blaise Konezi, Tskiko Georgievski, Bogomil Gurel, Olivera Nikolova, Vladislav Urosevich, and Vladimir Korrov. It also contains a general introduction and bibliographical notes on each of the authors.

The general introduction is written in a style frequently found in Macedonian publications intended for foreign readers. It is somewhat superficial, but for the reader who may not be familiar with the history of the area it does provide some information. The part of the introduction dealing with modern, i.e., postwar, Macedonian literature is the most informative. The biographical notes give each author’s date and place of birth, and a brief sketch of his or her background, major works, and current occupation. Sometimes a comment on the story being presented is included. The selection of stories provides a fair representation of contemporary writing in Macedonia. Realism and regionalism have dominated Macedonian writing until very recently, the main thematic backgrounds being the city, the village, the war, peasants


Ivan Cankar (1876-1918) is probably the greatest of Slovene prose stylists. He passed through Decadence and Symbolism, and championed art for art’s sake and tenden
tious literature. But he ultimately discovered his own, completely personal vision. His art is rooted in Slovene national life and in the problems of a small nation. During some 20 years of literary activity, Cankar published novels, plays, and short stories, but the genre most typical of him is the lyrical sketch, often autobiographical in subject matter, realistic in tone, and distinctly poetic in expression.

This work is concerned with the recurrent theme of nostalgia in Cankar’s works,