



Stříbrný, Zdeněk and Zdeněk Beran (eds.): *Tušivá rozpomnění: Jezerní básníci* [Shadowy Recollections: The Lake Poets]. Translated by Václav Renč. Selected and compiled by Zdeněk Stříbrný. Praha: Jitro, 2010. ISBN 978-80-86985-10-7, 232 pp.

After thirty-nine years' waiting, Václav Renč's (1911-1973) translation of an anthology of the Lake Poets – William Wordsworth, S. T. Coleridge and Robert Southey – was published. Initially compiled by Zdeněk Stříbrný in a close collaboration with the translator in 1971, discontinued for both the regime turmoils of the 1970s and Václav Renč's sudden death in 1973, Zdeněk Beran resuscitated the project upon the discovery of the original manuscript, and published the volume with the Jitro publishing house under the title *Tušivá rozpomnění: Jezerní básníci* [Shadowy Recollections: The Lake Poets]. Beran included also a selection of (predominantly) Renč's letters to Stříbrný (of 1971) and a thorough essay 'Jeden pohled na jezerní básníky' (One view of the Lake Poets, pp. 197–219) on the Wordsworth-Coleridge phase of the English Romanticism. Written by Beran, it makes up for the envisaged and uncompleted essay that Stříbrný was to write originally for the volume. Beran's essay strangely falls into two parts: while the first is rather specialized and almost burdened with English-sounding terminology and connoisseur allusions that would make it difficult to understand for a non-English reader, the second part (205–219) is a rewarding and comprehensive read presenting a lucid introduction to Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *The Lyrical Ballads* (1798) as well as to the development of both their poetic visions and lives.

Renč's correspondence with Stříbrný documents the discussions over the translations and the selection of poems, as well as hints at the troubles with the post-1968 chicane eventually leading to the four decades of waiting for the publication. It is a great achievement of Zdeněk Beran that this editorial debt has finally been paid. As he observes in the editor's note, since 1971, when the volume was prepared, several of the key poems have appeared in print in other translations, culminating in Zdeněk Hron's anthology *Jezerní básníci* of 1999 (in Hron's own translation). The appeal of the present volume has therefore shifted from the "groundbreaking feat" to the "poetic and translation mastery" of Václav Renč (230). It is a pity that apart from a handful of letters and the above passing note the editors have not paid more attention as well as a larger tribute to Renč's mastery. A critical commentary on his translations, perhaps accompanied with a mirror edition of the poems in the English original would have highlighted Renč's genius rarely harmonizing with the Lake Poets – which Renč himself confesses to in a letter to Stříbrný:

Abych řekl plnou pravdu, já si tolik nelámu hlavu tím, abych si na podkladě přesné, prohloubené analýzy předem stanovil pevné koleje stylové adekvace, ono mi to zpravidla spíš jaksi „vychází samo“, taky tím čichem a hmatem. (180)

[To tell you the full truth, I am not worrying too much over an exact and profound analysis that would set fixed ruts of stylistic adequacy; it mostly "comes out" rather "by itself", also by the smell and the touch.]

The editorial choice of Renč for a translator was an especially lucky one. It may be said that the philosophical passages in Wordsworth and Coleridge – heritage of the eighteenth-century poetic concerns – are difficult to combine with the overwhelming (as well as cloying) Czech lyrical tradition, which is marked by a pseudo-romantic stress on sentiment, often in an anti-rationalist way. However, the imaginative strain of the Lake Poets, so influential on Vítězslav Hálek, Josef Václav Sládek, Adolf Heyduk or Jaroslav Vrchlický, finds a congenial rendering in Renč's translation. The

cornerstone ballads – such as *Christabel* or *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* – have a mesmerizing and magnetic quality of Renč's own masterpieces, *Popelka nazaretská* (The Cinderella of Nazareth) and *Pražská legenda* (The Legend of the Virgin Mary of Prague).

From the lovers and admirers of Václav Renč's poetry, Zdeněk Beran and Zdeněk Stříbrný deserve great thanks for this anthology.

Pavel Drábek

Address: doc. Mgr. Pavel Drábek, Ph.D., Department of English and American Studies, Faculty of Arts, Masaryk University, Arna Nováka 1, 602 00 Brno, Czech Republic. [email: drabek@phil.muni.cz]