

in for real trouble this time. It wasn't just his mother's tone of voice, for she had shouted that loud many times before; but it was the use of the insulting or derogatory expression *ʔđj* before his name and the use of the pronoun *myŋ* which women don't use in polite speech that gave Mee his cue that punishment was approaching.

Supposing now, we were to attempt to translate this Thai sentence into English. We could translate it like this: "Look! Stupid Mee, what are you doing?" But this sounds queer and un-English. However, this is the sort of thing that we translators have done in the past in formal correspondence translations! How would a dynamic equivalent translation sound? Maybe it would be something like this: "Mee Duang Phetr Jr. what do you think you're doing?"

## PSALMS IN SERBIAN POPULAR VERSE

*The translation of biblical poetry has been the subject of much recent discussion<sup>1</sup>.*

*During a visit to Yugoslavia in June 1972, the Rev. Paul Ellingworth, Regional Translations Coordinator for Europe, interviewed the Rev. Aleksander Bierwisch, a Baptist minister and documentalist, about his use of popular verse-forms in translating some of the Psalms into modern Serbian.*

ELLINGWORTH: How did you first come to make this kind of translation?

BIERWISCH: I first got the idea from reading, in Dr. Eugene A. Nida's *Bible Translating*,<sup>2</sup> about translations which used the form of popular chanting. About the same time, I became aware of the shortcomings of Daničić's translation of the Psalms. I attended a meeting of church leaders at which one brother based a long exegesis of Psalm 41:1 on a totally false translation. "Blessed is the man who understands what 'nothing' is", he read (*Blago čovjeku koji razume ništemu*). "This passage shows how happy a man is when he comes to understand that he is nothing in God's sight, and that only in Christ can he become anything at all." It was a worthy thought, but not what the Psalmist was saying. Daničić's translation confused *ništi* "poor man" with *ništa* "nothing", and derived from the latter a non-existent word *ništema* with the dative *ništemu*, which he proceeded to put in his translation. I checked the Hebrew, and decided something better was needed.<sup>3</sup>

ELLINGWORTH: When did you begin work?

BIERWISCH: On 9 September 1971.

ELLINGWORTH: And since then, how many psalms have you put into Serbian verse?

BIERWISCH: Sixty-five, so far.

<sup>1</sup> See K. Crim, "Translating the poetry of the Bible", in *Technical Papers for the Bible Translator*, vol. 23, No. 1 (January 1972), pp. 102ff.

<sup>2</sup> E. A. Nida, *Bible Translating*, p. 17. London, UBS, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> The Stvarnost Bible was revised in 1968 by B. Duda and Fućak, and is at present undergoing further revision by an interconfessional group.

ELLINGWORTH: For whom is your translation intended?

BIERWISCH: Well, in the first place for my own congregation, in the Baptist church in Belgrade. There are some occasions when the Psalms are read in worship, and other times when the young people like to get together to recite poetry.

ELLINGWORTH: What kind of reaction have you received?

BIERWISCH: The young people didn't make much comment, except to keep on asking if I had translated any more psalms! The older members liked to hear them, but they had the habit of following the lessons in their own Bibles. That is why I had a few hundred copies of my Psalm 119 duplicated and handed out. Now everyone seems to be happy. Some of my psalms have been broadcast, and I have had a positive reaction also from non-Christians with whom I work. In the Orthodox Church, there are pietist groups which have their own songs and prayers (in Serbian, not Church Slavonic). I think there are people in these groups who will set my psalms to music, because they are meant to be sung.

ELLINGWORTH: What verse-forms have you used?

BIERWISCH: Psalm 119 I have translated using a form which is commonly used for epics, or for any long poem on a serious subject. It has ten-syllabled lines with a caesura after the fourth syllable of each line. I have translated each verse of the biblical text with a stanza of three lines. For example:

- 63 Saputnik sam ja u zajednici  
svih koji se tebe živog boje  
i propise razmatraju tvoje.
- 64 Dobrotom je tvojom, o Gospode,  
ispunjena zemlja svekolika,  
nauči me tvojim naredbama.

Back translation:

Co-traveller am I in fellowship  
(with) all them that fear living thee  
and precepts consider thine.  
(Of) goodness thine, O Lord,  
filled is (the) earth (the) entire,  
teach me thy statutes. (Psalm 119: 63-64)

This is the commonest verse-form in our folk poetry. The folk model is:

Kladila se vila i devojka  
ko će bolje poraniti rano.

Back translation:

A fay and a girl had bet  
who will get up earlier.

We also have popular forms with 7, 8, 10 and even 13 and 14-syllabled lines. The seven and eight-syllabled lines are generally used in gay, joyous poems. Lyrics use a different kind of ten-syllabled line, with the caesura after the fifth

syllable. Eight and ten syllables are associated with love poetry and wedding songs. I have translated Psalm 45 into this 5+5 metre, since it deals with a similar theme.

Srce je moje trepet čudesni,  
iz njega drage ističu reči;  
Pesma je moja pesma za cara,  
jezik moj trska veštog pisara. (Psalm 45:1)

Back translation:

Heart (of) mine is (the) twinkling (the) wonderful,  
out of it dear words are flowing out:  
Song (of) mine is (a) song for (the) king,  
tongue (of) mine is (a) cane of (a) skilful writer.

The folk model is:

Oblak se vije po vedrom nebu  
i lepi Ranko po belom dvoru.

Back translation:

A cloud is making a garland on a clear sky  
so the handsome Ranko is garlanding through the  
white castle.

Other forms include a 4+4+4 line:

O moj Bože, o moj Bože,  
o Božanstvo,  
zašto si me ostavio  
tako sada?  
Od spasenja daleko si,  
od mog spasa.  
Ja uzdišem, ti ne slušaš  
reči moje.

Back translation:

O my God, O my God,  
O Godhead,  
Why hast (thou) me forsaken  
so now?  
From salvation far art (thou),  
from my salvation.  
I am sighing, thou art not hearing  
words (of) mine. (Psalm 22:1)

The folklore model is a following lamentation:

Evo danas treće jutro,  
zlo mi jutro,  
da te zovem i prizivljem,  
sinko Vuko.

Lo, today is the third morning,  
as I call and invite you,  
my son Vuko.

A form with 4+4+3/4+3 lines:

Uzvisite, vrata, svoje vrhove,  
dignite se i vi, večne vratnice,  
neka udje slave car.  
A ko je taj slave car?  
Gospod silni, on je moćni vladalac,  
Gospod moćni, u boju je pobednik. (Psalm 24:7-8)

Back translation:

Lift up (o) gates, your tops,  
elevate also your, (o) everlasting doors,  
Let come in the king of glory.  
But who is this king of glory?  
The Lord powerful, he is a mighty ruler,  
The Lord mighty, in a battle he is the victor.

The folk model is very rare, but used among pious people:

Pak natrgaj hristogranje zeleno,  
pak otidi Krstitelju Jovanu,  
i pred njim se pokloni,  
crnu zemlju poljubi.  
Then pluck out the green Christ-branches,  
then go to the John Baptist,  
and prostrate in front of him,  
kiss the black soil.

A 6+6 syllable line:

Neka Bog ustane, razveje dušmane,  
dušmani njegovi neka se rasture,  
oni što ga mrze pred njim neka beže.

Back translation:

Let God arise, let (him) drive away enemies,  
enemies of him let be scattered,  
they that hate him before him let flee. (Psalm 68:1)

The folklore model is:

Devojka junaku prsten povraćala:  
Na ti prsten, momče, moj te rod ne ljubi,  
ni otac, ni majka, ni brat, ni sestrica.  
The girl has been giving back the engagement ring  
to the brave boy:  
Take the ring, boy, my relatives do not love you,  
neither father, nor mother, nor brother, nor little  
sister.

A 4+4+5 syllable line:

**Pouzdam se, Izrailju, ti u Gospoda,  
pouzdam se ti od sada i do večnosti. (Psalm 131:3)**

Back translation:

**Be confident, o Israel, in the Lord,  
be confident from now and to eternity.**

The folklore model is:

**Kiša pada, trava raste, gora zeleni  
i gora se s listom sasta, a ja nemam s kim.  
A moj dragi nadaleko u tudjoj zemlji.**

**It rains, a grass grows, the mountain greens,  
mountain and leaf have their meeting, but I  
have nobody to meet me.  
For my beloved is far away in a foreign country.**

A 7 syllable line:

**Bolje je na Gospoda  
pouzdanje staviti,  
nego se osloniti  
na ništavnog čoveka. (Psalm 118:8)**

Back translation:

**It is better on the Lord  
the trust to put,  
than to put the confidence  
in a worthless man.**

The folklore model is:

**Ne znaju se kraljevi,  
ne poznaju carevi,  
ne nište se potrebni,  
ne ponose bogati—**

**The kings are not recognized,  
the emperors are not distinguished,  
the needy ones are not reduced to nothing,  
the rich ones are not proud—**

A form with 4+4/2+3/2+3 lines:

**Na rekama vavilnonskim,  
tamo sedosmo,  
tamo plakasmo,  
kad bismo se mi Siona  
samo setili,  
samo mislili. (Psalm 137:1)**

Back translation:

By the rivers of Babylon,  
 there we sat down,  
 there we wept,  
 Whenever we Zion  
 just remembered,  
 just thought about.

The folklore model is:

Raslo mi je badem drvo,  
 tanko visoko,  
 tanko visoko.  
 Pod njim leži hajduk Veljko  
 s lepom devojkom,  
 s lepom devojkom.

My almond tree has grown,  
 thin, high,  
 thin, high,  
 Under it is brigand Veljko lying  
 with a beautiful girl,  
 with a beautiful girl.

ELLINGWORTH: These are all folk-forms?

BIERWISCH: Yes: literary poetry is quite different. There was also, in the years following the second world war, a kind of political poetry which was different again: popular, but not traditional, often bitter, satirical. Everyone read it, especially young people.

ELLINGWORTH: What forms would you use if you were to translate some of the prophetic oracles of the Old Testament?

BIERWISCH: I think I should use the long 12 or 14-syllabled lines. We use them traditionally for religious or mythical poetry. But folk-forms with 8 and 10-syllabled lines are used almost entirely nowadays for secular verse.

ELLINGWORTH: Going back to Psalm 119, did you have any difficulty in changing the Hebrew verse, based on a twofold parallelism in this case, into three-line stanzas?

BIERWISCH: No, but first I should say that so far I have only used this rather artificial three-lined stanza form in this particular psalm, because it is rather artificial and highly-wrought in the original. Sometimes, when the idea was repeated without change, I combined the two halves of the original verse, if it seemed that I would get a more immediate impact by doing so; but I didn't set myself any rule to follow mechanically. I never left out any of the meaning, but sometimes I expanded it in order to fit the metre: for example, I might say "Holy God" instead of simply "God". I generally reduced the Hebrew to near-kernels, and then reconstructed and expanded as necessary.

ELLINGWORTH: What dialect have you used?

BIERWISCH: The language spoken in central Serbia, not in Slovenia or somewhere on the periphery. It is the most commonly spoken form of the language: all Serbs understand it.

ELLINGWORTH: Did you limit yourself to common language, or have you used many specifically religious or ecclesiastical terms?

BIERWISCH: The language is based on the language of popular poetry, which includes some religious terms, and also some forms which are specially used in poetry: for example, *življenje* "living", for *život* "life", *oproštenje* for *aprostaj* "forgiveness" and so on. The constructions are not all those which an average peasant would use in normal conversation, but they are all constructions which he would understand.

ELLINGWORTH: What are the next steps you hope to take?

BIERWISCH: It would be nice to complete a translation of the Psalter, including psalms which I have found too difficult so far. Also, it would be good to find people to write tunes for them which are simple enough, not only for church choirs, but for the whole congregation. I am sure it can be done.

HERBERT G. GREETHER

## TRANSLATING THE QUESTIONS IN ISAIAH 50

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A striking feature of the literary style of Isaiah 50 is the use of rhetorical questions—that is, questions that are asked to make assertions, rather than to gain information. In this short chapter of eleven verses there are no less than ten questions, most, and possibly all, of them rhetorical. Such questions, when literally rendered, often give the reader trouble. He tends to read them as straight questions and so miss the point completely, or be puzzled by what is said.

In what follows, each of the questions in Isaiah 50 will be presented first in the rather literal rendering of the RSV. Then, following discussion of some of the problems involved, the rendering which is proposed for *Today's English Version* will be given. Since TEV is still being prepared for publication, the renderings presented here are all subject to further revision. Reader response to them is invited and welcome!

The first half of Isa. 50:1 reads in the RSV:

Thus says the Lord:  
 "Where is your mother's bill of divorce,  
 with which I put her away?  
 Or which of my creditors is it  
 to whom I have sold you?"

Many readers will take this to mean that the Lord really wants to know the whereabouts of the bill of divorce, and the identity of the creditors!

To understand the real meaning of these questions, one must not only realize that they are rhetorical, but must understand the figures of speech used in them, and something of the situation in which they are used. For this the comment on the passage that we find in *The Interpreter's Bible* is helpful: "Second Isaiah describes the covenant relationship between Yahweh and his