

BERT PRIBAC'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AS REFLECTED IN HIS POETRY

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INTRODUCTION

During the great literary flourishing of the post war period a number of talented and prolific authors appeared, among whom some will be recorded as indispensable characters in the development of the Slovene literary tradition, while others will pass away unobserved, wrapped in the limpid veil of their intimate world. Who will fall into one group and who into the other, only time will reveal. However, each of the authors has given to the period a special personal touch, making it rich in vivacity and freshness. Among the authors who began to pave their way for a successful literary career was Bert Pribac. He was born in Sergaši in 1933. After finishing his grammar school in Koper, he began to study Comparative Literature at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. At that time he entered the Communist Party, out of gratitude for the scholarship he received from the government. He founded a so-called Marxist debating circle, where students discussed humanistic socialism; later on he also founded a literary club for students from Primorska. Both circles had a very limited period of existence due to the annoyance the Party caused by infiltrating their own people into these circles and wanting Pribac and his companions to operate under the strict but veiled supervision of the Party. The more Pribac was involved in political life, the more he felt disillusioned and disappointed at his putative socialist colleagues. Continual ethical incidents caused by the Party put his Socialist consciousness to the test, yet it was not until 1959 that he decided to break with his cultural and political career in Slovenia in order to remain loyal to his original principles, which were becoming increasingly vague and indefinite. In the same year he set out on an aimless journey that led him through different refugee camps in Europe to settle finally in Australia, where after the tough beginning he managed to recompose himself and made a successful career in librarianship. Meantime he continued writing poems both in Slovene and in English, and succeeded in attracting the attention of the Australian literary public as well as the attention of the few Slovenes to whom his poems were attainable.

PRIBAC'S LITERARY BEGINNINGS

Pribac's literary beginnings go back to his grammar school years, when he published some of his poems in the school literary magazine entitled *Naša misel* (*Our Thought*),

of which Pribac was editor-in-chief. Some of the poems from this period reflect Pribac's social engagement, a thematic feature quite characteristic of post-war Slovene literature. In his poem »May 1945«¹ Pribac welcomes freedom, which Slovenia obtained at that time. Freedom for Pribac is not merely an abstract notion nor is it a dissembling satisfaction over the defeated enemy, but the poet can feel freedom reflected in nature, where the *cherry trees grow ripe*, and the *corn waves, the wood sings and the hills shout as one man* to honour freedom. Everything blooms for the first time after the long period of oppression and slavery:

*Look, father, how the cherry trees grow ripe,
And the corn, how it waves,
In the past years it bent and shivered,
As blood shivers in our veins.*

*How the woods are singing now
And the hills are shouting as one man!
Wow! Everything will bloom this year
'cause freedom has come to our land.*

In his first poems Pribac already introduces the theme that will become the leitmotif of all of his later works, namely love for nature and his native land. Even when the social engagement of his early years is gone, and a new understanding of society and the whole world takes its place, impressionist depictions of Mother Nature, or God's gift as he understands the universe later, will remain deeply rooted in his poetic portrayals. Beside these two features, Pribac's sensitive soul could not remain unaffected by another experience that has inspired the whole artistic and philosophical world from the genesis of humankind until the present day. Pribac, though young, had experienced the joys and pains the love for a woman brings to a man; yet Pribac's love is usually an unrequited love, a sad feeling of non-acceptance causing loneliness and despair. And it was this sorrow that produced in some of Pribac's best verses, confirming Kierkegaard's conviction that no poet, no genius and no hero ever became great due to the woman whose inclination they achieved, but they became great due to the woman whose inclination they did not achieve.² Yet Pribac never feels really lonely since olive trees and cypresses and all the Istrian landscape feel with him, comforting and holding out hope to him, as presented in the poem *Now the Bora blows*³

*Near the silent path above my place of birth
Acacias in May bear a fragrant smell,*

¹ B. Pribac, »Maj 1945« (»May 1945«), in: *Niša misel*, 2/9, 1952, 21. Translated by Teja Pribac.

² Cf. A. Stres, *Zgodovina novoveške filozofije*, Družina, Ljubljana 1998, 219.

³ B. Pribac, »Zdaj burja zavija« (»Now the bora blows«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti Tolkač in druge pesmi*, Edicija Capris, Koper 1999, 184. Translated by T. Pribac.

Above the wood, growing in desolate earth
Tops of chestnut trees in winds do dwell.

In the darksome sky, devoid of a star's glows
And in grey cypresses where owls nest,
Above the silent hill now the bora blows,
Tramping round the roads, uncovers graves in rest.

And the winds in myself, as the bora they freeze,
Bursting my heart that for the beloved's in mourn⁴ -
It wishes for sun and springtime ease,
Yet, amidst an unknown path it staggers forlorn.

An Istrian is so tightly linked to the landscape and its acacias, cypresses, chestnut trees, to the wind and the paths, that they represent a unique spirit, a unique soul. When a man's heart is sunk in mourning for his longed-for beloved, nature mourns with him: cypresses become grey, and the chilly bora blows, and »tramps« angrily round the roads until the sun rises again and brings springtime into a man's heart. It is then that the acacias bloom, and the cypresses become green again, and the cold bora is chased away in order to welcome the warmth of the southerly wind; even if it is autumn, nature is beautiful in Istria, and it is friendly as it fills *the pitchers in our homes* with *sweet red wine* as presented in another poem from this period, entitled *In Istria*⁵

With us here in Istria
The autumn is beautiful:
The vineyard on the slope
Is clad in golden yellow
And sweet red
Seethes in the pitchers
In our homes.

...

Here the beauty of vineyards and olive trees attracts the poet's attention and invokes his susceptibility to colour impressions of the homely landscape on one hand, and his attachment to Istria, its people and their habits on the other hand.⁶

When poems from the magazine *Naša misel* are compared with those published

⁴ I.e. mourning

⁵ B. Pribac, »V Istri« (»In Istria«), in: *Mlada pota*, II/6, 1953-54, 178. Translated by Igor Maver.

⁶ The production of wine is an ancient practice in Istria; and nothing gives more joy to Istrians than vines laden with juicy bunches of grapes, promising an abundance of wine, which will vivify the people's spirit, and together with the large quantities of oil produced will also provide for their economic stability.

later in other literary magazines during Pribac's student years, a change in both style and form is noticeable. The outbursts of emotional effusions that are characteristic of his early poems develop into a more thoughtful approach in poetic expression,⁷ yet Pribac preserves simplicity in his poetic language: true enough he enlarges his horizons and adds new images to his circle of green cypresses and golden vineyards, e.g. *lonely sea-gull* in the poem »Complaint«,⁸ or the *torpid shore* which *awakens in the noon-light* in the poem »Sea Wind«. Nevertheless the directness of some depictions of the poet's beloved landscape remains unchanged and fascinates the reader with its childlike genuineness, e.g. the *grass that sprang up coloured there in midst of the woodland* from the poem »A Spring Morning«, or the *fields of fair-haired corn, and groups of tanned reapers of azure eyes* from the poem »I saw the Fields«.⁹

Stylistically Pribac's poems from this first period of his literary activity show great affinity with the impressionist poetic portrayals traceable in the works of Slovene poets such as Oton Župančič, Alojz Gradnik and the young Srečko Kosovel, to whom Pribac is particularly inclined. Thematically Pribac's main concern is the small world surrounding him, namely the beauties of nature with a particular privilege granted to the Istrian landscape, his youthful love affairs and all the sorrows unrequited love can bring into one's life. As far as the form of his poems is concerned, Pribac shifts from his initially traditional rhymed verse to free verse, omitting four-line stanza and tending to make recurrent use of enjambment and assonance.¹⁰ Enjambment is most noticeable in the last stanza of the poem »The Land of Happiness«:

Could I
Hold at once
So many beautiful things

and in the second stanza of the poem »I saw the Fields«:

... Until there is daylight and everything smells
Like pine, corn and hay...

while assonance occurs for example in the third stanza of the poem »A Spring Morning«:

Na morju se jadro belo
*Vžgalo je*¹¹

⁷ Cf. B. Suša, »Bronasti tolkač in V kljunu golobice«, in: *Dve domovini / Two Homelands*, 1, 1990, 292.

⁸ B. Pribac, »Tožba« (»Complaint«), in: *Mlada pota*, IV/7, 1955-56, 324. This poem is entitled »Jesenski dan« (»An Autumnal Day«) in the collection *Bronasti tolkač in druge pesmi*.

⁹ B. Pribac, »Videl sem njive« (»I saw the Fields«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač in druge pesmi*, 182.

¹⁰ Cf. B. Suša, »Bronasti tolkač in V kljunu golobice«, 292.

¹¹ *In the sea the sail, white / took fire*

Apart from fragments reflecting a melancholic mood and low spirits, Pribac's poetry from this period is optimistic; it shows the extreme vigour of a young poet full of hope and great expectations from life, which may induce us to consider him highly ideological and naive, yet it was this youthful enthusiasm for the gift of life itself that accompanied him through all the adventures fate made him undergo, and that helped him surmount the many difficult situations he found himself in during the following years.

»THIS IS NOT THE RIGHT CUP OF TEA FOR ME«

A deep feeling of desperation and loneliness marks the first Australian period, which was a natural reaction to the hard experiences he went through after leaving his native country. This was a period of adaptation to a new world, to new living circumstances, to new friends, and particularly it was a period of necessarily revising all of his past wishes, intentions and plans. His jobs rendered the survival of his family possible, yet this was the survival of mere flesh, which could not serve as a general satisfaction for Pribac:

A foreigner in a foreign country,
I go through the dry forest,
And the branches are breaking up, snapping the thoughts.
A pilgrim in a foreign country
Where all the trees are alike
And they are sparse as the churches on hills.
How do they survive on this dry continent?¹²

Pribac's National Feeling

Pribac's literary work reflects distinctive personal dimensions; no l'art pour l'art finds shelter in his poetry. Each line Pribac creates originates in the innermost depths of his susceptibility to the variety of experiences life has offered him. Every word is carefully selected in order to express his feelings clearly and accurately. The speaker thus is usually a beggar, a pilgrim in a foreign country, who always remains alone in his desperation¹³ and mourns for his native land, but tries hard to succeed in acclimatising to new living

¹² B. Pribac, »Grem po suhem gozdu« (»I Go Through the Dry Forest«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač in druge pesmi*, 132. Translated by T. Pribac.

¹³ In poems such as »Pepel moje podobe« (»Ashes of my Image«), »Deževne ceste« (»Rainy Roads«), »Obsojenci po tlaku ječe« (»The Convicts on the Pavement of a Jail«), »Sejmišča beračev« (»The Marketplace of Beggars«), »Obrežje večera« (»Shore of Evening«) the loneliness and hopelessness of the *beggars* is stressed.

conditions. The poet preserves his impressionistic portrayals of nature, yet images such as green cypresses and olive trees together with juicy grapes and the azure of the sea proved inadequate for the depiction of the new continent, which is dry and cold, and its forests are dry too, and the trees are all alike. As was true for the Istrian landscape, the Australian countryside also changes according to human moods. Yet this does not mean that Pribac has already become an integral part of the Australian world as was the case with Istria, he is still indulging in the sorrows of his alienation, which is reflected in the poem entitled »Distant, Cold Seas«¹⁴:

...
 Trunks uprooted we are
 In downpours and tempests
 Sore souls
 On this foreign land

...
 His is not closeness to the concrete Australian landscape and other natural phenomena; it seems more a feeling of closeness to the very miracle of nature itself. If Pribac used to feel united into one single soul with Istrian nature, now he forms a unique soul with nature in general. After all nature is the only familiar thing Pribac found in his newly imposed homeland. Of course, Australian trees do not bear the *fragrant smell* that *acacias in May* used to in Istria, but on the other hand even Istrian nature was not always pleasant, if we consider the gloomy clouds that covered the Istrian *darksome sky* or the *grey cypresses* growing in *desolate earth*. In sum, as far as nature is concerned Pribac distanced himself from the regional narrowness of emotional perception, and raised nature to the level of universality; nature becomes a sacred gift offered to man as a companion and a friend with whom to share the bitterness and also the pleasantness affecting his soul, as noticeable in the following poem entitled »Impression on Mugga Hill«¹⁵:

*A drab olive green wall,
 With twisted clear lines of white
 Are the gums on Mugga Hill
 After the rain.
 From afar they look like
 Boletus mushrooms having a yarn -
 A landscape indeed
 For Alice in her dreaming land*

The impressionistic character of Pribac's portrayals of nature is thus preserved when Australia is brought up for consideration, but it is nature in general, not Australian

¹⁴ B. Pribac, »Daljna hladna morja« (»Distant, Cold Seas«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 13.

¹⁵ B. Pribac, »Impression on Mugga Hill«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 23.

nature in particular, even if under the stress of circumstances universal nature is manifested through its Australian variety, to share feelings with him; while in cases when Pribac expresses his solitude and longing for his native country, the land and its gifts lose their impressionistic features to become symbols of something which is beautiful, warm and homelike. In the poem »Remembering from Afar«¹⁶:

The valley of the Valderniga stream
Always rich in corn, melons and wine
And other fruits in season,
Its pools teeming with crabs and eels
And at evening time
The slow ox carts, bringing the harvest in
Like tired but contented pilgrims
Returning from the holy shrine of Strunjan.

the richness of nature in the author's native land is presented. Images such as corn, wine, harvest, and sea bear a symbolic meaning of life, genuineness and truth, of both spiritual and physical abundance, and of the dynamics of human existence respectively,¹⁷ which is exactly what was lacking initially in his Australian living, and was on the other hand so abundant in the *Istrian paradise*, or at least Pribac perceives it this way when *remembering from afar*. And indeed, Pribac is often caught in the act of remembering all the wonders and beauties of his beloved Istria, which, to tell the truth, had never been so ample in splendour as it was now when the poet felt it out of his reach. The more the foreignness of the land of the Aborigines oppressed and exasperated him, the more he sought for shelter in memories and dreams of his past life at home. Consequently a number of poems thematically related to Slovenia in general and Istria in particular appeared in this period of Pribac's life. The reminiscences of his past life are manifested in three different thematic subunits in Pribac's poetry.

The first subunit includes poems extolling the natural beauties of Istria such as the previously mentioned poem »Remembering from Afar« or the poem »Even Stones at Home«,¹⁸ in which the poet expresses for the first time his determination to go back...

One day

...
Between motionless olive trees
In summer heat...
This sea of long distances

¹⁶ B. Pribac, »Remembering from Afar«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 45.

¹⁷ Cf. Chevalier J., Gheerbrant A., *Slovar simbolov*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1995, 370-371, 658-659, 719, 720. (Translated from the original *Dictionnaire des Symboles* by Stane Ivanc.).

¹⁸ B. Pribac, »Še kamni doma« (»Even Stones at Home«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 16. Translated by I. Maver.

Has killed my soul
To a bitter fatigue -

The use of images from the nature of the native land is probably one of the commonest means of presenting the feeling of homesickness, a theme strongly emphasized in all immigrant literary creations. The speaker, who is usually a beggar, a vagabond or a tramp, as both Mirko Jurak and Igor Maver observe,¹⁹ is particularly susceptible to natural beauties, the portrayal of which sometimes results in clichés and in insipidly pathetic moods. Even if it would be an injustice to attribute lack of originality to Pribac's work generally, a few images in his poems bear witness to the abovementioned stereotyping trends, as may be perceived from the sentimental enumeration of places and people in the poem »A Visit to the Native Village«²⁰:

As I watch from the yard of my native house
On number six,
I see Korte, Kocina, Padna and
The nakedness of the hills of Malija

...

Of all the old villagers

Only the old Skenič, Mamali, my mother,
Aunt Ančka, uncle Pjero and Ošter are still alive,

...

Yet Pribac is far from being unique in such poetic lapses since, as Jurak claims when speaking of another Australian-Slovene poet Jože Žohar and his poem »Reminiscence of Rudi«, other »Slovene poets in Australia are easily carried away by such sentimental, pathetic feelings... A fairly consistent elegiac tone is destroyed by prosaic triviality, enumeration of restaurants, which are then followed by names of hills in Slovenia. The effect of this contrast is such that it may provoke laughter, which was undoubtedly not intended by an otherwise sympathetic reminiscence about a friend.«²¹

The second thematic subunit is composed of poems Pribac dedicated to his mother. However, besides referring to his real mother, i.e. the woman who gave birth to him, it seems that the image can also be understood allegorically, as a denotation of his native land, as in the poem entitled »She shall bring me old wine«²²:

¹⁹ Cf. M. Jurak, »Poetry Written by Slovene Immigrants in Australia: Types of Imagery from the Old and the New Country«, in: M. Jurak (ed.), *Australian Papers*, Filozofska fakulteta, Ljubljana 1983, 57; and I. Maver, »The Mediterranean in Mind: B. Pribac, a Slovene Poet in Australia«, in: *Westerly*, 39/4, 1994, 126.

²⁰ B. Pribac, »Obisk domače vasi« (»A Visit to the Native Village«), in: B. Pribac, *Prozorni ljudje (Translucent People)*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1991, 139-142. Translated by T. Pribac.

²¹ M. Jurak, »Poetry Written by Slovene Immigrants in Australia: Types of Imagery from the Old and the New Country«, 57.

²² B. Pribac, »Prinesla mi bo starega vina« (»She shall Bring Me Old Wine«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 10. Translated by T. Pribac.

I shall go back to her
Quiet simplicity
Suddenly, as I went away
Behind the distant seas,
And I shall wipe away her tears
Dripping from then,
Wordless as the morning dew
On her furrowed
Withered cheeks.

As Jurak points out, emigrant poetry is often characterised by a sense of guilt felt by the poet for having left his native country.²³ This sort of remorse is also reflected in Pribac's poetry. In the above poem the feeling of guilt is not openly expressed; however, it can be deduced from his intention to go back to her, be it his mother or his native country, in order to wipe away her tears, i.e. to console her for having left her alone for so many years. This remorse is the result of the poet's growing awareness of both the solitude his real mother has to face at the close of her days, and the sad fate of the country, and of the uselessness of him and his emigrant companions, who preferred to run away from her instead of helping to prevent her premature decease, even if they were perhaps the only ones able to do it. The poem »People of Stifling Decks«²⁴ presents the case in question:

Man at home
Sells his soul for a crust of bread,
Which gets stuck in his throat
As a knot,
That he walks like a horse
With shades under the eyes
On furrowed paths
Of abandoned farms.

The curtain has been dropped in front of the eyes
And for a long, long time
There will be no action...

The third subunit manifesting Pribac's reminiscences of Slovenia consists of poems in which the poet uses motifs from Slovene ballads and folk songs. Such is the poem

²³ Cf. M. Jurak, »Poetry Written by Slovene Immigrants in Australia: Types of Imagery from the Old and the New Country«, 58. Cf. also I. Maver, »The Mediterranean in Mind: Bert Pribac, a Slovene Poet in Australia«, 126.

²⁴ B. Pribac, »Ljudje zatohlih palub« (»People of Stifling Decks«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 43-44.

»The Beautiful Vida«,²⁵ adapted from the Slovene folk ballad telling the story of Vida, a young and beautiful girl, kidnapped by a black seaman and brought to a foreign land with no hope left of a possible return home. The sad story of Vida becomes in Pribac's verse the story of all the Slovene emigrants²⁶ whose *sails have burnt in the fiery flames of a glowing port...*

...

And the boat of her desires has sunken
 In the muddy gulf of a foreign land
 And there is nothing left in her heart
 To brave the waves of yearning
 For a happier shore,
 For the pure streams of youth
 And she has sunk
 So low, so low
 In the mud of mankind.

Fragments of the Slovene folk-tale tradition are also visible in the poem »The Tenth Daughter and Son.«²⁷ In feudal times peasants had to cede one tenth of their annual harvest to the landlord, and by analogy the tenth child had to leave home due to the meagre living conditions of the peasantry. In Pribac's poem both the bride and the bridegroom are tenth children; both of them have been expelled from home and like Slovene emigrants they have remained alone -

*There was no beer,
 And no cheerful wedding guests:
 Nor parents
 To bless their happiness.
 Even candles on the altar
 Were blazing in derision
 Of the beautiful sadness in their eyes.*

Pribac's first collection *The Bronze Knocker*²⁸ from 1962 has been estimated as the first Slovene book published in Australia. The motif is taken from the doorknocker on his grandfather's home and entrances to patrician homes in Koper. Apart from some poems written in the late 1950s when he lived in Slovenia, it includes poems from his first Australian period. Consequently a prevalence of sadness in mood, and

²⁵ B. Pribac, »The Beautiful Vida«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 39.

²⁶ Cf. I. Maver, »The Mediterranean in Mind: Bert Pribac, a Slovene Poet in Australia«, 125.

²⁷ B. Pribac, »Desetnika« (»The Tenth Daughter and Son«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 5. However, both Pribac and his wife were children of large families.

²⁸ B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač (The Bronze Knocker)*, The Slovene Association, Melbourne 1962.

thematic contiguity, that is the feeling of a deep loss for being far from the native land and for not having found an appropriate shelter on *the shores of forgetfulness*, remains the leitmotif throughout the collection.

Pribac's Religious and Social Feelings

Other two issues, which have always occupied Pribac's mind and heart, and to which he has been sincerely devoted since his early youth, certainly could not be found missing in his first collection of literary effusions. Yet it seems appropriate to treat these two topics, his social concern and his religious feelings, simultaneously due to the close affinity of one with the other. Aware of the corrupted and sinful tendencies of man, Pribac sought for consolation in nature. His attachment to nature and his keen admiration of it, which is clearly reflected in his poetry, might be misinterpreted as a sign of Pribac's pantheistic outlook on the universe. Even if his love for the beauty of nature and his astonishment at its capacity of reflecting human feelings remains a constant in his verses, nature, however, has never exceeded the role of a companion and a friend, it has never transcended the level of a created being to become a creating being, a position the poet has always preserved for God only. And this is not any god whatever, but the God of the Bible, the Christian God, Lord of Heaven and Earth, creator of the universe and of man. As beginner of all things God's spirit is thus, in Pribac's view, present in all created beings, but it is not limited to them, on the contrary it goes beyond them, and this is actually essentially different from the position of being identified with them, a feature that makes Pribac a panentheist rather than a pantheist. As noticeable from the poem »Wind in the Whirl²⁹ we can feel God in the *wind*, in the *soil*, in *every blade*:

*And when the wind
In the whirls of dust
Roams round the crossroads,
It spreads the invisible existence
Of your presence
Onto the last inch of soil
Onto the last blade*

Yet most of all we can feel God in ourselves, namely in our conscience, especially in a guilty one, which is ingeniously referred to by Pribac as

*A raving storm
Above snowbound hollows
Of the human soul*

²⁹ B. Pribac, »Veter v vrtincih« (»Wind in the Whirl«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 65. Translated by T. Pribac.

In Pribac's religious poetry the main theme is manifested through three distinctive motifs. The first one being the recognition and worshipping of God's omnipotence by recurrent accounts of the magnificence of his creation deeds. The influence of Biblical style is easily noticeable in these poems; a number of images are accurately transferred directly from the Bible, although they are wrapped in a new veil of freshness and power of expression. One of Pribac's best poems testifying to this observation is »When He Became Aware of the Wind«³⁰:

...
 In that instant he conceived all the generations
 And brought forth all the tribes,
 He circumnavigated all the seas,
 He climbed the tops of all the mountains
 And was present in all the deeds
 Of all times.
 He breathed with lungs,
 Which had never drunk wind before,
 He looked with eyes,
 Which were the first to create light...

God's mercy in His omnipotence invokes the speaker's heart to trust him and to feel secure under His protection and guidance, which is the second motif of Pribac's religious poetry. In the poem »Prayer«³¹ the speaker calls upon God, asking for His grace and mercy in a moment of dread and despair. Pribac uses images from nature, which seem to have remained the most appropriate means in the construction of similes illustrating God's magnificent assistance in human distress:

*Breathe Your grace upon me,
 And it will pass as the freshness of the wind
 Through the hair
 On weary roads
 Of endless quests*

If God's grace-bringing presence in the above poem was restricted to mere hope inducing the speaker to cry out his supplications, it becomes in another poem entitled »Take me, Star, to Bethlehem«³² a deep certainty of the everlasting divine willingness to watch over the *images of His face*, namely human beings:

³⁰ B. Pribac, »Ko se je zavedel vetra« (»When He Became Aware of the Wind«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tokač in druge pesmi*, 85-86.

³¹ B. Pribac, »Molitev« (»Prayer«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 58.

³² B. Pribac, »Pelji me zvezda v Betlehem« (»Take me, Star, to Bethlehem«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 62-63. Translated by T. Pribac.

*You will be my steel shield
When sharp lances of despair
Will fall upon me...*

I searched for You among the labyrinths
Of ploughed thoughts,
And although the threads tore apart
I did not become lost -
The star, going above the shepherds
Led me also
To Bethlehem.

The speaker's devoted certainty is a sequence of past experiences, when notwithstanding the hardheartedness of people, God's love for them and His determination in taking care of them did not diminish, proving itself a *steel shield*, which can be uncompromisingly relied upon. However, the poet is aware of people's sinful nature, and of their rebel blindness and insusceptibility to God's gracious concern. And this is the third motif of Pribac's religious poetry, through which the poet presents the corruption of humans and their hazy reminiscences of the primeval source of their being. In the presentation of the moral depravation of present-day society the poet uses naturalistic features intensified with ugly and lustful images from depraved dens, where people's most bestial instincts are brought to the surface, as in the poem »Belly Dance«³³:

We feasted savage lusts
Upon naked bodies of girls,
And we sucked their breasts
Greedy as leeches

We sold our souls
For instances of dazing lust
Of stirred up flesh.

Pribac, however, never misses an opportunity to warn people of the divine promise of the inevitability of the final judgement, when God will come illuminated with all his kindness and righteousness to administer justice among His children. On the day of judgement God will not come as a meek lamb to those who have rejected him; he will carry the *whip* in his hand, and thus

³³ B. Pribac, »Trebušni ples« (»Belly Dance«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 41-42. Translated by T. Pribac.

The belly dance will end
 In the lustre of yellow lights
 Of the basements of dens,
 Full of naked corpses of
 Living folk

Pribac uses dark, deadly images such as *whips*, *hungry ravens*, and *waxy faces* as symbols of the torment human souls are condemned to because of their non-resistance to the temptation of evil. In reality, it is not God who punishes people, but it is humans themselves who continue the way towards their complete destruction by not accepting Him as their guide. Therefore the image carrying the whip in truth is not God, but the absence of God, namely Satan, who has settled in the hearts of those that rejected their creator because they wanted to be gods themselves, as reflected in the poem »Cold Cathedrals«³⁴:

Again and again
 They crucified You on the altars
 Of cold cathedrals...
 ...
 They came from everywhere
 On cushions of soft sedan chairs...
 To pray the ineffable name
 Into their, not Your shrines.

Pribac's sentimental pessimism reminds us of the feeling of misplacement of human beings, affecting the poetry of romanticism, yet Pribac has preserved his trust in life and his hope in the coming of a better world, since he believes that there will always be righteous individuals, like the *poor fishermen and peasants* from his poem »Cold Cathedrals«, open to the word of God, representing a good example for all humanity:

And You built
 Royal staircases
 In the hearts of poor fishermen
 And peasants,
 Who often starved of bread
 And lived by the truth
 Of Your Words

³⁴ B. Pribac, »Hladne katedrale« (»Cold Cathedrals«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 56. Translated by T. Pribac.

A feeling of loneliness and despair marks Pribac's first Australian period. The poet was disappointed in every aspect of his life. His was a routine life, a mere lingering on, spending the days either cleaning dirty rooms, and witnessing the passing away of lives weary of the burden of constant struggles in this vale of tears, or being enclosed in a miserable post-office, getting lost under heavy piles of letters needing to be sorted and arranged. Brought to near psychic breakdown, Pribac said to himself: »This is not the right cup of tea for me, and decided to chance his luck again« with *the bronze knocker on the entrance of God's court*:

...
God knows how many before me
Seized the green metal,
And they returned desperate
To the hopeless hunts of darkness;
As they did not light the torches
On muddy slopes
They dirtied their faces and clothes
...
I am here too, now
In the dim shine of an almost burnt out torch
...
I know I kept falling
On the ploughed up ground
I knelt in the puddles of muddy paths,
But midst of the rocks of rinsed ravines
I found brooks
Where I cleaned my boots
And washed my face.³⁵

IN THE BEAK OF A DOVE

In the period that followed Pribac graduated and started to work first at the National Library in Canberra, and then at the Federal Ministry of Health. Later on he was given a scholarship and went to the New South Wales University in Sydney to finish his M. Lib.³⁶ At that time he wrote over fifty articles and reports on different topics but related mainly to medical librarianship. He was also the initiator, a leader of the project, and one of the editors-in-chief of the Bicentennial Bibliography of Australian Medicine and Health Services, which was published in four thick volumes at the AGPS in

³⁵ B. Pribac, »Bronasti tolkač« (»The Bronze Knocker«), in: B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač*, 66-68. Translated by T. Pribac.

³⁶ M. Lib.: Master of Librarianship

Canberra in 1989. This was a period of progress for Pribac. He found a job at last that brought him delight and satisfaction, and furthermore it offered him the mental challenges so desperately needed after the long period of intellectual abstinence. In the 1980s his first poems written in English appeared. The Melbourne literary magazine *Helix* then published some of them; others were read at the Poet's Lunch in Canberra, and at various poetry readings in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

Taking into account this general blossoming of Pribac, one would expect his second collection of poems *In the Beak of a Dove*³⁷ from 1973 to be, at least as far as the mood is concerned, exactly the opposite compared to the first collection. Yet this is far from being a correct supposition since most of the poems preserve the melancholy and grief, characteristic of poems from *The Bronze Knocker*. The longing for his Istria remains one of the main themes; yet, if the poems from the first collection are coloured by a »pathetic nostalgia«,³⁸ as Maver observes, reflecting some sort of »geographic schizophrenia«³⁹ deriving from the chaotic dispositions of mind and heart of disinherited children brought to a foreign land, the poems published in the early seventies seem to express a kind of constructive resignation to the second homeland. In fact, Pribac had two possible choices: he could either have rejected the new country and resigned himself to lethal mourning for his beloved Istria, or have accepted the new land as his adopted country by trying to make the best of it. And Pribac decided for the latter. Even if the feeling of being uprooted from his native soil continued to grieve his heart, as reflected in the poem »Contrasts«⁴⁰:

...
As a vine transplanted
 Into a foreign soil
 We could not at first
 Push our roots into this ground
 Or feel cool under the shade of the gum.

he was determined to pave the way for a better future for the children who will...

...
 Establish their roots
 And draw the juices of this new land,
 Becoming one entity with it -
 ...
 And for ages to come

³⁷ B. Pribac, »V kljunu golobice« (»In the Beak of a Dove«), Lapwing Private Press, Canberra 1973.

³⁸ Cf. I. Maver, »The Mediterranean in Mind«, 129.

³⁹ Cf. I. Maver, »The Mediterranean in Mind«, 129.

⁴⁰ B. Pribac, »Contrasts«, in: *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 54. (Slovene title: »Na koncu sveta« (»At the End of the World«), published in *In The Beak of the Dove*, 1.)

They shall count the coming
Of the Southern Cross.

Often Pribac has recourse to the Istrian country idyll in moments of distress, and the images of the cypresses and birch trees bring some joy to his heart, lost in the *distant cold seas* of his wandering fate, as in poems such as »Dreaming About My Native Village«, »When the Moon Shines«, or »All the Paths«. The poet, in truth, has never really accepted his adopted country fully as his new home, and as hard as he tries, his feeling of an improved acclimatisation to Australia seems more an artificial construction of his mind resulting from a strong rational will, than real factuality. In fact, his attempt to conform completely to the new world failed in the instance when he stifled his national emotions and brought them into his subconscious, giving them optimal ground to become more powerful than ever before. This paranoid puzzlement afflicting Pribac's personality is noticeable from his new conception of Istria and anything related to it. If Istria in *The Bronze Knocker* symbolised an unattainable idyllic place, where his *sore soul*, once he reached it, would have found consolation and peace, in *The Beak of a Dove* it has lost all earthly dimensions to become a true spiritual paradise without serpents or trees of the knowledge of good and evil, an irrational Alfa and Omega of any human hope and desire, a promised land with promised people fed with milk and honey. This is reflected particularly in poems in which the poet's social concern is dealt with. In fact, what was mere admiration for the unique genuineness and fairness of Istrian people together with the beauties of the landscape has become praise, if not even heathenish worship of it. In the poem »Through the Window of Ordinary Life«⁴¹ the poet gives an account of the everyday life of the peasantry of Istria:

Down there under the village
Every morning carriages go
...
And peasants trip drowsily behind them,
Bearing the warmth of their wives
On callous hands.
...
How many leaves fell away from the trees,
Year after year at the same time before winter,
And how many storms rapped on the windows,
And vanished back into serenity.
Should I call
All of this ordinary life?

⁴¹ B. Pribac, »Skozi okno vsakdanjosti« (»Through the Window of Everyday Life«), in: B. Pribac, *V kljunu golobice*, 39. Translated by T. Pribac.

»Yes, we would say«, »This is ordinary life«. But the author leaves the question answerless as a hint for us to understand it rhetorically. »This is not ordinary life is what the poet is crying out to us«. For Pribac, this is nothing but Paradise itself; callous hands, violent storms, trees naked of leaves would in any other context symbolise negativity and lack of welfare, yet in this case they represent the objects of dreams and a desperate want of action. This is not ordinary life for him, not anymore at least. A new picture appears when he looks through the window of ordinariness now; he sees

...

*People as they pass by fleetingly in their cars,
They left their wives at home, laved in the bathtubs,
Veiled in perfumes, and clean as the air.
Are they better than our country maids,
Is there more humanity in them?
Simple girls from Šavrinija⁴²
Bore at least the scent of human flesh.*

The poet's incapacity to acclimatise to the dehumanisation of people in a modern, technologically highly developed society results in his flight from reality to a world of imagination and dreams. The question whether Pribac really believed in his Istrian Paradise may be the object of our enquiry at this point; and the correct answer would undoubtedly be: »No, he does not.« From his rational viewpoint he was well aware of the rough times his native country was going through in that period; after all he left it because *people were selling their souls for a crust of bread* there, and he did not want to be one of them. The main reason for his disappointment with the new country seems to be the fact that he could not find what he came there to search for, namely his 'paradise lost'. But this lost paradise was neither Istrian trees, Istrian birds, Istrian winds nor Istrian girls, after all he did not need to come to Australia to find all this Istrianity, he had it at home, besides he also fell in love with Australian nature, its vales, its brooks and strange forests that ...

Have echoed in sad refrain
The songs of those
Who danced around the campfires
Who were the firstborn of this land,
...
And the eerie sound of tribes
Killed by poisoned flower and buried in the caves...⁴³

⁴² Šavrinija is the part of Istria where Pribac was born.

⁴³ B. Pribac, »At the Murrumbidgee«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 14. This poem was composed in the style of T.S. Eliot, whom Pribac greatly admires. Cf. T.S. Eliot, »The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock«, in: *Selected poems*, Faber and Faber, London 1973 (reprint; 1st published 1954), 11-27.

What he was looking for was something greater, something divine, and at the same time something simple and sweet; he came to find humanity and love. And now that he has realised that nothing of what he desired is destined for him, dreams remain his only consolation, but more often than not they become a scant consolation since

Poets once upon a time used to dream
That after many years they would return,
In the shape of grass and butterflies, on meadows,
Where the laughter of boys and girls would resound.

...
The poet in this world
Is an unnecessary beggar,
Who is not willing even to dream anymore
Since many poets before him
Dreamt in vain.⁴⁴

However, Pribac never stopped dreaming, and it was this dreaming that gave him heart to continue his search for paradise lost, which was not Australia, nor was it Istria, even if his subconscious perceived it this way; yet by the time his paradise was regained, he kept dreaming *on the nib of the wind*:

And if I deliver my disquiet
Into the beak of a dove,
And if I run away on the nib of the wind,
The world will still be in me, caught in dreams,
Bearing the universe in themselves

...
Do not light up candles
To the shipwrecked on the ocean,
For they will not find the way
To the wonderful rims of stars,
And even in violent storm
Their ship will not sink at the rock:
In my dreams only the universe swims
And there are no rocks and no lights.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ B. Pribac, »Nekoč so pesniki sanjali« (»Poets Once Upon a Time Used to Dream«), in: B. Pribac, *V kljunu golobice*, 25. Translated by T. Pribac.

⁴⁵ B. Pribac, »V kljunu golobice« (»In a Beak of a Dove«), in: B. Pribac, *V kljunu golobice*, 16. Translated by T. Pribac.

»MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD« (JOHN 18:26)

In the period that followed, Pribac's life was marked by constant motion. His business duties made him spend a lot of time travelling round the world. It was then that he visited Europe for the first time after he had left it in 1960. And for the first time after so many years he could see it, not through the subjective eyes of his heart and of deformed pictures of memory, but through the non-deceptive microscope of his reason and his senses: he could smell it, he could touch it, observe its shape and all the hidden features, and the Europe of his illusionary dreams vanished instantly like soap bubbles bursting into nothingness. This Europe stretching in front of him now was a...

...

Haven of fat tourists

From every corner and wind,

Exquisitely dressed middle-aged Marxist dandies

In pavement cafes,

Dropping their eyes down the Corso on teenage flesh

And sipping a cool amaretto.

After having lived twenty five years

Under the Southern Cross,

And now being a tourist myself,

I feel estranged and I wonder

If I am really still one of them.⁴⁶

This was a great shock for Pribac, a sharp arrow struck directly into his very being. The idol, which he devotedly praised and extolled to the stars, so ruthlessly proved to be a mere sham, an illusionary artificial construction made by a weak and unsteady soul that preferred to retire from the real world to live in the void of misleading dreams, driving people into certain ruin. And indeed, Pribac was in ruin at this point, when reality in all its cruelty showed him its true image. And in such a ruin the line between life and death is so dreadfully thin, so frightfully weak, that each inconstant individual is certain to see the face of doom. It is in such ruin that human faculties are put to the test; those who find the right way will survive in every respect, the others will perish. And the survivors will become as *strong as death* (Song of Solomon 7: 6) since they know that once they have defeated Death, nothing can dim the light they bear in their hearts. And it was with this strength that Pribac has faced and surmounted all the further crises life has imposed on him, even his wife's infidelity and the subsequent divorce, thus becoming a sad optimist, having retained an optimistic outlook on life,

⁴⁶ B. Pribac, »Travel Diary«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 63.

yet the awareness of his categorical guilt as a human being has always been deeply present in his soul, giving birth to extraordinary literary creations, in which his conception of life is expressed.

Concept of Society

Most of Pribac's poems from this second Australian period relate to the question of people and their social and natural environment. As he comprehended the mediocrity of his formerly idolised Europe and its moral depravity, which was perhaps even greater than in Australia, Pribac felt disillusioned and deceived by people and the entire world. He could not accept people's carelessness for anything related to either nature or humans; their coldness and *spiritual senility* irritated and grieved him deeply:

...

And when they became bored with the trees,
And killed all the fish in the sea
And wildlife in the groves,
And when they had polluted the rivers
Flowing through their towns,
The leaders of the nations
Have decided to pierce the sky
With knives of their
Spiritual senility.⁴⁷

Images from nature remain a constant in Pribac's poetry in his second Australian period as well. Yet nature is now presented as a victim of unscrupulous magnates obsessed with arrogance and the need for self-confirmation. Engrossed with the desire for unlimited power, they have lost the capacity of appreciating small beauties enriching the world, and with their insensitiveness to everything genuine and pure, they also try to deprive those who have preserved a sincere admiration for all created beings of these small miracles:

The strong and the learned
They take for themselves
The best fruits of this earth,
And yet the murmur of the stream,
The flower's scent
And the magnificence
Of the night firmament

⁴⁷ B. Pribac, »Polluters of Heaven«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 64.

Can be felt as deeply, if not more
 By the begging tramp
*And the uneducated farmer's hand.*⁴⁸

However, Pribac does not stop warning humanity against the risk of succumbing to the Devil's temptations, which may represent an insurmountable obstacle in the attempt to attain the everlasting peace of the divine abodes. In fact, disappointed with people in general due to their coldness and their lack of interest in anything good and divine, he feels estranged from this world, and he gradually becomes aware of the fact that there is no place on earth where he could feel at home for his real home *is not of this world* and it will never be. He feels uprooted from the source of life, and thrown into the valley of darkness, where he cannot find true happiness. Pribac searches for comfort in religion, and indeed it is there that he finds it at last. It is Christian belief that has helped him form his outlook on people, on the world, and on the whole universe. Accordingly, he perceives his earthly living as a test for him (and all other human beings), which will show whether he deserves to enjoy the delightful glory of the face of God or not. Conscious of the truthfulness of St. Augustine's words: *Restless is our spirit until it reposes in God*, Pribac listens humbly to the gentle voice through which the Holy Spirit shows him the way to his real home, which is in the *cool of the shade* by the divine springs:

...
 If you reach for the waters
 Of that living stream
 And you believe that I can fill
 All the dry riverbeds around
 You will become a mighty branch of that tree
 Where other creatures lonely and pure
 Will come to share the cool of the shade
 And to drink the waters that make you
 Never thirsty again.⁴⁹

Pribac finally gave a fresh impetus to the meaning of his life; by trying to pave his own way to salvation, he discovered the satisfaction Charity can bring to one's heart. In the endeavour to become worthy of the heavenly home, he realised that home can also be found on Earth, since wherever love dwells, God also dwells, and where there is no love, there is no God. And this has become Pribac's motto in life, inducing him to search for love, not for a home any more, since love brings God, and God is home.

⁴⁸ B. Pribac, »Another Statement«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 53.

⁴⁹ B. Pribac, »Merinda, My Merinda«, in: B. Pribac, *The Beautiful Vida and Other Poems from Two Homelands*, 36-37.

Numinous Eroticism

Pribac's heart has been replete with so much love for his native land and for God that, at least concerning what can be deduced from his early poems, little place is left for love for women. However, this is not entirely true, since fragments of his poetry reveal quite a different picture of his experience of love. Pribac believed in romanticism, and love meant to him the most strong and pure bond of two human beings, a union of two kindred souls boundlessly devoted to each other, capable of experiencing the Absolute in all its might and grace. And this was only possible because the poet and his beloved were never alone; God was always with them to bless their happiness in surrendering to the harmony of their unconditional devotedness to the sacredness of human essence. And it is the absolute joining of soul and body that permeates this circle of numinous eroticism. He does not neglect physical love, on the contrary, he welcomes it for it is the external manifestation of the most intimate feelings pervading two human beings united by spiritual love. Each movement, each gesture, each sigh reflects a most hidden and private sentiment in the categorical willingness to totally abandon oneself to the whirl of God's gift of the erotic experience. The stronger the emotion, the more abrupt the movements, and in the alternating of gentle and jerky gestures the two persons involved lose any sense for reality, reaching near madness to transcend human boundaries and experience the divineness of the Absolute. And this is Pribac's numinous eroticism, where there is little place for lust and none for pornography, because everything is felt and done out of the incessant human aspiration toward perfection, which can be achieved only in the harmonious union of human souls with the divine grace. This is why numinous eroticism rejects prohibitions of any kind.

What a disappointment, what an encroachment upon his dreams it was for Pribac when he was confronted with the fact that his marriage ended in divorce. In 1986 he was involved in a bad car-crash in Austria, and after that he spent almost a whole year recovering from the physical injuries sustained in the accident, and from the personal ones resulting from the conflict with his wife. This was a tough period for the poet; once again he was compelled to start from the beginning, and this time completely alone, or at least he thought so. But he was wrong, since God was still there keeping an eye on him, and sooner than anyone could have imagined, He sent Pribac another companion, a real kindred soul this time, an exceptionally powerful muse, with whom he would set up a new family and to whom he would dedicate most of his further literary creations. In 1989 they married and settled in Sergaši. In that period (1991) his third collection of poems, actually a selection of his best verse, entitled *Translucent People*⁵⁰ was published, this time in Slovenia. During his stay in his native country, and even earlier, he endeavoured to introduce Australian poetry to the Slovene public by contributing about eight readings of contemporary Australian poetry in his own

⁵⁰ B. Pribac, *Prozorni ljudje (Translucent People)*, Mladinska knjiga, Ljubljana 1991.

translations on Slovene national radio, while some other translated Australian poems were also published in literary reviews such as *Most* from Trieste and *Svobodni razgovori* from Sydney. Pribac's health problems forced the family to return to Australia, where they remained for eight years instead of the expected one, but in 2000 they returned to Sergaši, where they have lived ever since. In 2000 another collection of poems entitled *The Bronze Knocker and Other Poems*,⁵¹ which is partly a reprint of his first collection, was published, while in July 2002 his book *Slovene Disturbances of Reconciliation (Slovenske spravne motnje)* was published at the Društvo 2000 in Ljubljana.

Having been left alone at a later stage of life, Pribac began to reconcile himself to solitude with no intention or hope of finding another companion with whom to spend his ripe old age, when like a bolt from the blue young Ljuba came to disturb his weary loneliness:

Ripe and strained as a pod

But yet alone,

With ends somewhere in the clouds of the spirit and nonfulfilment
She clung to me, an early growing grey man

...

In my sad but maybe warm smile

She saw my fleeing youth

And in my soul an unfulfilled abyss of passion,

Inexpressible by my weary flesh,

Yet my big brown eyes

Radiated youthful power and desire.

Indeed, my soul is young,

Not yet expressed or abloom as the buds of spring

Though I am approaching early autumn

And my napes are snowy of age

...

And now I question God

Why has he created and united us

So fleeting and frail

That we meet as children of different generations.

This fugacious time is a dangling bridge

On which we both come worried, wondering

Whether it will sustain the weight of difference in our age.⁵²

⁵¹ B. Pribac, *Bronasti tolkač in druge pesmi (The Bronze Knocker and Other poems)*, Edicija Capris, Koper 2000.

⁵² B. Pribac, »Viseči most časa« (»The Dangling Bridge of Time«), <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~lapwing/pesmi.html>. Translated by T. Pribac. Most of his other unpublished poems can be viewed on this web site.

Lately, Pribac in his poems has praised his beloved wife, her beauty and her sweetness, and he has extolled the kindness of God, who has united them in the magic circle of numinous love. And if anyone may wonder why words in his love lyrics lose the power of expressiveness characteristic of the presentation of other motifs in his verse, it is worth noticing that there are things which simply cannot be confined to words:

...

*Poems can certainly be put into shape,
Organised into sense, rhythm, feelings.
But when shaped into inky words,
Sentences, pages or books
Just for their own sake,
Then poems become only a distant echo
Of buried thought.*⁵³

CONCLUSION

After Pribac had spent so many years travelling round the world in search of a home, he came back to his native village and found it there, not in the green of the cypresses nor in the fragrance of the wind, but he found it within himself; in that instant he realised that it had always been there, but he had not noticed it. It might be surprising, however, to learn that lately Pribac has not been very active in literary creation, even if he could find many pleasant motifs to put into verse. But perhaps Kierkegaard was right: perhaps a genius is born out of sadness, grief, and desperation, and when these burdens of the heart are gone, the capacity for genius is gone, too. But if apprehension may arise at the thought of a possible close to Pribac's literary career, it would be convenient to ask ourselves: Can the burdens of the heart indeed ever be completely removed from this world?

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POVZETEK

DUHOVNI RAZVOJ BERTA PRIBACA, KOT SE ODRAŽA V NJEGOVI POEZIJI

Teja Pribac

»Ker velikih literarnih ambicij ne zmorem izpeljati, je zame važna izpoved, vsebina in resnica o sebi in okolju, taka resnica kot jo jaz vidim in občutim. Samo to, kar imam, lahko razdam, da bi si domišljaj kaj več, za to nisem imel ne časa ne vneme.« Tako se glasi skromna opazka, ki jo je Bert Pribac podal v razmišljanju o svojem literarnem ustvarjanju z naslovom »Zakaj pišem pesmi« (v: Svobodni razgovori, X/3, 1993, 8.). Kot Pribac sam pojasni, je poezija, ki jo ustvarja, odraz njegovih zaznav, občutij in pogledov na različna vprašanja o svetu in bitjih v njem, kar nam omogoči oblikovanje sorazmerno popolne slike njegovega duhovnega razvoja vse od zgodnje mladosti pa do pozne zrelosti. Mladostno igrivost in lahkotnost prekine prisiljena odločitev, da se odpravi po poti vseh blodnežev, beračev in večnih romarjev tega sveta. Posledično se v poeziji začetnega obdobja njegovega izseljenstva odražata globoka bolečina in beda, ki izhajata iz spoznanja o izgubi doma, prijateljev in vseh najbolj intimnih momentov lastnega bivanja. In ko še zadnje upanje na ustrezno zatočišče pod Južnim križem umre, se pesnik zateče k sanjam, ki mu nudijo tolažbo, saj le v sanjah lahko ponovno občuti atmosfero domačnosti ljubljene Istre, ki pa ni več stvarna Istra njegove mladosti, temveč močno idealizirana mentalna konstrukcija, osnovana na njegovih željah in upih. Veliko časa je potreboval Pribac, da je lahko opustil sanje o izgubljenem raju in žalovanje za njim ter sprejel, da istrska zemlja ni nič bolj prijazna do svojih ljudi kot je avstralska do svojih. Temu soočenju z realnostjo, ki je bila kruta in neizprosna in ki mu ni nudila temeljev za izpolnitev prvobitne človeške usmerjenosti k harmoničnemu bivanju v duhu in resnici, je sledila popolna obupanost pesnika. Toda ko so temačna brezna osamljenosti in brezupa dušila Pribca, je on našel pot, ki jo je instinktivno zaznal kot pot, ki vodi k odrešenju. Takrat je razumel, da tisto, za čemer je stremel dolga leta, ni bila Istra, niti ni bil katerikoli drugi kotiček zemlje, kajti daleč stran od prvotnega bivališča ga ni odpeljalo izseljenstvo, sam je namreč kot človeško bitje brezpogojno podvržen izkoreninjenosti zaradi svoje grešne narave, kar sicer pogosto nastopi kot eden osrednjih

motivov v poeziji njegovega drugega avstralskega obdobja. Posledično, kamorkoli bo šel v tem svetu, bo vedno ostal tujec, saj njegovo kraljestvo ni od tega sveta. V tem trenutku Pribac odkrije Boga; in Bog je tisti, pri katerem mora iskati zatočišče, ker Bog je njegov pravi dom, sedaj in vedno. Toda Boga nikoli ne dosežemo neposredno, ampak samo preko ljubezni do vseh ustvarjenih bitij, predvsem pa preko absolutne vdanosti sorodnih duš v vrtincu pobožne erotike. In v svojem ponovno odkritem rajju je Pribac našel sorodno dušo, s katero bo delil najbolj sveto izkustvo našega bivanja.