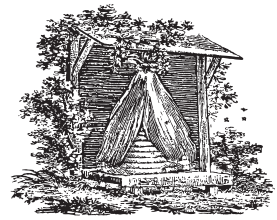

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CONTENTS

BOOK REVIEW

DRAGOSLAV MIHAILOVIĆ

A SHUKAR SPOT

To Milorad Bata Mihailović

A barely visible drizzle began to moisten the pavement, and occasional umbrellas made their way along the street.

Ćamil raised his greasy cap with a cord and a broken parasol, and looked up at the overcast sky with his bulging eye. If the rain didn't persist, he thought to himself, everything would be alright. Customers tend to appear after it rains. But if it drags on forever, who would be interested in cleaning their footwear?

Stuffing the brushes and boxes into a chest that embodied his business, he took a few steps from the top of the sidewalk, beside the iron electric pole, and walked under the shallow overhang of the "Consignment Store" on Makedonska Street, a place that some still referred to as the Levi Brothers' Shop, just like before the war.

Ahead, on the multi-story *Riunione*, on Republic Square, some kind of advertising sign lit up and started flashing too soon. It cast a red, green and blue reflection on the people and rare cars. Immediately, as if on cue, the yellowish, pale light bulbs on the metal poles also started to flicker. They didn't illuminate much, but the moisture around their hats created a double, stretched, golden rim.

He sat under the overhang in his small chair with a back post and opened the small door of the chest. Again, he arranged the boxes, bottles and rags around the footrest. He noticed a red spot on the mirror on his right side, so he spat on the glass and removed it with the palm of his hand. Then, on the nails at the front and on the sides, he hung his multi-colored, thick brushes.

At that moment, in a spruced-up kiosk a few meters ahead, already in Dečanska Street, a blind newspaper vendor addressed a young man

in a gray tweed jacket with her soft voice, “It hasn’t arrived yet. It’ll be here at any moment, sir.”

With her eyelids lowered to halfway, she was returning his change. She recognized the bills under her fingertips and knew exactly where everything was. But, her mother was usually with her. She wasn’t there now for some reason.

The older woman, the salesgirl’s mother, somehow reminded him of Mečka’s mother, Selena. Except this one wasn’t so ugly.

The old woman couldn’t stand him. Ever since the first time she laid eyes on him. She was fumbling around the copper kettle in the meadow, and barking at me,

“*Jenes romane, Jamil*, huh?”

They should ask him! Damn it! Hell, he’s always been as swarthy as a piece of burnt wood, and his other eye was bulging, and his bulky nose hung like a hook, as soon as you look at him, you know what he is.

And a little further away, sitting on a stump, was the elderly, fat Ivan, her husband. He was smoking a pipe with a short, crooked stem and fixing his gray, dangling moustache, yellowish from the tobacco, with the back of his hand.

He turned to the old man. It’s clear who one should talk to.

“Of course I speak it.” But the other one pretended not to hear. “Don’t be like that, Selena, I’m begging you. I’m a gypsy, just like you.”

“And you’re not a Turk?” she continued barking from a distance.

She had given birth at least ten times and, in those dirty, wide skirts, gray-haired and disheveled, she looked older than her husband. Or maybe she was.

“What d’ya mean a Turk? I’ve never even seen ’em!” Although, he might originally be from Turkey. He’s not sure. In any case, his brother Ćazim sat in the Muslim Turkey mahalla in Jagodina, between the river Belica and the fairgrounds, while the Orthodox had their own mahalla, near the Levač *charshia* square. Of course, Ivan and his buddies had to figure it out.

“C’mon, you’re an old Romani! You’ve got children! How can ya’ be a match for our Mečka!”

He spread his arms toward the man with the moustache and laughed. “What d’ya mean old man? I’m tweni’ five, what d’ya mean old?” He was actually thirty. But they won’t ask for his birth certificate. “They married me off early.”

Finally, old Ivan raised his head and took the pipe out of his mouth.

“What d’ya care about his children?” At least he knows what the rights of a man are; a wife must not interfere with them.

"Aren't they his wife's children?" How can a Romani know which children are his and which aren't? They're his for as long as their mother is his wife. After that, they're not."

A green armored garbage truck came roaring from Republic Square into Makedonska Street. It came to a halt a little before the "Consignment Store" and two Shiptars in long, waterproof raincoats with hoods got off the footboard at the back and walked into some backyard. They came out with grapples over their shoulders, carrying large, deep cans full of garbage. When they emptied them into the bed of the truck, similar to those used in concrete mixers, they took them back into the backyard. Then, they climbed back on the footboard and whistled, giving a signal to the driver. At that, the truck moved on, again with a roar, and disappeared down the street.

A short, stocky middle-aged lady with a brown hat on her large head was leading a short, stocky, brown-haired young boxer on a leash.

Ćamil clicked his tongue at him. The dog wagged its clipped tail and tried to stop. But the woman jerked the leash and they moved on with dignity.

With a mischievous wink from his bulging eye, he muttered insults directed at the dog owner.

Nevertheless, the time with Mica in Ćuprija was a *shukar* life.

By then, she had given birth to six children, God took three of them, and while she was doing laundry for other households, he was sitting in front of Sinđelić Tavern with his chest. Everyone knew him and everyone wanted to say hello.

"Are you *shukar,* Ćamil?" they asked.

He confirmed in Bulgarian, shaking his head.

"*Shukar*, *shukar*."

That spring, on the eve of the war, in Sibinović Sokače in Ćuprija, more commonly called Sibinovska Mala, word spread about the skill of the sixteen-year-old beauty, Mečka, daughter of the Russian gypsy Ivan, who lived with his kind at the Jagodina fairground above Klefiš's slaughterhouse. Married young, her father, brothers and husband, they say, guarded her carefully, although they had nothing to guard her from, they say, she doesn't even go to the outhouse alone—but when they go out on a bigger job, always outside the Jagodina District and out of reach of the local authorities, they let her go first. And while she reads palms and fava beans, sings and plays the balalaika, making the proprietors' heads spin, they are somewhere on the other side, running amok in silence. And if she gets into a scrape, they swoop in, fearless and rampant, just like in those vivid paintings in the Ćuprija Artisan Club,

with screams and gunshots, lifting her onto a white horse without a saddle and rescuing her at the last moment. Small legends were woven about their exploits.

Ćamil himself gladly listened to and recounted those narratives. He perceived an element of retribution within them, reflecting the difficulties of gypsy life, which soothed his soul. But he did not appreciate the role of beautiful young women in gypsy exploits. He believed that he knew how they managed to do it.

"That's how they are, Ćazim," he told his brother, "devious and vicious. Run from 'em."

Word got around in Ćuprija that a dangerous contagious disease and plague had struck the pigs at the state-run farm in Dobrićevo, and that they wanted to get rid of them. The gypsies ran to get some cheap grub, racing to buy the pigs, alive or dead. In the heart of spring, the scent of pork wafted through Sibinovska Mala, where flames flickered under cauldrons for melting fat and making soap. This summer, there will be plenty of both lard and detergent.

He immediately sent the oldest child to Turska Mala in Jagodina to get Ćazim. He, on the other hand, ran around the Ćuprija bazaar asking the merchants for a loan; he also had some savings and, as collateral for the loan, he offered a small, wattle and daub house in Mala. That's how he managed to get the initial capital in time.

And then, together with his brother, in a hired horse-drawn wagon, he dragged the pigs from Dobričevo to Klefiš's slaughterhouse in Jagodina for a week. In the pigpens, he was able to judge how long each one would last—despite that, he lost a few on the way—he was careful during loading and transportation, placing straw into baskets reinforced with boards and, in Jagodina, he had a man who received his delivery without inspection.

And after he paid the slaughterhouse clerk and his brother, the wagon owners and merchants, he was left with almost two hundred ten-dinar notes.

Cha-ching! He hasn't come into that much money in a long time.

A boy with a tan complexion, dressed in a red shirt and coat, came running from the direction of the *Borba* daily. He called out in a shrill, youthful voice that pierced the air:

"The second edition of *Novosti*! The second edition of *Novosti*!"

Yelling at the top of his lungs, he stopped at the corner next to him. He drew a newspaper from his side like a sword, capturing the attention of passersby. Consequently, within just a few minutes, he managed to sell multiple copies.

This one won't go hungry, he thought.

In that instant, the agitated mother of the blind newspaper vendor hurried over, carrying a bundle under her arm, and bumped into the young boy. Very similar to her daughter—with the same saddle nose, almost like it was chiseled—and in some ways resembling that nasty Selena—he couldn't figure out why—she hissed and waved at the young paperboy as though she were trying to shoo away some birds.

"Get out of here! Move it, this is not your area!"

The boy somehow straightened his posture and became tense.

"Hold on, hold on," he replied menacingly.

He was taller than her and appeared ruffled, as though he was itching for a confrontation.

Then suddenly, he turned and ran across the street, already fading away toward the *Politika* daily.

After making a tidy profit, the duo enjoyed a small celebration. They visited various taverns in Jagodina and indulged in revelry.

And how did she suddenly appear there? Ivan's camp at the fairgrounds was not far from Turska Mala or the slaughterhouse—did she get a whiff of the dough?

Ah, no! He could never believe something like that. He'll never believe it. And let no one ever say anything like that to him. He'd kill them!

They were just sitting there, enjoying themselves. And then, three tall, blonde young men, with slightly darker skin, entered the tavern with a beautiful young brunette. They were wearing unbuttoned light shirts, long city trousers, dull, slightly muddy two-tone white and brown shoes, light gray broad-brimmed hats, and she had on a red silk blouse, a wide, thin flowered skirt, and a large yellow headscarf, the ends of which hung down her back. Her complexion was pale, her face was round and broad with a rosy hue, her slender lips were adorned with red tissue paper, and her eyes were big, wide-open, and supple. Not at all like the alluring enchantress found in flamboyant gypsy tales.

"Are ya' Gypsies?"

"Yes."

"Let's have a drink."

"C'mon."

And then they drank together for a day or two.

At first, it didn't even occur to him that he could get the girl. Mečka? No way. His first thought was that they wanted free drinks. And then, since the beauty was still there—and he was clanging the silver ten and twenty-dinar coins—maybe she wanted Ćazim. This one, he thought, is younger and better looking.

But, she was moving closer and closer to him—without even glancing at Ćazim—and she wasn't moving away. She sat in the chair

next to him, asking him something in her soft, Russian gypsy voice and smiling at him with her tiny white teeth, humming in his ear and whispering, while caressing the back of his hand and preventing him from giving big tips.

There was also a boy with them, practically a child, skinny, with pursed lips, sitting on the side. As if offended, he looked at her angrily and every now and then he would say in a drawn-out tone, "Mečka! Let's go Mečkaaa!"

She just waved her hand.

"Who's this boy?" he asked her.

"My husband," she replied innocently. And then smiled at him with her beautiful teeth.

"And he lets you do this?"

"What's he gonna do?" And with that reply, came a new innocent smile.

In truth, what can he do? He was a child burdened with a harpy, one that even older men had trouble handling and all he can do is submit.

On the second day, Mečka whispered something to one of her brothers, who quickly got the married child drunk and then led him away.

The two slipped away from the clamorous group into a drunken May evening. There, in the darkness near a fence, he wrapped his arms around the small, slender beauty, who smelled faintly of milk and a touch of smoke. He consumed the alluring spirit from her mouth, which left him feeling lightheaded, and gently lifted her skirt, realizing there was nothing underneath. And she didn't even resist, but clung to him, sinking into his lips, while pressing her firm belly and thighs against him. And when he felt that hot spot with his body, the adjacent fence gradually collapsed, lifting them into the air, and he found himself drifting away, unaware of his surroundings.

As they strolled back to the tavern, arms entwined, he gazed down at her lovely, smiling face resting on his shoulder, pondering quietly to himself: Was this a dream? Did Ćamil deserve this beauty? Is this how it typically is for a true Romani man and woman, and he simply hasn't encountered it before, or was it something specifically bestowed upon him?

As he sat down in his chair at the tavern, he already knew that he could do anything in the world for her and that it still wouldn't be enough.

On 29 November Street, opposite Skadarska, there was a construction site that left a noticeable trail of red soil on the dark, slippery pavement near Ćamil. Fortunately, it's conveniently located nearby. There will be work.

Under the overhang, a silver-haired man removed his hat and wiped his forehead while he tended to the obviously well-maintained yet somewhat worn shoes with aged toecaps.

Some pensioner, he thought to himself.

The man looked neat and tidy, but also somehow detached and sullen. The brim of his hat and the collar of his gray pre-war officer's coat were somewhat stained with grease.

No one's coming, Ćamil thought.

It was only then that Ćamil and Mečka went to the fairgrounds, to Ivan's camp, as his brother saw him off with a worried look.

"Now you two," said the old man, who also didn't look like the gypsy king in the legends, "go away for a day or two until it's arranged here for Marko"—that's Mečka's young husband—"to go to Romania. And until then, you decide how you're gonna support your wife."

Ćamil has never lived outside the town before and wanted to stay with her in Turska mala, in Jagodina. But Mečka said no, as she couldn't leave her family. And he agreed. Ćamil was willing to do anything for the woman he loved.

He still had some money left. But, he agreed with his new in-laws to buy a horse and a wagon for collecting scrap metal, and it wasn't enough. So, he secretly sent his brother to Ćuprija to track down the gypsy who had previously shown interest in his house.

"I've found another wife," he said to him, "and I wanna sell the house in Sibinovska Mala. If you're still lookin' to buy, let's negotiate a deal."

Of course, the man was now hesitating. Like, it didn't seem right; he knew his family, what would people say? So, both Ćamil's and Mica's place sold for half the price.

The next evening, he arrived in Ćuprija, accompanied by two new brothers-in-law and the buyer from Ćuprija.

"Mica," he said to his wife, who had already tried to get him back two or three times, "I've decided to follow my happiness, and you're goin' back to where ya' were. I brought this man to sell 'im the house. I bought it, I'm sellin' it. Start packin' your things, unless you don't wanna leave 'em."

The wife began to weep. The children were squealing and clinging to his trouser legs.

"What's the matter, Gypsies," he shouted, "to hell with ya'! You've squeezed the life out of me! Now I'm gonna live a little! Clear out your stuff! Count the money! Right now, in front of witnesses, so that the whole world knows that I was paid fairly!"

And while his brothers-in-law were clearing out the furniture, with the children squealing and his wife screaming, the man counted the money, placing it in his hand.

There's no going back now. Nor was he even thinking about going back.

He looked up and down Makedonska Street. Is anyone going to approach him? He unhooked two brushes and struck them against the footrest, as though he were playing a drum.

"Shoe shiner! Shoe shiiinerr!" he shouted. "Need a polish?" he asked a busy young couple, walking arm in arm.

Leaning towards each other, they continued walking past him without turning around.

There's no need to even bother with couples, he thought. Women don't like shoe shiners. What you give a shoe shiner, they think, you can save and spend it on a new dress.

Ćamil was moving into a gypsy camp to live in a tent. It's not the most comfortable place; he's never lived like that before. But his Mečka was in the tent with him, and nothing in the world could be more important than that.

True, while he was in Levač buying a wagon, his young wife had disappeared from the tent somewhere. Nevertheless, that night, Ivan and many of the men, as well as some other women from the camp, were with her. And he thought to himself: Well, I guess her father knows what she's doing. She can't go against him.

The time came for him to go on the road and find scrap metal. Mečka was reluctant: she can't go with him right away, she doesn't feel well, she'll stay with her people in the camp. Ivan and Selena supported her: why shouldn't she stay, it's a man's job. But he didn't give in and in the end, they left together.

Ćamil will never forget those days. Those were very, very *lachho* times for him.

At sunrise and sunset, they were busy with their business ("Scrap metal! Buying scrap metaaal!"), during the midday heat, they would hide from the sun in the shade, while the nights were meant for their enjoyment. Particularly when they set up their campsite alongside the Lugomir, Morava, or Belica rivers, or near a small stream, beside the remnants of a smoldering fire where they prepared polenta, accompanied by the gentle rustle of willows by the water, while their horse, tied nearby, let out soft snorts. That's when he would sometimes find himself in a state of euphoria, staying up until the early hours of the morning. Under the wagon, she would be softly breathing in her sleep beside him, and as he looked up at the vast sky, it seemed to him that they were riding through it together in a beautiful golden chariot.

This was a gift from God to Ćamil; a mere mortal could never deserve such happiness.

A boy approached him with a covered basket in his hand.

"Ya' wanna buy it?" he asked, and uncovered the basket to show a crouched hedgehog.

From the coiled form covered in spikes, a sharp nose jutted out, while frightened, button-like eyes peered at the world.

He replied almost offended:

"Why would I want it?"

"To eat cockroaches for you."

Ćamil wavered.

"Lemme see." He thought for a moment. Then he shook his head. "Nah. Better take it back where ya' found it."

The boy replied disappointedly:

"I've no idea what I'm gonna do."

He covered the basket once more and walked in the direction of the Prince Mihailo Monument, carrying it on his arm.

They would unload the scrap at the railway station in Jagodina; when there was enough to fill a freight car, Ivan would arrange for it to be loaded and driven to Belgrade; then he would go somewhere and collect the money.

Over the course of ten days, they emptied multiple wagons, visiting the camp each time they finished. However, Cvetko, his horse, was not young and suffered from a shortness of breath. He appeared to be growing weary and somewhat less vigorous.

"If you keep this up, he'll meet his end," Ivan commented.

"We can also rest," he laughed.

"If we rest now," his father-in-law replied, who wasn't really happy with him anyway, "What're we gonna do in the winter? Listen, from now on, you should go alone."

"What d'ya mean alone!" Ćamil was astonished. "I can't do it alone." I can go on foot next to the wagon! Mečka can ride in the wagon alone! What d'ya say, Mečka?"

But, she didn't feel like going anymore either. She said she's had enough of life with him, an old horse and scrap metal, smelling of garlic, as her only company. If he thinks he can make money, he can continue without her. He isn't good for anything else anyway.

And what can Ćamil do but continue alone?

But, without her, he didn't feel like going on the road. Sometimes, he would spend a full morning lying in the shade. He accomplished far less, and the effects were apparent. As he finally got up, he hurried to

compensate for the lost time, sprinting after Cvetko along the sweltering Tsarigrad Road and the dusty rural paths, while pondering his new way of life. As he pondered the situation further, his fear intensified. His young wife knew nothing about loyalty, nor did she have anyone to teach her. Consequently, his growing anxiety and jealousy led him to lash out more harshly at the horse.

By trotting through multiple villages in the Levač and Pomoravlje areas during the afternoon, he sometimes arrived at the fairgrounds just as darkness set in. On occasion, after arriving, he would see his wife in the tent, while at other times, she wouldn't be there. He counted himself lucky if she showed up by the next morning. She wouldn't even explain where she was. If he asked her parents, they would gaze at him as if he were speaking a foreign language.

And he would go back on the road the next day, even more worried.

Finally, one day, on an uphill stretch, his horse ran out of strength. He merely coughed, lowered his head to the ground, and came to a halt, gasping for air.

Stepping out of the wagon, he gave him a chance to regain his breath. Then, he picked up the whip.

"C'mon, Cvetko."

Cvetko raised his head, retreated a few meters, then coughed again and stayed planted on the ground.

Luckily, there happened to be a stream nearby. Ćamil unharnessed the aging animal and led him, step by step, to the water. He found a nice area under the willows where he let the animal rest.

In the evening, pushing more on his own, he somehow managed to get the overloaded wagon to the nearest village. Once there, he struggled to persuade a Gypsy cooper to keep it for a few days until he could return with help from Jagodina.

At dawn, he was already hurrying to the camp on the fairgrounds. While he stomped through the cool, wet soil next to the Tsarigrad Road with his bare feet apart, he thought about what to do next. Scrap iron, it seems, is not much use; at least that's what Ivan tells him. So far, he has received barely a dozen ten-dinar notes from him. Perhaps he ought to consider going back to shoe shining? Or maybe he could try selling goods instead? He just hopes his horse holds up during this time.

With these thoughts, he approached the camp that was already awake. Half of them had already taken off in the early morning, while the rest, looking tousled and unkempt, lingered near their tents. His Mečka was not among them. And her things disappeared with her.

Where's Mečka, he asked fearfully. Nobody knew.

Where's Ivan? He went to Jagodina on business.

Ćamil hurried to Jagodina, searching for him at the train station, near the slaughterhouse, and at various taverns like the Palas. However, he was unable to find him.

It was only later that evening that he finally saw him in the camp.

"I can't," his father-in-law said, looking at him coldly over his pipe, "choose a man for my daughter. She chooses who she wants to live with. She went to her husband Marko in Romania."

A railway worker, brushed past Ćamil, holding a bag. His expression, marked by exhaustion, suggested he was coming back from a long trip, indifferent to everything around him. He thought to himself that, if they allowed it, he could sleep for twelve hours and still find himself exhausted.

A large middle-aged man in a light raincoat strolled past, accompanied by a young woman with heavy legs, who waddled slightly like a duck.

The man abruptly halted and remarked thoughtfully, filled with wonder:

"Incredible."

It seemed as though he was asking someone for an explanation. He then lifted his arms high and nearly yelled:

"That's outrageous!"

The woman beside him appeared terrified. She looked around and tightly clutched his arm.

"Not now, please!"

And she pulled him down the street.

As if in a trance, Ćamil gathered his stuff from the camp and went to his brother in Turska Mala. When he arrived in Jagodina, he spent the first day drinking, then the second and third.

On the fourth day, Ćazim somehow persuaded him to at least go and get the wagon. If the scrap metal can't be transported, they should leave it and sell the horse and wagon. He sold his wattle and daub house in Sibinovska Mala to buy them.

But when they got to the village, they had a surprise waiting for them. Just the day before yesterday, Ivan and his kind took the wagon away. What's more, the watchman said that they didn't even pay for the storage and that he should.

Ćamil berated and cussed the Gypsy for giving the wagon to someone else, and he rushed with his brother to the fairgrounds. However, what they discovered was merely litter strewn about, along with horse droppings, human waste, and remnants of recent bonfires. The Gypsy camp was no longer there.

He walked among the garbage and, with an astonishment that he could not hide, looked at the place where his tent used to be. Was this where he spent so many wonderful nights with his Mečka? Did it even happen or was he, feeling desperate and still under the influence, fooled by his mind?

With a cowboy-like waddle, a young boy of ten approached, his fists lazily resting in the pockets of his blue button-up sweater, and a sizable straw hat sitting atop his head. In front of Ćamil's shop, he unexpectedly sprang up and swung his left fist into the air, then followed it with his right. After which, he tucked them back into his pockets and resumed his leisurely waddle.

He made his way across the crosswalk heading towards the Military Club.

As the season of autumn settled in, Ćamil sat in Jagodina for a week, drunk and leaning towards death, uncertain of his next course of action. Should he follow her to Romania? But how will he find her there and, if he does find her, what would he say to her? If only that Mica would send him some kind of message. He might even return to Ćuprija.

One night, Ćazim, worried about being stuck with his brother, quietly spoke up:

"She knows everything and won't even hear of you. She's already looking for someone to marry. She's got children to raise."

Finally, Ćamil gave up on Jagodina and, for a while, he wandered aimlessly around the Tsarigrad Road. Towards the end of autumn, he found himself in the village of Ciganjaši located in Velika Plana, and then in Smederevo.

While in Ciganjaši, he half-heartedly asked if a caravan of Russian gypsies had come by lately. If they saw an old, shaggy, brown horse with a distinctive white floral marking on its forehead, his wheezing Cvetko, in the column? Whether they noticed a short, plump, gray-haired gypsy with a crooked pipe in his teeth and a yellowish mustache, his would-be, headstrong father-in-law Ivan? If, among the colorful brothers, they saw a beautiful young woman who looked like a girl, wearing a colorful silk dress, with lips embellished with crimson tissue paper and large virtuous eyes that she often fixed on men, with flawless white skin that smelled of geraniums and a hint of black locust smoke, his beloved Mečka?

But, some replied that such a caravan—they did not notice a horse with a floral mark and everyone in the column was elderly—passed through a month ago; others claimed that they saw a similar one two

days ago, if not yesterday; and yet others, the most numerous, did not see anything at all, although they constantly watched the road.

And perhaps, he didn't even care anymore about the real truth. His Mečka had flown off like a sleek, dark coastal swallow and was now chirping under a tent that was warmer than his own.

In Smederevo, he was greeted by the beginning of winter and the man with whom he had taken shelter was getting ready for an important job. The winter holidays are coming soon, he said, people will be looking to roast pigs, and in Mala, a man with a household without dogs, the Gypsies' greatest enemies, has two sows with about a dozen piglets. If they take them and stash the piglets away at a friend's place in a village until the holidays, they'll have enough time to prepare them and then sell them at the market in Mladenovac. He's already made arrangements with the man; nothing can go wrong.

Čamil wasn't in the mood for stealing; he wasn't in the mood for anything. Nevertheless, he had to repay his friend for the bread and the bedspread. After Mečka, he thought, nothing could harm to him.

In the stillness of the night, the trio quietly neared a wooden fence. Once they could see their target, they paused to review their strategy one final time. They were armed with flashlights and had their pockets filled with corn and rope snares for the snouts. Everything must be done in the utmost silence; each of them was to carry three or four piglets in their sacks. And so, may God help them.

They jumped over the fence and, led by the one who was familiar with the house, headed for the pens. They silently crept through the flap doors. Like soft, sooty kittens, the piglets slept on their mothers' bellies, and initially, the sows were a little agitated. Still, the clever young lads moved in quietly, like shadows, softly scratched behind their ears, and even though they were still distrustful, they seemed to be starting to feel at ease.

They immediately took the corn out of their pockets. The sows approached them cautiously and, while keeping a sharp eye on what was happening around them, began to nibble. They let them be a little longer, then suddenly jumped them, fitting muzzles over their snouts. Then, while still scratching around, they began to slowly ensnare the young pigs. Some were already restrained, and before long, they would begin to load them into bags.

The interior was both low and cramped, making it difficult for them to see properly. Every time they shifted, they collided with something, which caused the sows to become more uneasy, and they began to emit soft squeals from their muzzles.

And then, one of them managed to break free. Stomping around in a panic, before their horrified eyes, she lunged at one of them, knocked

him down and raced through a flap door. The demon was now in the snowy part of the pen, galloping like a heavy draft horse and summoning total havoc with its gasping and groaning.

They froze. What now, Gypsy brothers? Run away at once or wait some more?

But the door of the house at the back was already slamming. Someone shouted from that direction:

"Who's there!"

They turned off the flashlights, looking at each other in fear. They slowly crawled out through the flap doors. They figured that they should lay low for a while and then make a break for it. Leave the bags, abandon the loot, run for their lives.

However, a bulb lit up at the house, followed by a gas lamp, as the voice started to near. Some man.

"Who's there, damn it!" shouted the villain. "Speak up if you're there!"

At that, the third partner lost his nerve—he's from Smederevo, it won't be convenient for him to even be spotted—and he vaulted over the small fence of the pigpen. He then stumbled through the yard and, likely having jumped over the wooden fence, he vanished from sight.

At the same moment, frantic shouts erupted from the lamp:

"Thieves! Thieves are attacking me! Stop them, people! Thieves!"

His friend just managed to emit a faint hiss:

"Holy shit, run!"

And in an instant, he too jumped over the small wooden fence and vanished with a loud noise.

In the pigpen, Ćamil was suddenly all alone in the world. Surrounded by bloodthirsty enemies, who wanted to take his Russian head off, he was completely lost. He had the urge to follow them, but he was unwilling. If only there were a place where he could take cover? Where he could bury his face?

But, his legs had grown rigid and shortened from sheer terror, leaving him unable to budge. He was shaking with fear, and his mind was so tangled that he couldn't find a way to untangle it.

So, with a delay, he ran to the pigpen's entrance and, in a daze, started to rattle the barred door. And while he was wasting time, he heard the rumbling of the man with the lamp approaching from the same direction.

He realized, at an inopportune moment, that he could also leap over them. He propelled himself onto the fence with one foot, only to suddenly notice that glimmering, pointed cams were shooting out from the side, heading straight for his head. He was still trying to get away. Yet, at that very instant, a powerful and deafening impact struck his right temple, similar to a burning piece of timber.

A blazing, massive sun flashed in front of his vision, particularly affecting his right eye. Initially, it scorched everything in his surroundings in a split second, then it struck his head, weaving it into countless agonizing, flickering strands.

Ćamil flew off the fence, soaring through the air like a soiled cloth used for scrubbing tavern floors, and immediately sought salvation in unconsciousness.

At the entrance of the Jadran Cinema on Republic Square, a large group of people was forming. A colorful poster was displayed from a great height, featuring a gorgeous woman in a bathing suit. Below her, it stated *Dancing in Water*.

Mine, he thought, could rival this one.

Unable to see properly, he took his hands, stained black and smelling of shoe polish, and carefully cleaned the good eye first, then the wet, empty cavity of his gouged-out eye. Although the scar son his nose and temple were small, he was still mostly blind on one side of his head.

A pale, gooey layer would develop on the inside of his eyelid, and it was not a pleasant sight.

What have they done to him.

As though in a dream and seemingly unaffected, Ćamil quietly tuned into the murmurs from afar while feeling some sort of shaking and pulling. At a certain point, he thought he detected a crunching and creaking sound beneath him, suggesting he was being taken away. His head had grown to the size of a big white pumpkin, and some soft, rubber horseshoes were being driven into it.

Outside the doorway of Vlajko's horseshoe workshop, at the beginning of a dead-end street called Hajduk-Veljko in Ćuprija, Mečka held onto Cvetko's harness, expressing her discontent:

"What are you waiting for when your Cvetko is barefoot?" But the workshop was echoing with the noise of hammers and bellows, preventing him from discovering a way out. He concluded that this was because he was in his own head, which, of course, had no door. Still, amidst the shadows of the shop, he noticed the hardworking Vlajko, a regular client from his days by the Sinđelić Monument, and he wanted to ask him something. It seemed very important to him. However, in front of the workshop, the farrier was scraping the hoof of the secured Cvetko with a pick and shouting at the top of his lungs:

"Hold him, they're robbing me! Hold him, thieves!"

And he forgot what he wanted.

Then he heard the clanking and clattering of numerous knives and forks and thought to himself in a daze:

"Are they slaughtering me for Christmas?"

Following that, he drifted into a hazy mix of scraping, clattering, and swaying, until a sudden, intense urge to relieve himself pierced through his abdomen. He woke up, but was still in a dazed state where everything was stirring, and at first, he couldn't remember how to do it, and then he heard himself squealing. I squeal like a pig, he thought, shaking his head against some pillow.

He struggled to open his eyes and thought he was successful, but there was nothing visible around him. He concluded it was still the middle of the night.

For a full day, or perhaps two or three, or even an entire year, he emitted squeals that he couldn't stop or control. At last, he noticed a draft against his skin, realizing that someone was approaching him.

A pleasant female voice asked him:

"What d'you want?"

He uttered clearly, although in an offensive whiny voice, "I wanna take a piss."

But for some reason, he heard it coming out as some strange:

"Bo-bo-bo."

Confounded for a moment, he hesitated, hoping the woman would explain.

"It hurts?" she said. "Well, it has to hurt a little." "No!" he yelled in that strange voice. "I wanna pee!"

But, what he heard was:

"Mo-mo-mo!"

"It'll pass," the woman said, patting around on his bed.

And the movement of the air and the rustling of her clothes announced to him that she had left.

He thought: Could it be I've forgotten how to say it? Then he released it. Instantly, the pain in his belly subsided, transforming into soothing warmth that spread and dispersed across his abdomen, thighs, and rear.

Then, he fell asleep peacefully.

Ćamil slept for several hours, free from hallucinations. And then, still in the dark, he woke up in a wet, cold bed, smelling of medicine and urine. Feeling ashamed, he reached up to feel the bulky bandage on his head and eyes, not daring to call for help for a long time. And when he finally got his courage up to do so, he learned from the nurse that a police officer was standing outside his hospital room, and that he had lost an eye.

Ćamil was blind.

He questioned how that was possible, hidden behind his dark wrap, still in disbelief. At that instant, he felt an even greater sense of humiliation over the urine.

Ćamil patted the side of the chest and blew something off.

"At your service, at your service," he said.

A pudgy man with a miner's badge, featuring two crossed hammers, pinned to his lapel buttonhole made his way toward him. Beneath a square cap resting on his sizable head, unruly gray hair sprouted, accompanied by a small, bent, pointed nose, while his eyes, behind thick glasses, resembled those of an ox.

Every third or fourth evening, he cleaned and polished his shoes—he thought he was getting him ready for a lady and concluded with a groan: Money talks—and the engineer had still not descended to acknowledge his presence and greet him. So, it was simply a matter of professional honor to find a way to play a trick on him.

"What kind of polish do you have?" the engineer asked. He never asked him anything else.

Looking up at him with a helpful expression, he quickly arranged several tins and small jars on the board.

The customer then grumpily lifted his foot and pointed with his sleek, pointed shoe:

"This one." Both the gesture and the choice were always the same.

Then he placed his foot on the footrest. Ignoring him completely, he pulled a newspaper from his pocket and leaned towards the light coming from the "Consignment Store" window.

The war saved Ćamil from a long prison sentence and during the period of occupation, he settled in an area near Cvetko's Tavern in Belgrade.

He need someone to cook for him, someone to do his laundry, and he lived with one, then another, then a third wife, and he didn't care much for any of them. He thought that after Mečka, he was unable to endure the presence of any other woman, and at home he was usually indifferent and gloomy, and sometimes cruel.

His activities included smuggling, gambling, petty theft, and once more, shining shoes, primarily German army boots this time. In exchange for polishing boots, he was sometimes given a whole pack of occupation cigarettes, and now and then, he would end up with a full chest of them. Engaging in such exchanges spared him and his family from the torment of intense starvation.

However, his work lacked both stability and safety, as he was detained three times by the Germans for being a small-time criminal and a Gypsy captive. He managed to escape twice through sheer luck, cunning, and bribery, often due to his cheeky attitude and light-hearted jokes. The third time was especially dangerous, as he was initially transported to the Sajmište camp, and subsequently moved to Banjica, where he was picked for execution night after night. However, this too

ultimately led to a somewhat cheerful conclusion, after six months of helplessly staring death in the face, receiving occasional painful slaps and kicks, and burying those who were executed in Jajinci. As a physical reminder of this experience, he developed lasting nerve sensitivity, an inclination to sweat excessively, low endurance, and a propensity for conflict, even though he often ended up on the losing side.

The liberation was marked by the end of his marriage to his last wife, and he zealously shouted in the street by Cvetko's Tavern:

"Long live the Russian brothers! Long live the corn farmers!"

In his excitement, he enlisted in the army.

As he was defective, he spent the initial ten days happily working as a cook in a battalion located in the capital city. Then he was transferred across the Sava River to Srem, into the rain, slush, cold and shivers, into the frantic movements of the field kitchen, shifting from one spot to another, into fear of the horrors of being wounded, dismembered and killed, and his enthusiasm quickly faded. Consequently, he embraced the first signs of eyelid inflammation as a present from God and managed to arrive at the field hospital beyond Šid, where he immediately inquired about a referral to the military commission.

"Then why did you enlist?" the tired doctor asked him.

"Comrade doctor," he replied glumly, "I screwed up."

Hence, they released him. But after the war, this gave him the opportunity to register with the Veterans' Union and to present himself, always unofficially, as a war invalid. However, he soon recognized with a sigh that it was of little use.

Ćamil rolled up the engineer's cuffed trouser leg, then attached the cardboard protectors to his shoe and carefully removed the mud from the sole and heel using a sharp brush. Then with the other, soft one, he wiped the dust off the upper part of the shoe.

At that moment, a huge, overloaded yellow truck backed out of the construction site on the 29 November Street into Dečanska. It belched out smoke as it rumbled down the road toward Marx and Engels Square, while passersby regarded it with indifference. The engineer was also watching it over his newspaper.

Taking advantage of the moment, Ćamil hurriedly coated the shoe with paint he had in a bottle.

There you go. While you're busy reading, I'll paint you.

He then began to buff it, initially using brushes and later a soft velvet cloth. He worked skillfully and quickly, his hands were simply flying.

"The other one, please."

The miner's badge lowered his foot down on the pavement, assessing the quality of his work through his thick glasses and fixing the sagging

sock. Then he placed the other one on the footrest and covered himself with the newspaper again.

Just then, a pretty, slender girl in a pale raincoat approached the telephone pole close to Republic Square. She lived somewhere nearby, Ćamil had seen her often. Her brown hair was fastened with a thin scarf, while her hands were tucked in her pockets. A youthful handbag rested on her elbow.

The customer with the badge was utterly captivated by the young woman, and the shoe shiner, with almost jealous ferocity, coated his other shoe with paint. He then made it gleam just as quickly and skillfully.

When he straightened his trouser leg, he said with satisfaction:

"Now that's good work."

Again, the engineer didn't reply. Still staring at the figure in the pale raincoat—if only you could have some, Ćamil thought maliciously—he folded the newspaper and paid him absentmindedly. Then he looked back at the girl once more and headed towards *Borba*.

He stomped like a Styrian horse, kicking his heels sharply, rocking his straight, flabby back and wiggling his high backside.

After being discharged from the army, Ćamil moved in with his fourth wife, who had two children. He accepted them as his own and soon made her a third, then a fourth, and for his family of six, he had to build an unauthorized small wattle and daub house in Jatagan-Mala, situated below the mental hospital in Guberevac. He somehow made a living by engaging in a small-scale black market and reselling stolen merchandise, as well as mobilizing a new shoeshine kit. Unfortunately, he was apprehended for his illicit activities on two or three occasions, but fortunately, he was never incarcerated for more than three months.

"You're a fighter," an officer without epaulets and with a light blue rhombus on his collar told him once while he was in prison at Obilićev Venac, "will ya' help us defeat this reactionary scum?" He replied, shocked:

"Sure I will, Comrade Captain!"

"Well then, sign this for me, and I'll let you go."

With a trembling hand, Ćamil signed a piece of paper that required him to identify the enemies of the people and to endorse deliveries as Hamid, without including a last name.

Released immediately, he ran like hell back to his family, wanting to find a place to hide. He spent two days there, filled with anxiety. After that, he woke his wife, asked her to handle things without him for a while, and caught a train to Zagreb.

During his time in Zagreb, he spent three to four months shining shoes at the station, where he occasionally dispatched covert postal orders to Jatagan-Mala while observing the travelers with a humble gaze.

At times, he still dreamed of seeing Mečka's stunning, wide skirt adorned with flowers and her blushing, round face among the masses, and in his loneliness, it dawned on him: that was a really *lachho* life. He had almost forgotten Mica in Ćuprija and couldn't remember what she looked like. However, the children he had left with her sometimes crossed his mind, making him think uneasily: how old are they now?

One day, he found himself detained once more and, while at the prison on Petrinjska Street, without mentioning the previous arrangement, he agreed to a new arrangement to act as a snitch, this time for the Croatian UDB, as some Korčagin without a first name.

Overwhelmed with fear and uncertainty, he immediately slung the chest over his shoulder and hurried away to his Jatagan-Mala as soon as they let him go.

Within the neighborhood below the mental hospital, everyone was equally delighted with the encounter and he tearfully vowed to his wife that he would not leave again, even if chased by lighting. He also made a vow to himself that he would refuse to be a snitch, regardless of whether he had to go back to Ćuprija, and he found this idea perfectly acceptable.

He entirely abandoned his shady activities, now pure as a saint, and once more brought the gear out to the streets of Belgrade, starting at the pharmacy on Slavija, then moving to the steps by the train station, and finally to the clock at Terazije. Much like a frightened animal, he stayed watchful for the appearance of his personal demon, the officer in a uniform without epaulettes. To be on the safe side, he chose not to reply to the city's summons, and sent his wife in his place, while he took great care to steer clear of any interactions with law enforcement.

At Terazije, he would notice, on multiple occasions, the threatening individual just in time to escape. One time, he dashed into the throng near the ticket counter of the Belgrade Cinema. But, then someone took hold of his arm.

"Where've you been?" the secret agent asked him with a frown, now wearing a blue velvet coat and his hair slicked back with walnut oil.

"I'm right here, Comrade Captain," he replied, turning pale.

"So why haven't you been in touch? You know what you promised?"

Ćamil, staring intensely, raised his voice as if he were admonishing someone:

"I've nothing to do with 'em, motherfuckers! I'm a fallen soldier, look!" And he pointed to his blind eye with his index finger. "I can't see! I can't see anything!"

The noise in the crowd drew attention, leaving the man in the blue coat bewildered. He mumbled uncertainly that this might have consequences for someone and hurriedly left the corridor without glancing back.

He remained anxious about negative encounters for a while. After two or three years of this ongoing concern, he began to suspect that perhaps they had lost interest in him, which allowed him to feel a bit more at ease.

Then, at the beginning of Makedonska Street, right behind the Ginić Tavern, which had been in state hands since the war, he discovered a secure entryway where he could suspend his chest from a bar in the evenings, freeing him from the anxiety of toting it around on trams and in the streets.

He's too old for that. He's forty-seven.

It's good, this is a *shukar* spot.

In the midst of the morning rush, when everyone was eager to start their workday, he still had a flow of customers. There were always people who were going to business or Party meetings or looking for a job and wanted to look neat. Even in the daytime, many individuals roamed the shops, eager to uncover something interesting, and sometimes, they would even chat with him. But, of course, the evening hours were the best time for business, as that was when social visits and tavern gatherings took place. It's just that by that time, exhaustion sets in, and the motivation to work diminishes. You find yourself wanting to rush home, enjoy your vegetarian beans, and then head straight to bed.

"Hi." A companion of his, who works as a street sweeper and lives nearby in Prokop, walked past. At home, a fat, unkempt wife and several children, like many others, awaited his return. It's fortunate that they begin to earn an income at a young age.

The gentle drizzle ceased as quietly as it had begun. The pavement appeared tacky due to the dampness, but aside from the construction site stains, it was relatively clean. The warm autumn evenings were descending into darkness, and the lamps on the posts were starting to serve their purpose at last.

The girl in the pale raincoat continued to spin around casually, glancing in the direction of the *Borba*. If she was waiting for someone, Ćamil thought, he should have shown up by now. Although, seeing her like this, she was even dearer to him. This way, it felt as though she remained loyal to him.

I could one day, he thought, offer to shine her shoes. I'd simply say—you don't have to pay.

At that moment, the renowned Hungarian twin dwarfs from the Adrija Circus, located close to Karađorđe Park, who were featured in various newspapers, walked by. During the war, the Germans intended to wipe them out and held them in a dangerous camp, but the sisters turned out to be stronger. And, here they were, prominent stars in the folk art of circus entertainment.

Dressed identically, in yellow dresses with blue flowers and unbuttoned gray children's coats, they solemnly waved their small hands from side to side, extending their elbows outward like the wings of a damaged bird.

"Ah, look at 'em!" shouted a restless little boy in a repurposed military shirt.

The woman who was with him smacked him on the mouth and he fell silent.

The twins passed by unperturbed, as if it were none of their business. The attention on the streets, I guess, didn't bother them, and their tiny faces, lined with a thick, see-through web of wrinkles, looked calm. With a twist of their waists, they admired the crowded windows of the "Consignment Store" as they passed by.

Bowing her head like a nearsighted person, the girl in the pale raincoat followed them with a sideways glance.

When they had moved away, she pursed her lips indifferently, glanced back at the *Borba* one last time and, softly scraping her narrow-heeled shoes, continued across the crosswalk toward the Prince Mihailo Monument. Before long, she disappeared in the crowd.

Meanwhile, Ćamil was resting against the wall, battling drowsiness. He knew he ought to move forward again, but he didn't feel up to it. He thought that if he returned home now, he would end up waking at midnight. "*Kurafte*," he grumbled, "my age."

So he decided that it would be best if he had a mild Levač rakia behind the bar of the Ginić Tavern, where they knew him. This would shake him up.

However, he remained still, and with a somewhat wrinkled, elongated eyelid resembling a curtain over his single eye, he blinked dreamily.

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

BRATISLAV R. MILANOVIĆ

SEVEN POEMS

INCIDENTS IN THE LIBRARY

My library smells of dust
of unventilated centuries and—of us, seated leisurely,
in the back aisles among bookshelves: in beautiful Nefertiti's bedroom,
at the fraudulent trials of Tomas de Torquemada

resurrected in Siberia with his large,
yet also his small, mustache on the square of the Third Reich.
And behind these remain ashes and bones
in the catalogues of the most popular reality show.

My library also smells of
yesterday, which has deposited
tiny particles on the top of the closed books, where
even the tiniest mote searches for its own page:

with others' innocent, yet deadly games,
with others' lackluster or mad loves,
with others' small battles and great pogroms...
Each searches the terrain for a peaceful lodging for the night...

That's how these shelves juxtapose purpose with purpose,
fate with fate, a dream with dream.

HOW ABEL KILLED CAIN*

In the beginning it was all the same:
at the edge of the horizon two sacrificial altars
for burning merge with the sky, as if on a picnic:
the smoke of Abel's sacrifice, provocatively,
caresses the sky—while Cain's smoke,
its spine smoldering, hovers above the ground.

And nothing points to the crime;
even God, possibly bribed, through
a tiny hole in the cloud, squints down on the scene...
And in the shadows of the generous fig, Cain,
having knocked Abel onto the ground, waves
with his brotherly hand at the top of his head.

For seven thousand years, this image has been repeated.
But, more recently, among the figs,
smoke rises above the red lights
of the two stacks of an oil refinery,
and through its huge piston, rushes Cain
clutching a murderer's key towards Abel.

But suddenly Abel stands up,
dusts the eons after his death from his shirt,
rolls up his sleeves, and whispers through gritted teeth to himself:
And now it's my turn.

AN AFTERNOON UNDER RILKE'S DUINO TOWER

There the sea has completely grown wings...
I've waited for the irresistible whisper: *come*,
so I might surrender my life into its soft glow,
or one dream completely resembling it,
—often I've measured where I've lived the longest—
and for everyone to fulfill the other.

* Previously published (in a slightly different version) in the United States in *Atlanta Review* (special Serbian Issue), Spring/Summer 2021.

I've waited for the sea to open its book
of birth and death: in its particles is
written the secret of combining and dividing of matter,
and on the bottom still remain the walls and gates
of cities, swaying and you can hear bells tolling
from belltowers overgrown with corals...

Only a few things have occurred by my wish:
yes, the sea has gaped its infinite mouth...
But then lukewarm, it splashed me, leaving
on the shore its cigarette butts, plastic hair pins,
swimming sandals, beach umbrellas, lounge chairs,
and a confusing gentleness from Germany...

And in me lingers the salty taste of betrayal.

THE ENDURANCE OF THE POEM

Now it has become clear: the poem is not dying,
but my eyes and tongue, mere objects...
Everywhere arises a strange, circular ischemia:

from the whispers that still seep through
scars are left in the bloodstream of things:
trailing along the walls of arteries and the ventricles
—as if after a heart attack.

And someone—once the cyclones,
stirred by the hands of the clocks, calm—may explore
these trifles: holding a magnifying glass
to study this fibrous tissue, a semblance of the alphabet...

And may interpret what was burning under the sternum,
of the one, who sang loudly, above the cities
in the shadows of the plane trees along the Boulevard:

did it speak of some kind of love, unsurpassable,
which dissembled the moment he climbed the heights,
or was it the thought that everything, but without us, repeats itself?

WHEN THE BODY BECOMES A GHOST...

When the ghost leaves it and the body begins to stiffen
into some new realm, will there remain at least
some evidence of its light which, in some
future time might be studied by experts?

Will they then say:
this foot dreamt of leaving a hot
imprint, deep and permanent, recognizable,
in the ashes of the literary Pompeii;

around this face once gathered a clear day,
amid the murmur of cities on the line between pretense and a dream,
and this forehead broke through the dark truths
splayed across the suburban skies;

this is this arm, his favorite, which has scribbled
its inscriptions on clay, on a tree, and on disks,
even on fog and water—barely a tiny scratch
oh I am, oh to be and to want—as if doing
some new and unfamiliar work.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Maybe I'll sail through the last leg of the trip
to the Big Mouth, behind which await me
some other kind of beaches and bays,
some other squares, rooms and hallways,
maybe even a new kind of time, where I'll sail
across a shimmering, calm sea . . .

And maybe I'll be sucked into some Black Hole
by a whirling maelstrom of this river riptide
from which already for a small lifetime
I've been smuggling dreams here, and hope there,
and poking with a barge pole the tide pools
more dangerous than silent caverns?

Yet, certainly, propped on some rock above the sea
a lighthouse must be waiting for me, although
it has not up to now, to illumintae the point,
with a brief flash, where the light clots,
to my long ago predestined—crossing . . .

INITIAL AND FINAL QUARTER

New is this phase on our path, my darling,
the initial quarter of a new era
more clearly than ever rushing through light,
on our final stumbling toward nothing:
that's how it was meant to be when we first saw daylight.

September now, it is: bees drink grapes
fermented as a prophecy of aging
here where thorns and spurs attack, and where
some people stumble across the fields, where
fire pits multiply and plaster flakes are discarded.

September, it is: sweetness disperses
and limestone creeps towards senility
under membranes, into boiled-down sugars born,
when reason was blurry, and the walk, in fog.

New is this phase: it's time to measure
each slow step along our summer path
which suddenly transforms into a whirlpool
while a spider casts its web toward a distant shoreline

from which wave our dear ones, long-gone,
faces crying out together familiar words:
about love and hope, about greed and hunger
and the processions, searching for their final dream...
That clear place where this phase finds its closure.

Translated from Serbian by
Biljana D. Obradović

DAVID ALBAHARI

THE BEGINNING OF SILENCE

Leon Kabiljo tried leaving Novi Sad three times. The first time, he wasn't making the decision: he was a baby, and his parents brought him on a trip that lasted six years. Back then, Germany embarked on a war and lost. His parents had had enough of their lives as refugees and the constant wandering through Albania and Italy. They contemplated the idea of moving to America, which was complicated by the fact that many people were seeking to go there so, they made a spur-of-the-moment decision to return to Novi Sad.

"All in all," his father told their friends, who rented them a room until they sorted out their living situation, "there's no place like Novi Sad. There are, of course, more beautiful cities out there, but none have the heart and soul of Novi Sad."

However, it turned out that the soul and heart were not quite the same as before, so when Leon's father noticed that the obstacles in settling into their apartment were ongoing, he decided they would move to Israel. This time, Leon participated in the family discussion, organised around a table in their friend's kitchen. In addition to his father, mother, and himself, his older sister, ten-year-old Julija, was also sitting at the table and even joined in on the conversation a few times. Still, it was their father who spoke the entire time. From time to time, his mother would quietly say "Yes" with a grin, and as far as Leon could recall, there was just one occasion when she replied differently. He was unclear about what his father had asked, but the memory of his astonishment and the conciliatory statement, "If that's what you want, then so be it," remained with him.

Seven years later, they returned to Novi Sad. Again, his father told his acquaintances, "All in all, there's no place like Novi Sad. Nahariya is nice, Jerusalem even nicer, but none have the heart and soul of Novi Sad."

Leon had a hard time dealing with the change. Unlike Julija, who continued to get good grades in school, his grades completely plummeted. His head was full of Hebrew words and Israeli images, and he couldn't get used to the fact that instead of the Mediterranean Sea, he had to swim in the Danube. Nevertheless, time worked its magic, and by the following summer, he felt like a true Novi Sad resident. Out of all the numerous memories of the previous years, only his nickname remained: Leon the Israeli.

Life continued in an already familiar fashion. Leon first finished elementary school, then high school and then, he enrolled at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Belgrade. During his studies, he lived with his aunt in New Belgrade and that was where, in that one-bedroom apartment, near the underpass that led to Zemun, he had his first love-making experience with Olgica, a law student he had met at a dance. They got married after graduating—first, she and then he followed five months later—and after a short period of contemplation, they decided to live with Leon's parents in Novi Sad.

By the second or third day, Leon found himself questioning whether his decision was a good one. During Sunday dinner, the initial clash occurred between his mother and Olga. Olga, quite innocently as Leon thought, made a small remark about the moussaka that Leon's mother had prepared. His mother reacted with a loud and furious outburst, snapping angrily at Olga and her husband. Without giving them a chance to reply, she threw the cloth onto the table and hurried out of the kitchen. Leon's father, Leon and Olga remained sitting in silence. Leon and Olga put down their cutlery, looked at each other and occasionally raised their eyebrows or shrugged. Leon's father waved his hand and continued with his dinner, but after a few bites, which he washed down with beer, he also stopped eating.

"And?" asked Leon, "What now?"

"It's nothing," his father replied, "She just needs some time to adjust." He looked at Olgica and winked. "And the meat," he added, "is a little dry. It always is when she makes moussaka and that also takes some getting used to. Once a person gets used to something, nothing bothers him. And you!" he said to Leon, "You better go check on your mother. It's up to you now."

His mother didn't want to talk. When Leon entered his parents' room, she was sitting by the window, staring outside, and she remained in the same position when he left. His father stood in the doorway. "Nothing!" Leon said, "She didn't say a word." His father sighed. "I knew it!" he whispered, "She's as stubborn as a mule." He entered their room and closed the door behind him. Leon waited a moment before

moving closer to the door and pressing his ear against it, but—if his parents were even talking—he couldn't hear anything.

Olgica immediately suggested that they look for an apartment, but Leon kept finding new reasons not to. First, he insisted on their alleged money shortage which, as Olgica showed him, was not true since both of them, as scholarship holders of large companies, were hired immediately. True, they were still receiving internship salaries, but even with such incomes, her calculations relentlessly confirmed they had enough to rent a modest apartment. Leon then changed tactics: he argued that such modest apartments could only be found a fair distance from the city center, which would greatly complicate their lives. Both of them worked in the city center, so staying in Leon's parents' apartment, located not far from the Synagogue, was—Olgica had to admit—a much better solution for them.

Leon could breathe a sigh of relief, but it didn't last long. One day, Olgica returned home from work, excited. After ensuring that Leon was alone in the apartment, she announced that their problem had been solved for at least the next seven or eight years. Her colleague's husband, she said, had gotten a job at the JAT representative office in Frankfurt or London, she wasn't sure which, and her colleague suggested that they rent the apartment to them during that time. The best thing about all of this, Olgica stated, was that the apartment was located near the Matica srpska, and Leon could see his favourite writers, Boško Petrović and Aleksandar Tišma, regularly.

Leon had only one other argument left. In a shaky voice, he thanked Olgica for thinking of his literary preferences, but there was something else, something he hadn't mentioned to her before, and now he realized that he should have. "It's about my mother," he said in the same emotional voice. And then he told the stunned Olgica that his mother had cancer and that her days were practically numbered. "You know how attached she is to me," he said, "and I fear that if we were to leave now, our departure would have perilous consequences for her health."

Olgica was too stunned to speak. She nodded silently, and finally, when she realized that she couldn't hold back her tears any longer, she rushed into their room, threw herself on the bed, and burst into tears. A moment later, Leon entered the room, knelt near the bed and started consoling her, after that he lifted her skirt, turned her on her back and took off her panties, all the while warning her that she could not, in any way, show his mother that she knows her secret. As he was penetrating her, Olgica was crying, biting down on the pillow and tearfully repeating, "I know, I know... take it easy, that's it, that's it.... I know, I know..." It wasn't until later that she suspected Leon had made it all up.

It just so happened that one day, Olgica saw two medical reports on the dining room table, both addressed to Leon's mother. She managed to look at only one of them, a blood test, and then she heard someone's footsteps, put the report down on the table, and hastily left the room. She didn't know what the second report said, but the results she did see were more than good: not even the cholesterol was that high. "There have to be some changes in the blood composition of cancer patients," she thought and immediately rebuked herself for being so naive. It couldn't be that way, especially in the advanced stage of the disease that, judging by what Leon had said, his mother had been in for a long time. Maybe she wasn't seeing well, Olgica thought, perhaps she wasn't noticing the subtle changes in the family's daily rituals. Even if they're hiding the illness from her, they certainly aren't hiding in their relationships with each other. She just had to pay more attention, to observe in a way she had never observed before, and she would surely notice some codes and patterns in their verbal and physical communication.

It took two Sunday dinners and two Saturday dinners for Olgica to be convinced that nothing was wrong with her mother-in-law. Not only by what she was eating and drinking, but also by how she was behaving, what she was saying and, most importantly, how she was laughing. Nothing, absolutely nothing indicated the existence of some secret from which Olgica was excluded, there were no unfinished or unclear sentences and consoling gestures and as discussions unfolded regarding summer plans for this year and the next, Leon's mother contributed numerous suggestions and said how she already saw herself in Spain, emphasizing that, if she liked it, she would go there "the following year, too". Olgica remembered how an acquaintance from work, whose mother had recently died of cancer, told her that since the moment her mother was diagnosed with lung cancer, she had never used the future tense in her sentences. Of course, not all patients are the same and everyone copes in their own way, but the room for doubt opened and there wasn't anything that could close it anymore.

She tried to coax an answer from Leon by asking him several worrisome questions about his mother's health, and she always got similar, general answers. Once he said that it was "better than anyone had hoped"; another time he talked about some new "miracle drug" and a third time, in a slightly irritated voice, he thanked Olgica for her concern, emphasizing that it was unnecessary because everything was under perfect control. So, Olgica decided that the time had come to take matters into her own hands.

By tacit agreement, Sunday dinner was a time of truce. The hatchets were buried and everyone tried to act as if family relations were in good order. In contrast to the usual brief questions and answers, Leon's

mother talked to Olga, sometimes indulging in a flood of memories and reminiscences about people who were completely unknown to Olgica. Leon's father was also more at ease during Sunday dinner, chatting openly with Olgica, sometimes starting political discussions, even though these usually turned into long monologues of his own. Olgica welcomed this breather and break, each Sunday at noon, from her strained relationship with Leon's mother, even though she was bothered by the hypocrisy with which she one-sidedly determined when there would be peace between them and when there would be war. That day, however, she didn't think about any of that but rather concentrated completely on finding the right moment for her question. She found it when Leon's father told a funny anecdote about something that happened on the city bus. Everyone laughed, especially Leon's mother. And while her laughter was still echoing, Olgica put down her cutlery and asked in a determined voice, "Mrs. Kabiljo, how is your health?"

Still smiling, Leon's mother said, "Never better, never better." Then she looked at Olgica and asked, "Why do you ask?"

"Just asking," Olgica replied after a short hesitation, "it doesn't matter".

"It does matter," Leon's mother said sharply. "So?"

Olgica looked down, sniffed, and covered her face with her hands. "I heard," she said, "that you have cancer."

"Cancer?!" Leon's mother sounded genuinely shocked. "What fool could have told you that?"

Then Olgica looked at Leon for the first time and saw his frantic expression. "Leon," whispered Olgica, "Leon told me."

"You're lying," Leon shouted, "I didn't say anything."

"You did," Olgica said calmly, "Why don't you admit it?"

"Leon!" his mother asked, "What did you say?"

"Nothing, Mom," Leon replied in an almost tearful voice, "She made it all up!"

"Just a little longer," Olgica said to herself, "then I'll run to my room to cry." Her gaze fell on Leon's father, who was not interfering in the conversation and on whose face an almost mocking smile floated. "He knows," she thought to herself, and at that moment, Leon grabbed her shoulder and shook it, telling her to admit that she was lying. This was the moment Olgica waited for: she pushed his hand off her shoulder, pushed the chair away, and stormed out of the dining room. She rushed into their room and locked the door. She wasn't sure what she wanted to achieve, but now the moment had arrived for her to face the consequences. She heard footsteps, then Leon's voice. He shook the doorknob, kicked the door, and told her to unlock it immediately because if she didn't, he would break down the door.

"Do it, and I'll call the police!" said Olgica.

"I don't know what you wanted to accomplish," Leon replied from the other side of the door, "but you have half an hour to pack up and leave. It's two minutes past ten now, so I want you gone by a quarter to three. Is that clear?" His angry footsteps caused the hardwood floor to creak, and then the apartment fell silent.

"Yes," Olgica said, even though no one heard her, "that's what I wanted to achieve." She pulled out a suitcase from under the bed, opened it, and began to pack her things. First, she put in two sweaters, then a few blouses, underwear, and socks. Then came skirts and dresses, two pairs of pants, a summer jacket and scarves. She put her shoes and sneakers in one bag. She shouldn't forget to take the raincoat and umbrella from the coat rack in the hall, as well as her makeup from the bathroom. And the towels, what was she going to do with the towels? She hesitated, but only a moment later, it occurred to her that she was finally free and she could easily buy new towels. True, she didn't know where to go once she left the apartment; miraculously, it didn't seem scary at all. "Just get out," she thought, "everything will be easier then."

She was in the corridor, dragging her suitcase and pushing the bag using her legs, when Leon intercepted her. First, he stood in her way, blocking her path, then moved aside only to block her path again.

"Make up your mind," said Olga, "Do you want me to stay or do you want me to go? You can't have both."

"You make up yours," replied Leon.

"You want me to make up my mind?" Olgica yelled, "What on earth are you talking about? You're trying to make it seem like I left of my own free will, which is completely out of the question, do you hear me?

Leon was silent.

"What's wrong?" asked Olgica, "Your mom didn't tell you what to do and now you don't know what to say? Yeah, well, I'm sick of both you and your mother. As far as I'm concerned, I'm leaving and you're free to happily live with her. The old crone will never die anyway."

Olgica slowly marched on until she reached the entryway. She opened the door, lifted the bag with the shoes and walked out. She couldn't carry everything at once, so she took the suitcase and put it next to the mailboxes. "It's a blessing that we live on the first floor," she thought as she headed back for the bag and immediately corrected herself, "That I lived on the first floor". She picked up the bag, stuck out her tongue at the door, with the "Kabiljo" nameplate, and walked towards the mailboxes.

This is where, two steps away from the suitcase, Leon caught up to her. He covered her mouth with his left hand, and in his right hand,

he had a knife, which he was waving around in front of her, repeatedly saying, "You want me to kill you? Is that what you want?"

Olgica was muttering and shaking her head. She didn't think Leon would dare use the knife; she even found him funny with his messed-up hair and wide eyes. The thing that she minded most was the little drops of saliva coming out of his mouth and dripping down on her face. She thought that she would sooner die from that than the dull knife that Leon kept shoving under her chin.

This is how Stevan Stevanović, their neighbour from the second floor, who was returning from his fishing trip, found them. He was angry because the fish weren't biting as he'd hoped and he had to buy a sizeable carp to save the expected fish dinner. At first, considering his eyes hadn't adapted to the darkness after being out in the daylight, he wasn't sure whether or not he was seeing things, but soon realised what was happening and yelled: "Leon, don't! What are you doing? Drop that knife!"

When he heard his voice, Leon turned around, let Olgica go and hastily hid the knife behind his back. Olgica didn't hesitate, she quickly lifted her leg and kneed Leon in the groin. Leon yelped out in pain, bent over, dropped the knife and fell on his knees as if he were praying. Stevan Stevanović took the opportunity to take a swing at Leon with his bag filled with fish, hitting him on the head. A blow echoed dully as if it had occurred underwater, and Leon tumbled to the floor. The knife fell in front of Olgica's feet and she kicked it away from her with disgust. She recognised that knife: it was the knife that Leon's father always used to carve the roast, always saying how it needed to be sharpened. Every time, Leon would promise to get to it but never did. It would annoy Olgica, but, evidently, all of that had become irrelevant. She stepped over the knife, lifting her legs high, thanked the neighbour, who was carefully leaning over Leon, picked up her things and left.

"Novi Sad was always different on Sundays," she thought as she slowly walked towards the city centre. She didn't know where to go, she thought of Katolička Porta, the Danube, even the building in which Aleksandar Tišma lived as Leon had once mentioned, the Synagogue or a department store and after each of these images, the moment when the bag with the carp hit Leon on the head, would come back to her. The look of surprise on his face was so realistic that Olgica almost felt sorry for him. Then she straightened her back, and with her chest out, whispered to herself, "Never again will I have regrets about anything." She looked around in search of a payphone. "I'll go to Marija's," she firmly decided and started repeating her number.

Two years passed, and a letter had arrived at Marija's place from The Netherlands in which Leon let Olgica know that he'd decided to return to Novi Sad, after all. "All in all, there's no place like Novi Sad," he wrote. Leon also wrote that, in the meantime, his parents died and that she was always welcome to come back to him, that is if she wanted to. All of her things were still there, just like she left them.

Olgica was shaking and she dropped the letter. That night, she dreamt of a knife. As soon as she told Marija about the dream, Marija said, "A knife means that a trip awaits you. If the knife is sharp, then the trip will be rough and long, but if it's dull, it'll be an outing. It's just a matter of knowing what type of knife it is."

"It doesn't matter what kind of knife it is," replied Olgica, "I have to pack my stuff either way." Then, she started opening and closing drawers, taking stuff out of the wardrobe, going through the folded clothes, picking out socks, and folding her headscarves as if she had tons of suitcases for all her clothes, and not just the one that she brought with her.

Leaning on the doorframe, Marija tried to convince her not to leave Novi Sad. "In these two years that you've lived here, I've learned something about you," she said, "and I know that you don't bear grudges. Go back to Leon and try again, you can always leave him if it turns out that you don't fit together."

"You're right," replied Olgica, as she continued packing her stuff. "I want to be prepared," she explained to Marija. And indeed, as soon as he called her a week later and told her that he'd arrived, she quickly picked up the suitcase and the bag and hurried off to his apartment. It was already dark outside, and a boring, light rain was falling and Olgica had to walk quickly. Completely out of breath, she arrived and rang the doorbell which still had the nameplate of Leon's father on it.

"We have to change this," she said to Leon, once he opened the door.

"Of course," Leon replied as he took the suitcase and the bag out of her hands.

They hugged only after Leon made coffee, and kissed after dinner. After that, they ate ice cream and watched TV until they started dozing off. Olgica stood up, reached out to him and led him to their room. They took their clothes off in the dark as if they'd never been together before. After everything, Leon fell asleep first. Olgica spent a little time listening to him breathing, and then, she too drifted off.

The following morning, at 6 a.m., Leon entered the police station. The boring, light rain was still falling outside which was why Leon had to wear a raincoat over his pyjamas. The upper part of his pyjamas, as well as his hands, were covered with dark stains. Leon smiled at the

officer on duty, and said, “It’s over, I slaughtered that evildoer?” After that, he fell silent, took the two policemen to his apartment, unlocked the door, showed them the room and the bloodied bed, and didn’t utter another word, not then, nor later, not even at his trial. Nobody ever heard him speak again.

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida and Nataša Bošković

DRAGAN HAMOVIĆ

THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE

PRAISE FOR SUBURBIA

As chance would have it, my white flag was raised
In an act of will, hoisted by my inner self,
On the completely wrong side of the tracks.
I am gladly surrendering to the city's edge!

The city of tall buildings towering above men,
The hub of the urbanophilic universe,
Designed for devastation by the general plan,
Although highly impressive, is far too intense.

From city beasts that feed on everybody else,
The makeshift shelter in the suburbs I have found.
Away from the constant every-man-for-himself,
I'm taking root on the edge, in the shallow ground.

Easily misguided, as humans tend to be,
The crowd rushes downtown, to the bottomless pit,
While I set sail for the rim of serenity,
Riding the last bus, fastened tightly in my seat.

MOTHER COUNTRY

‘I’m held in high esteem everywhere but in my own household!’
Radmila Marković (née Dugalić)
(1919–2004)

The real name of my Serbia is Radmila,
(The queen bee of the mother of our buzzing hive),
The princess of catchphrases and ancient adage
Who gave me shelter under her stretched winged arms.

She wove her threads into me to knot a bedrock.
Her restless fingers would not cease tying my sheaf,
Like never wavering, herculean force,
A surge of vitality that needs no relief.

In this homeland that acquired Radmila’s name,
This motherland that takes precedence over all,
She lovingly fondled me, her forgiving hand
As light as a cloud, and as heavy as a rock.

With the softest of blankets she covered me up,
Tucked me up in bed, watchful at her busiest;
And ever since then, I’ve been cooing like a dove
From the morningtide window facing southeast.

THE OLD HOUSE IN RIBNICA
(NEAR THE FORMER RESTAURANT ‘SLOGA’)

Surrounded by the sturdy stone houses, a demolished home
Dozes, shakily propped on a couple of dry wooden beams.
Assailed by tempests and high waters, defeated and undone,
It surrenders to decay, as worthless as old folk sayings.

The former red apple of the house has been gnawed to the core,
Down to the bare, withered seeds from which it once to life sprouted.
Honoring an old pledge, amid the hum of engines it stands,
Abandoned and alone, it seemingly requires nothing.

Not a bit does it contribute to chaos or to order,
This once teeming building block of the family and nation.
Yet the slant of its roof and walls with windowpanes that shatter
Prevail in a guerilla warfare against gravitation.

THE SHOP AT THE BUS STATION IN KRALJEVO

Take a step, stranger, inside the workshop of memory.
I mend it, as best I can, right after delivery
By the archive curator, who just needs to casually
Wink at the craftsman to stir it from drowsy lethargy.

I airbrush and retouch words, restore the picture brightness,
I polish tarnished silver to spark the shine of fragments;
I reconnect the wiring, from gears remove dust and rust,
Twitch the mechanism the song of former self to hum.

In the stale stench of objects, the heaps of ragbags pile up:
The scrapped rotting memories stacked center, right and left
Are to be resurrected, rotated, aligned or bound
To flicker briefly once more—before the final collapse.

HERZEGOVINA

The sight looms into view after a long journey:
The pre-war house of stone (without excess comfort)
Built by the grandfather, remembered just vaguely,
Who skimped and saved for it laboring on the coast;

This land we'd set off for at our father's request,
During sprawling summers (kids like little princes)
Destined for the wise eyes and the familiar gaze
Of neighbors who turned saints and stone-cutting uncles;

I sing shreds of myself, the fragments briefly seen,
The flaky dust of stone from my uncle's chisel;
I remember people untouched by anything,

Though witnesses of wrongs, unscathed by evil.
They're surplus in this world, which makes them paramount
In the holy prince's noble companions' camp.

GROWING LAZAR

My son sailed in from the tempests of crimson,
Out of the tenderness of his mother's flesh,
An unrelenting force destined to become,
Drifting on the waves of an ancestor's name,

As a winged Lazar, the novel version.
He is added to a tart sum of the meek
And wanders under an onerous burden,
Zealously preaching for the unworldly peace.

To what should we reduce this paternal sum
Almost impenetrable in its wisdom?
My son, the best of all good news of autumn,

The answer to all that falters and tires!
When it is over, the dark cave empty lies:
No trace of God's servant. For Lazar can rise.

OPEN SOCIETY

If shelf-life rates as one's primary concern,
Such perishable goods, liable to spoil,
Haughtily and almost painlessly, should choose
The ranks of 'Open Society' to join.

That way humanware, expendable and frail,
On the free market will fetch a higher price:
The 'Open Society' of souls won't fail,
Because it predates all George Soros's funds.

You will quit barking at the mighty and high,
You will eat the humble pie and tuck your tail!
To build an 'Open Society' takes time

If hobbits are in full charge of human brains.
Though minds can be reassembled and reshaped,
They will always return to their primal state.

Translated from Serbian by
Tatjana Grujić

ALEKSANDAR PETROVIĆ

A BOOK OF LIGHT

Among all the studies of natural causes and reasons,
light most delights the contemplators.
Leonardo da Vinci*, A Treatise on Painting* (I, 13)

Abstract: The book *Enchanted India* by Serbian Duke Božidar Karađorđević, grandson of Karađorđe Petrović—the leader of the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 and a pioneer of the world's first national anti-colonial movement—could aptly be called a *Book of Light*. This text attempts to clarify this since this year marks the 125th anniversary of the book's publication, presenting us with a unique opportunity to see whether time has dimmed its lights or perhaps made it glow brighter. About a decade ago, I came up with the idea that this book should be translated into Serbian, but I was held back from its realization by the language in which the Duke writes. The Duke at times writes more like a painter than a writer, requiring not only the translation of sentences but also the reimagining of images that are constantly flowing into one another. In the end, I decided to start the translation, which was later published in 2018, so that the legacy of Duke Božidar, the most distinguished descendant of the ill-fated dynasty following the great Karađorđe, would continue to live on in Serbian culture. I not only followed his text, but also traveled a good part of the path he took and became convinced that his travelogue preserves the eternal truths that I spoke about in the manuscript *From Nalanda to Hilandar*, which was also published by the Matica srpska. Therefore, this text is a completely personal reading, not an analysis, but an attempt to see India through the eyes of Duke Božidar Karađorđević.

Keywords: Duke Božidar Karađorđević, India, Siddhartha, light, hunger, dances

The manuscript of Duke Božidar Karađorđević is a true gem of travel literature. The duke—a painter, an artist of gems and precious metals, carefully shaped it, taking care to polish it so that India would

refract in the light of his spirit as if in crystal. He set off on a journey to India in 1896, and immediately after his return he began publishing his travelogue in installments in the magazine *Revue de Paris* from 1897 to 1899. The book was written in French under the title *Notes sur l'Inde* (Calmann-lévy), then immediately translated into English and published a few months before the French edition as *Enchanted India* (Harper & Brother) in 1899.

It is apparent that the work on the English edition ran parallel to the creation of the French manuscript, so that this work unexpectedly splits into two originals. As a result, we have two different titles and two versions that do not match. And that is why the Serbian translation was necessary in order to achieve, as far as possible, a synthesis of the original thought and text. It was not easy to unravel the threads that the author crosses with his text while being careful not to tear the delicate weaving of two looms. Paradoxically, the English edition, which states that it is a translation, appeared earlier than the French one, before the last continuation in the magazine. Carefully following the bifurcations of the text, we translated cautiously from both languages, and then compared everything to see where the author is and where we are. Thus, through the intersection, perhaps one could say grafting, of the two texts, we found in the French text a multitude of sentences, statements and parts of the text that are not in the English version, but also in the English a number of passages that are not in the French version. First of all, it should be said that the English edition did not print the preface that is in the French edition, for which there were undoubtedly reasons, perhaps no less important today than at the end of the 19th century, because the English version is still reprinted without a preface (the French edition has never been renewed). In the preface, the Duke, in the person of an English colonel whom he accidentally meets at the lodging of an Indian rajah, reveals all the arrogance of the English colonial administration and its militaristic culture. This is particularly significant because at the time of the Duke's writing, English colonialism was assuming the role of a civilizer while simultaneously artificially causing mass starvation, turning parts of India into a concentration camp of kulaks and causing mass death. The Duke, probably the first in Europe to address these atrocities, wrote poignant lines that even today, after all the horrors we have seen in the past century, are difficult to read without a visceral reaction and nausea.

Without going further into this anti-colonial discourse, it is significant for us that the Duke wrote in two languages, so that perhaps together with the translator he "translated" what was and was not in the French text, adding and removing parts, changing something that made the English version *volens nolens* a separate narrative. The Eng-

lish translator seems to write his own text at times—sometimes he fails to capture the writer's thought, omits parts or gets lost in his subtle observations and connections, or names that he does not understand, probably due to the high speed at which he works, and then gets back on track. For example, in English the sentence begins "The animals are cared for by a whole host of servants and the bedding under them is clean and smells good", but only in French do we see how it ends—"... and through the window openings birds constantly fly in and out, coming here to look for food, rummaging through the straw right up to the feet of the 'hosts'." In some parts we find incomplete sentences: "And here we see a group of drunken sailors, already emaciated, being led by coolies with malicious smiles that reveal teeth, too white on their shadowy faces", and then there are also whole paragraphs omitted: "The youngest dancer, still almost a child, all fragile and delicate, in the smoke of cigarettes and hookahs, looked incredibly lovely for a moment as she swayed lithely, jingling her hairpins, but the voices of the other dancers suddenly became shrill and harsh, unbearably amplified with a single brass pipe completing the orchestra, and the heavy and rapid stamping of feet soon raised a whole cloud of dust that enveloped everything..." Whether the translator was quickly omitting parts or the duke was crossing them out, we will never know, and the reason may not even be important.

The magma of memory

It is important that this travelogue requires us to pay close attention to and constantly monitor the two texts so that the sensitive whole that the duke communicates both within the lines and between them does not slip away. Of course, this is not easy, and one should also add a persistent search for the meaning of Sanskrit terms, the names of historical figures and geographical designations that the duke often mentions by ear, with authority, as well as the names of exotic plants that do not exist in European languages, little-known places and customs, while at the same time following his constant focus on light, shadows, colors, refractions, iridescence... There are also elliptical sentences that need to be understood, carelessly outlined and thrown thoughts that need to be resolved. Nevertheless, all this effort was worth it and now we have before us a third original, because the Serbian text, as the "third dimension" of the first two, is precisely that. We hope that the Serbian reader will embrace it and adopt it both because of its beauty and because it is an orphan, because this work is almost never mentioned. If it weren't for the Indian and some small American publishers who occasionally reprint it, or rather photocopy it, unfortunately

without the preface and photographs from the French edition, it would have disappeared. This travelogue does not deserve it, because the brilliance of its spirit justifies everything that is invested in it. The history of culture and life experience teach us, after all, that silence can be a very good recommendation.

Something in the blood flowing through his veins, in the magma of memory, connected Božidar Karađorđević with India and set him on a journey that had no specific historical goal, but rather, in such an Indian way, some unfathomable, infinite purpose. The manuscript itself does not reveal to us why the duke set out on the journey, but perhaps the very fact that it does not mention the reason for it even once says most clearly what prompted him. It was India itself, the place where all our memories that have not fallen into history are collected and where, despite everything, a connection with another world is constantly maintained, the birthplace of the true biography of this world, the goal of every inner search. He did not undertake it to satisfy curiosity, a greed for impressions, but to initiate a personal transformation, to feel the power of life and to see its unfettered flow without arrogant interpretations that reduce it to a historical illusion. Before him, no one in the Karađorđević family had in their right mind thought of wandering through India. Božidar goes as a free man to the crossroads of Serbian and Indian cultures that have broken away and are breaking away from the same enemies who have destroyed and humiliated them for centuries. He weaves into his travelogue the Serbian spirit of rebellion against the two-century captivity of India and thereby frees the view of its true nature. His great ancestor, the revolutionary leader Karađorđe, was a ray of freedom because in 1804 he raised the first anti-colonial revolution in the world, and his true descendant, driven by the same insatiable desire to emerge from darkness, goes to India as a source of the spirit of freedom. In this respect, the great liberators, Karađorđe and Gandhi, are so different, but at the same time similar because both were sacrificed for freedom. The spirit of freedom that asserted itself through Karađorđe and Gandhi is clearly evident in the compassion of Božidar's travel observations, devoid of the posturing and commonplaces of the "historical supremacy" of the conqueror's culture. Let us not forget, this is the 19th century of arrogant colonialism, full of optimism that the world would be subordinated to the European culture of power. But Duke Božidar does not arrogantly dissect people, things and events, but approaches everything with respect, somehow smoothing life with words.

The duke actually set out to find himself, because India is the best place for anyone to find what they have lost on the road. For him, the journey to India is an eternal return to the beginning, to the source of

memory. There he searches for the lost soul of the world and understands the relationships between the center and the periphery, between what is eternally reflected in itself and what is constantly revolving around it, observes what never moves, sees the rise and fall of what is constantly changing. The power of his experience does not allow India to be placed in a museum of overlooked history, where it was long ago placed by European ideologists and empowered travelers who saw in it only treasures that needed to be taken away and brought to "higher" forms of culture. India is not a beautiful antiquity, it is pure life that flows inexorably through everything that exists and does not exist. She lives, her pulse is strong, she is always true to herself and constantly changing, she is and is not in the river she enters and does not enter.

The true motives of the journey are also indicated by a sentence that, along with the preface (which was probably not rejected by the writer himself), is conspicuously missing from the English edition. It testifies that our duke, as in some ancient fairy tale, set out in search of light and its unfathomable source. "The life that is brought by light revives for a moment all these dead temples. The statues seem to move in a flickering, illuminated atmosphere...", he says. Following this sentence, the entire travelogue is indicated as a search for light and its hidden source. Viewed in this way, these writings are something more than a travelogue, something that could only have been written by this Serbian author writing in French—not because of any special aptitude of the French language for conveying light, despite the refinement with which the duke wields it, far from it, but because of the strength of identity, one could say the visarga of *све : свеш̄ : свеш̄ло (everything: world: light)*, which erupts through all layers of the oblivion of Latinized languages, recognizing the critical importance of this connection not just for this travelogue.

Light as a measure of value

Viewed from this perspective, these are noble and vibrant accounts of the lights of India scattered across the sky and earth, plants and people, jewelry and buildings. The main protagonist of these writings is not their author, but the radiant light that creates the world before his eyes, enigmatically and momentarily pointing toward the path of escape. What unfolds before us is India, entirely woven from the Sun and the counterpoints of light and shadow, and above all, the spirit of the duke, who, alongside figures like Archbishop Danilo II, ("the light that never sets and rules the world"), Laza Kostić ("light is truly the most significant, most immediate, and most noticeable attribute of the universe"), Milutin Milanković ("all energies... including life, are nothing

but transformations of the Sun's energy"), Ivo Andrić ("the Sun is form and balance, it is consciousness and thought, voice, motion, name...") or the *Sunčeva trpeza* ("the universe is but a metaphor of light"); he elevated himself closest to the light within both the Karađorđević family and Serbian culture. Just as much as it is a search for India, this travelogue, or rather, a chronicle of light, is also a quest for the Sun, which, in its reflections and glimmers, creates the colors, plants, temples, and this entire colorful world.

Light is the writer's measure of value, so he does not dwell on ephemeral things that typically attract plebeian attention. Thus, this is an aristocratic manuscript, undoubtedly the most aristocratic in Serbian culture and perhaps the only such work among all travelogues about India. For the duke, everything born of nature and created by man is, above all, a screen for the play of the Sun's rays. The adjective "aristocratic" should not be understood merely as a form of governance or the privileges associated with it but in its etymological sense, rooted in the Greek ἄριστος (*aristos*), meaning noble, or even more fittingly, the Sanskrit आर्य (*ārya*), which has a similar meaning. Guided by this nobility, the duke does not stoop to gather treasures or carry in his bags what he might collect along the way. Instead, he gazes toward the heavens, concerned only with the luxury of luxuries, light itself. The endless diversity he encounters daily does not remain a fleeting illusion, scattered and porous, but is powerfully impressed upon the spirit of our traveler. This impression is vivid, carried by the colors of the solar spectrum that he observes attentively at every moment, as he continuously seeks harmony between what he sees externally and what he feels internally. And he finds this harmony as he traverses thousands of kilometers, from the subtropical landscapes of Ceylon to the snowy slopes of the Himalayas, from the flat plains of Calcutta in the east to the mountains of Afghanistan. Along the way, he captures for us the external beauty and the inner strength of India, as well as his own ability to endure all these transformations and conquer, with his spirit, the summits of their meaning.

India presents itself as a birthplace of some irresistible force which compels every sensitive soul to embark on a search for lost time. It happens unexpectedly, so much so that the seeker himself is surprised by how little is needed, almost nothing tangible, to set out toward the source of this unconditional attraction. These are the true emissaries of the Holy Spirit—those who love light and can fulfill their love nowhere better than in India. The noblest sufferer in European history, Giordano Bruno, whom history will never rehabilitate because to do so would mean exposing its own guilt, writes in *The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*: "He is blind who does not see the sun, foolish who

does not recognize it, ungrateful who is not thankful unto it, since so great is the light, so great the good, so great the benefit, through which it glows, through which it excels, through which it serves, the teacher of the senses, the father of substances, the author of life....” The journey to India is a journey to meet the Sun and, at the same time, the expulsion of the triumphant beast. Božidar Karađorđević did not betray his ancestors, for he too, like Bruno, rose in rebellion against the confines of the oppressive reserve of forgetfulness, opening them to the light of India. This is, even between the lines, a book of a rebellious spirit, striving to show the fallen world in which it exists all that it has long lost, including the will to remember.

The sincerity of the author’s intentions is evident in the preface to the French edition, where he recounts rejecting the colonizers’ statistics, which were meant to provide a “correct” view of India before his journey. This, undoubtedly, is another reason why the preface was not translated into English. He felt that the offered book of tables and numbers, devoid of India’s light and gods, could not possibly represent the land he was about to explore. He understood that this mask, a shirt of rational blindness, revealed nothing about India but rather obscured it, burying it alive beneath the greedy impulses of colonial power. Such representations merely “glimmered in superficial sketches.” The author was seeking the India of dreams and knew it could not be found in exhaustive, pedantic catalogs or tables of numbers and calculations, where its nearly incomprehensible diversity was presented with extreme monotony. Those who had militarily conquered India and then imprisoned it in statistics were punished for their hubris with the loss of their soul, unable to perceive the source of life in the interplay of light and shadow. Thus, in his “anticipation of the land of dreams,” he found it uncomfortable to read the administrative book recommended to him as a guide to India. By rejecting statistics, the third degree of anecdotal comparison (lies, nasty lies, and statistics), our author transcends the rigid, deceptive boundaries of a subjugated consciousness, confined to outdated representations of India. This is why the book radiates the fervor of light and truth, a striving for a transformation where *this* world becomes *that* one, something least desirable in a culture regimented into columns of numbers.

At the end of the 16th and the beginning of the 17th century, India, once an unattainable source of imagination, became merely a “new world,” a collection of figures and tables, a cartographic draft with dates and names, rationally explained and presented to the reader as a land unlike European ones and undoubtedly still “wild” and “unawakened.” Argonauts of all kinds, from the homeless to those in palaces, began devising plans to conquer it. They embarked on long journeys to gather

information about this land of abundance and compile exhaustive inventories of the Indian subcontinent, appealing to European readers. These travelogues were crafted as manuals for soldiers and merchants, aiming to meticulously describe everything India had to offer that was unavailable elsewhere. Yet, despite extensive travel and careful documentation, they failed to truly see the country they had entered, as they measured it entirely by European standards. Without exception, they fell into a pattern of reporting on natural wealth, sensual pleasures, an abundance of jewels, an irrational world, widespread poverty, and the constant dangers posed by what they could not understand. Through such accounts, the early travel writers, mostly English, fostered a sense of imperial responsibility among readers toward the Indian peoples, who were to be integrated into the civilized order through an act of colonial grace, as well as toward the natural wealth to be exploited for the "common wealth." In their colonial mission, following in the footsteps of Asian hordes that had ravaged India in previous millennia only to vanish within it, they began demolishing ancient temples and palaces to construct canals, roads, and often military fortifications from which they would continue their crusade to "improve" Indian lands. The duke openly speaks about this in the preface and also between the lines in his travelogue, where he melancholically evokes the former glory of India's architecture and enchanting landscapes. This is a third reason why the preface is missing from the English edition, as it is yet another means of shielding the reader from the truth. We in Serbia understand this well, as the hordes of Turks who first wrought destruction in India continued their work centuries later in Serbia. The historical fates of India and Serbia, seemingly distant in time and space, are but two sides of the same coin.

The colonial practice of "civilizing" and the eschatology of "progress," about which the Empire proudly reports in its administrative panegyrics, is clearly seen by the duke as imposed illusions leading nowhere. Refusing to lose himself in them, he takes his narrow path to the source. He deeply felt that India cannot be truly experienced if one is spiritually detached from it. Thus, he did not seek the comfort of European-style residences in fear of the unfamiliar. Instead, sometimes diverging from the planned route, he ventured alone into ancient temples, gardens of rainbow hues, and the shacks of the destitute and hungry, aware that God resides in the poor. As a true sage, he refrains from interpreting what he sees, avoiding the pitfall into which travel writers before and after him have fallen—being frightened at the first insurmountable disparity between opulence and hunger, tranquility and chaos, kindness and cruelty, serenity and restlessness, supreme wisdom and profound ignorance, snow-capped giants and arid plains,

immortal gods and mortal men. These contrasts form an incomprehensible harmony. Therefore, the artistic narrative of the duke stands apart from typical travel literature through its heightened awareness. He creates a work dedicated to India itself, its shimmering soul and timeless splendor, the glittering and elusive amalgam he describes as "jasmine and roses, plague and famine."

The writer understood India far too well to accept viewing it through the patterns of travelogues. Woven into his words is its vast horizon, where he records not only encounters with people but also with countless forms and patterns, in textiles and stone, all of which, whether animate or inanimate, strive, or rather yearn, to express the interconnectedness upon which the world rests. His descriptions resemble lace carved into the stone of memory, which does not decay but instead adorns centuries. Everything the writer speaks of, through its vividness, imprints itself on the reader's consciousness as a flow that does not end but internally connects them to a memory that endures. The writer is there to enter time with open eyes and to feel, even briefly, its wheel, while the reader is there to meet him in that journey. This book is not merely a description but a true celebration: the writer symbolically burns his ego, his fear of life and death, and, more than that, he burns the idol of Time, just as the Indians in his narrative do. He does so to master its recurrence and prevent life from losing its touch with light. Thus, events, people, plants, animals, and temples are captured and transferred into a literary eternity where they do not end but persist and radiate through his words. A travelogue is, therefore, not time, but a slice of eternity, something that perhaps only in India can be understood; the European mind has lost that ability, exhausted like a dying post horse with a glassy gaze, whose wheezing the duke describes with endless compassion, reminiscent of Nietzsche's desperate embrace of the horse. One gets the impression that the duke empathizes so deeply with living beings that he loses faith in the arrogant division of organisms into "higher" and "lower," as proposed by the theory of evolution, for the only thing in this world capable of transformation is light.

India as an observatory

In the mind of this travel writer, there is no Eurocentrism, no overt or covert arrogance of the white man, but rather compassion and genuine closeness, a light in the heart. A remarkable achievement for European culture in the 19th century. At that moment, only Joseph Conrad in his 1899 novel *Heart of Darkness* had attempted something similar, yet without the unconditional aristocratic devotion to the light, which alone can resolve the agony of black and white on its own terms. In this way,

this work becomes more than an ordinary travelogue and can be read as a tale in which a fairy-tale prince travels through India in search of the Sun, emerging as a true spiritual ruler of the world. He meets the people without avoiding the plague-stricken or leprous and without succumbing to the splendor of royal courts. Standing equidistant from extremes, he is entirely prepared, through his Indian experience and Serbian sensibility, to speak bitter truths about conquerors and their posturing under the guise of "modernizing" the "savages," whose culture they neither understand nor will be able to grasp for many centuries to come. Yet he does not stop there, nor does he build his narrative on disdain; instead, he exudes the calm of one who knows his path. Judging by the abundance and beauty of his descriptions, his reason for this journey was not to unravel the Gordian knots of history but to observe the divinely unbound sunlight and its continuous creation of the world. For him, India is the ultimate observatory, one against which Galileo's telescopic lenses and mirrors merely intensify blindness and bring us closer to illusion. He sees India as a land gifted to humans by the Sun, a truth clearly evident in rivers, trees, and clouds, as well as in temples, books, and jewelry. All these, as an Indian proverb states, do not exist for themselves: "Rivers do not drink their own water, trees do not eat their own fruits, clouds do not swallow their own rain. All that is great always serves others." The same is true of this travelogue, which does not exist to glorify its writer but to allow its sentences to flow like a procession of an ancient, unknown religion celebrating the triumph of the world's source and light over darkness and chaos. The travel writer views the visible world as the shadow of another and uses metaphors and allegories to illustrate the connection between the two worlds, which can only be glimpsed through the play of sunlight and its reflections. For the writer, the world is merely an allegorical play of light.

Thus liberated, the writer discovers an India brimming with meaning in the infinite perfection of life. A life that, to those who view it through statistics, theories, or mirrors, appears as scarcity, poverty, and misery, without realizing that they are, in fact, gazing at themselves and their fallen spirit through a distorted reflection. The duke marvels as he describes a silversmith who is inseparable from the world in which he lives, not by a single thought, blink, or hand movement: "I stood by the silversmith and watched as a man crafted a silver box. He had no model or pattern drawn on the surface, yet he engraved the design with incredible confidence. All his tools consisted of irregular iron stakes that looked like nails. First, he drew a circle around the box, then letters and flowers, all in a single line etched into the metal. He had nothing. No bench, no workshop. He worked sitting in front of his shop, pausing to greet passersby or glance at the street, then resumed his task, con-

stantly chatting, and calmly completed his perfect work without any corrections." Being perfect, this work transcends ordinary labor, and through its openness, it becomes a religion akin to that of Prince Siddhartha, who teaches his disciples that "The Tathagata has no closed fist of a teacher who keeps something hidden within." There is no guild-like secrecy to the craft because, as Siddhartha also says, "There are only three things that have secrecy and not openness—women, priestly wisdom, and false doctrine." The entire drama of life resolves itself in the innocent perfection of the silversmith's work, which is devoid of ulterior motives and guided only by divine hand, uniting them in an uninvolved charm and happiness that rises like sublime vapor from the crucible of pure life. The writer reveals a culture that creates beauty without patterns, without sketches, without hidden plans, a culture that does not copy but creates beauty for beauty's sake, life for life's sake. The duke remarks that "he creates perfectly" because he too longs to touch a world uncorrupted by mechanics and contempt for life. How stark is the contrast to our world, which, from all its possibilities, has managed to create only the Machine, and primarily a machine for copying, a perfection of the artificial, achieved in every unnatural way. How distant these two perfections are, like light and darkness, like creation and reflection. Even today, when it seems that the only path forward lies in the perfection of replication, such travelogues demonstrate that the power of the source of light, which blazes everywhere, can never be imprisoned in the shadowy cave of reflections.

The duke pauses to observe a poor man who, with bare hands and no tools, builds a house for his family in just a few days. This stands in stark contrast to a civilization where nothing can be accomplished without tools, a civilization that, caught in its own helplessness, venerates tools as deities. Relying on such power of the hand, Gandhi was able to liberate his country from the British, who brought slavery wrapped in the industry of lifeless hands shackled to tools and soulless technological processes incapable of touching life and the world. Happiness can only be summoned when we free the hand, much like the carpenter the duke so beautifully describes: "He sang as he tapped lightly, appearing happy simply to be alive in this world." Elsewhere, he adds: "It seems as if some kind of joyful glow envelops these people with smiling faces and their homes built from ancient calcified stone." A century later, as I traveled from the south to the north of India, partly retracing the duke's path, I saw that it was still the same. Everywhere, there were happy people whose eyes reflected the entire world, and whose hands refused to let everything vanish into the void of technology. I believe that, despite everything and every clever and artificial disguise of Maya, it will remain so even when someone else, another century from

now, journeys there. Through the ages, India has been the great smile on the face of this world, a true polyphony of happiness with an open hand. Of course, those who view life through lenses will fail to notice this, for happiness cannot be caged in embellished spaces incapable of confronting the essence of being, which lies in the eternity of its creation and dissolution.

India remains a land unbroken, where all three worlds—the living, the dead, and the immortal—harmoniously coexist, along with the sacred realms of animals and plants, and, above all, the world of light that scatters and refracts in all directions. Wherever he finds himself, the travel writer collects the reflections of this light as precious treasure. The duke's gaze encompasses farmers in the mud and rajas on their thrones, beggars and princesses, marble lace studded with jewels, and the sorrowful eyes of workers dying of hunger, vultures, and flowers. He constantly demonstrates that he is a painter, a master of contrasts, capturing the duality that rules this world. Briefly, he recounts an attack on a carriage in which the driver was killed, only to immediately note that "after sunset, in every garden and along every hedge, especially where the shade had lingered during the night—a whole explosion of flowers opens to the coolness of the night, saturating the air with fragrance." In his vivid depiction, we see the ecstatic dances of bayaderes, from Bharatanatyam in the south to Kathak in the north, narrating creation and destruction, love and hatred, without which the temple doors can never open because only dance can summon the gods to enter the world. We see fervent prayers, unending processions, the glow of torches, gods dancing in temples and streets, dignified elephants as priests—nowhere else is public space so infused with the unending torrents of life that sweep everything before them. Nowhere else is life so intoxicatingly open and impassioned, driven to touch eternity even through death. Few have brought this life to vivid reality as our travel writer has; with Božidar Karađorđević, everything is there.

Mastering both light and dark tones, he is not merely a painter of skill but one who holds life itself in his hand. Applying hues to his canvas, he does not hesitate to enter makeshift hospitals and homes where the sick lie dying, offering them solace in their final moments through his calm demeanor. He walks the shadowy alleys of prostitution and gambling, where bodies with slit throats sometimes litter the streets. Witnessing such scenes and understanding the risks they carried, one gains the impression that our duke was a being both natural and supernatural, both historical and transcendent. He recounts walking through Bombay when it was abandoned by all who could flee, ravaged by the black death. When an unknown woman on the street begged him to enter a hospital, filled with plague patients dying one after another,

to assist her husband, he unflinchingly complied. He spoke with the dying man, offering him the final comfort of knowing that goodness still exists in people. In this fearless acceptance of life and death alike, with their inscrutable identities, one sees clearly that the heart of Karađorđe beats within him—undaunted, resolute, and imbued with a profound humanity.

And in that dark hell, he always lifts his head, seeing crimson clouds in the sky or the lavish sunset, and light is always with him. He moves toward golden temples and monumental ruins, gracefully overtaken by plants, revealing to us the nature of time and its images of transience. The stormy winds of destruction constantly are constantly felt in the background as they have for centuries, leveling everything to the ground in the darkness of history, which contrasts so starkly with the shimmering beauty of nature and the ornaments created by people who believed in the strength of gods to protect them. India is the place where everything that has seemingly passed and all that is yet to come intersect, where gods are everywhere, gathered in the hearts of people, as well as in the stone statues of magnificent temples. There, they endure as the history of great rulers fades into the weeds, their lands long since cast into a future without memory. And then the duke once more follows funerals, participates in the rituals of transition, and faces what people turn away from, for he wishes to pass through the illusion and make the journey through India a path to light. Without such enlightenment, the journey through India is impossible. He reveals to us not so much the earthly India, full of suffering and pain, but the ideal India, the one that will never pass because time has been replaced by eternity.

India is a land that, despite everything, does not betray its dream. Its hero is the ancient poet, revered more than kings whose mausoleums in conquered India have long been reduced to dust, but new ones have been erected in honor of the teachers of India's spiritual freedom, a land that, after all its Calvaries, remains true to its dreams. To remain ever faithful to the dream, it constantly forgets its past, which is stolen and scattered by conquerors. It leaves them the history to preserve the dream. For history and dreams do not go together. Europe has succumbed to history, its dreams are enveloped by history, and that is why it has lost its dream. The German philosopher Hegel, steeped in history, looks down on India as a country stuck in a dream, from which it needs to be cured by history, a history to be imposed by European conquerors. History is a tool for colonization, and the dream is the core of liberation. This is the deepest difference between Europe and India. When the duke visits a local ruler, he sees this clearly: "As soon as we were welcomed, they offered us bouquets of chrysanthemums attached

to sticks. The Raja hung garlands of jasmine around our necks, and a servant sprayed rose oil on us. The conversation turned to Europe, which Raol Shri imagined as a land of wonders where things were made that only existed in fairy tales, and where extraordinary powers tamed nature." In a few words, the duke describes the great reversal of thesis where Europe plays the role of a land of wonders, and industry is built as the teacher who will conquer nature. This mechanical *illusion*, so brutal to living beings, emerged as a colonization of the Indian dream, which it later sought to enchant. But today, it is not hard for us to see that the crude and harsh game of technology clumsily imitates the play of the gods—hundreds of hands waving around a production line are nothing compared to the dance of Shiva with a thousand hands, the god who dances constantly to destroy lies and liberate the souls of people from the trap of illusion. That is why the British Victorians suppressed all ancient dances, *Kathak, Odissi, Manipuri* in the north, *Bharatanatyam, Kuchipudi*, and *Kathakali* in the south, the sensual and sacred alphabet of life. To keep the temple doors closed, as the communists learned from them, the white masters banned traditional knowledge, especially Ayurveda, so that the doors of nature would remain locked, and people would be sick with time. The great soul of Gandhi was thrown into prison when he took a handful of salt from the Indian Ocean. But Gandhi, and with him India, became the salt of this world.

This travelogue is both an initiation into personal freedom and a poignant reminder of the universal connection and migration of souls. It functions like a camera obscura, where light leaves its mark on the transformation into the world. For those who are even a little familiar with India, it encourages them to turn their journeys through the land into a search for the light hidden everywhere. The duke himself says that he tried to capture "the images of light as they passed by." We will learn far more about ourselves by traveling, both outwardly and inwardly, through India, following the images of light, than by digging through the layers of our own history, where, at best, we can only find our reflection, while what we truly are lies where the source of memory resides. Perhaps only this can, like this book, ignite the light in the darkness.

Translated from Serbian by
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IVAN NEGRIŠORAC

FASCINATION WITH INDIA AND DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE COLONIZER'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS IT: DUKE BOŽIDAR KARAĐORĐEVIĆ AND THE DECONSTRUCTION OF BRITISH IMPERIAL-COLONIALIST DISCOURSE IN THE TRAVELOGUE *ENCHANTED INDIA*

Abstract: The author interprets the travelogue *Enchanted India* (1899) by Božidar Karađorđević in the context of his relationship with the colonial system of the British Empire and within the framework of the travel writer's personal desire to establish a more humane order that the people and culture of India deserve. His efforts should thus be viewed not only in the context of anti-colonial or neo-colonial political positions but also in the context of contemporary ideas of post-colonialism and the possibility of establishing and questioning post-colonialist discourse. Duke Božidar exhibits an uncompromisingly critical attitude towards the colonizers' attempts to keep the colonized people of India in complete subjugation and slavery. He also condemns with disdain the systemically organized mystifications, cover-ups, and lies that make the cruel colonialist system appear less dramatic than it actually is. He critiques the British colonialist system, performs a sharp deconstruction of colonialist discourse, openly advocates for a discourse of self-understanding, and even anticipates the specificities of post-colonial discourse.

Duke Božidar's position stems from Serbian political culture which has no understanding of attempts to conquer foreign territories and fully adapt them to the interests of the conquerors. Therefore, despite writing in French, Duke Božidar should be considered not only a Francophone but also a Serbian writer. His ties to Serbian culture and the political culture of his people are not limited merely to the question of familial roots and certain sympathies for the people, culture, and spirituality from which he originated: he remained a Serbian writer through his spirit of freedom, uncompromising fight for justice in international

relations, and willingness to pay the price for the positions he advocated. Reading his travelogue *Enchanted India*, we intensely feel that this writer is a contemporary of his readers at the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st centuries.

Keywords: Duke Božidar Karađorđević, travelogue, India, empire, colony, colonialism, anti-colonialism, post-colonialism, language, discourse, understanding, self-understanding, deconstruction, Francophonie, Serbian culture.

It is a long-since undisputed fact in social and human sciences that the perception and knowledge of certain segments of the world, the language and corresponding types of discourse about those facts of the world, are not innocent and naive elements of human consciousness, but rather, that certain systems of social power are quite naturally and consequently built upon them. Michel Foucault, one of the key creators of this epistemological paradigm, often encompassed by the concepts of post-structuralism and postmodernism, convincingly pointed out the importance of discursive practices and their direct connection to the will and want for knowledge, but also to the will and want for power. These post-Nietzschean theoretical perspectives have become key points of reference in the dominant epistemological paradigm of Western cultures at least since the late 1960s, and the link between knowledge, science, language, discursive practices, and systems of power has already been extensively examined. Not only has it been cognitively tested, but it has also been seriously applied in both the internal and external policies of Western countries, and especially in the policies of the largest Western powers, including the phenomenon of their collective action, in which this collective entity is presented, without any intellectual or ethical reservations and with full confidence, as the general and indisputable international community.

Strong political-ideological declarations, such as Francis Fukuyama's essay "The End of History" (1989), were extremely significant in establishing the order of absolute dominance of Western countries over the rest of the world. The author presented this position using various verbal formulations, but with the basic idea that economic and political liberalism had finally triumphed and that there were no longer any real alternatives anywhere in the world, thus opening the path to some sort of utopian state devoid of discord and conflict. At one point in his influential essay, the author even expressed the view that "in the universal homogeneous state, there are no more contradictions. Some have been resolved, and all human needs are satisfied. In such a state, there is no longer any struggle or conflict over 'great' and fundamental issues. Accordingly, it no longer needs generals or statesmen. What remains is

primarily economic activity."[1] As time passed, especially after the horrific experiences in FR Yugoslavia in 1999, Iraq in 2003, Libya in 2011, Ukraine in 2014, and Syria in 2015, it became clear that the condition of all conditions for humanity to find more humane perspectives for its survival is to withhold blank trust from Western centers of power. Such a course of events inevitably leads to conflicts between great powers: on one side are the bearers of globalist processes, and on the other are those who are large enough not to want to be victims of such processes. Thus, the events in Ukraine from February 2022 became inevitable. The amount of chaos that the globalist centers of power sow around the world has long since become unbearably great, so abandoning the perspective of a unipolar world appears as one of the possible hopes for reducing violence around the globe. All this clearly shows how Fukuyama's text fulfilled the function of deliberately sowing illusions to allow for a harvest that was never announced.

Archaeology of Knowledge, Dissemination, and Orientalism

If we remain solely at the level of epistemological dilemmas and corresponding discursive practices, we might recall what Foucault referred to as the "archaeology of knowledge" and the appropriate analyses through which it can be understood. In his study, *Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), the French epistemologist stated that "this kind of analysis would not attempt to isolate small islands of coherence with the aim of describing their internal structure; it would not try to suspect and reveal hidden conflicts; it would study the forms of division. Or again: instead of reconstituting chains of conclusions (as is often done in the history of science or philosophy), instead of compiling tables of differences (as linguists do), it would describe systems of dispersion."[2] Foucault's aforementioned epistemological declaration was only one of several fundamental ones that at that time, at the end of the 60s,

[1] When he published this text in the National Interest magazine, in the summer of 1989, just before the fall of the Berlin Wall, Fukuyama apparently began to sow blinding, dangerous, and terrible illusions aimed at the idealization of the neoliberal order and the occupation of the undisputed dominant position of the West on the globe. It is no wonder that many countries and peoples were "caught" by such a story, so they completely handed over their mobilization capacities, necessary for the protection of bare survival, to the great powers for safekeeping. Such an act is followed by a merciless punishment which, sooner or later, will have to be paid heavily. On the function of illusion in political life, see Dragan Simeunović, *Politics as the Art of Illusion*, Prometej—Matica srpska—Center for Cultural Integration, Novi Sad 2022, p. 94–101, 282–289, 156–161 and 291–327.

[2] Michel Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*, translated from the French AM Sheridan Smith, Pantheon Books, New York 1972, p. 37; fragment translated into Serbian by Ivan Negrišorac.

which were clearly stated and then over time occupied an increasingly wide field of influence.

This systemic commitment to the concept of dispersion, dispersal, dissemination, and whatever else could be called the dominant cognitive, semantic factor of social and humanistic sciences in the epic of poststructuralism and postmodernism, opened up a whole series of consequential consequences in different domains of knowledge. One of the cognitive disciplines in which these types of epistemological paradigm changes appeared is Orientalism as a science, but the changes also affected the general concept of the Orient, and the understanding of the tightly connected concepts of East and West, as well as their mutual understanding within the social and humanistic field of knowledge. as much as within the overall cultural and geopolitical practice. Oriental studies as a discipline were and remain a field of great changes and turns in our time, the best proof is provided by the scientific work, but also the entire life experience of Edward Said (1935–2003): he is a Palestinian-born in Jerusalem, in addition a Christian, educated in Beirut and Cairo, then educated in the USA, where he worked as an English scholar, comparatist and orientalist at several universities, and for the longest time at Columbia University in New York.[3] With such personal heritage and affinities, Said fundamentally dealt with the theoretical-methodological assumptions and implications of Orientalism, so he presented a whole series of valuable observations about the way in which both the concept of the East and the entire knowledge about it are constituted in the West.

One of the positions that he, in his ground-breaking study entitled *Orientalism* (1978), warned about, refers to the problems of the scientific, disciplinary, and educational constitution of knowledge about the East as we find it in the cultural system of the West. At one point in his study, Said writes: "Orientalism is, strictly speaking, a field of scientific study." In the Christian West, Orientalism is considered to begin formally with the decision of the Church Council in Vienna in 1312 to establish a series of chairs for 'Arabic, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac in Paris, Oxford,

[3] Edward Said, in his memoir *Out of Place* (1999), wrote about the multiple collisions he felt in himself and then tried to reshape them into a desirable way of being: "I kept that uneasy feeling of many identities—in mutual conflict—throughout my life, for one with an acute memory of that desperate desire to be only Arab or only European or American or only Christian or only Muslim. I had two ways of dealing with those questions and remarks that provoked and exposed me like 'Who are you really?'; 'Ali Said is an Arabic surname!'; 'You are American?'; 'You're an American who doesn't have an American last name and who's never been to America? '; 'You don't look American at all!': 'How come you were born in Jerusalem and live here?'; 'Okay, you're obviously Arab, and you live here?'; 'Okay, you're obviously an Arab, but how come you're a Protestant?'" (Edward Said, *Dissent: Memoirs*, translated by Hana Veček, VBZ, Zagreb 207, p. 15).

Bologna, Avignon and Salamanca.' However, any consideration of Orientalism must take into account not only the professional Orientalist and his work but also the very notion of a field of study based on a geographical, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic unit called the Orient. Fields of study, therefore, are being created."[4] Immediately afterward, Said will make another, additional statement, namely that "even in the most traditional disciplines such as philology, history or theology, the field can change so much that a comprehensive definition of the subject of study is almost impossible. That—for several interesting reasons—is certainly the case when it comes to Orientalism."[5] According to this author, therefore, Oriental studies as a science in our time is surviving a serious crisis in which the question of the definition of its subject of study appears as almost a priority, while all other questions of a theoretical and methodological character are the natural consequences of such solutions related to the subject of research, its basic understanding, and projecting the goal of knowledge towards which one should strive.

This conceptual search, and even Said's entire scientific engagement, is aimed at uncovering the process he calls the 'orientalization of the Orient', i.e., towards seeing the process through which this science goes within the cultural, scientific, and educational system of the West. That process implies the unveiling of a series of procedures by which any thorough, true scholar "will have to pass through the scientific lattice and codes created by the Orientalist, in order to reach the Orient." Orientalism is not only adapted to the moral needs of Western Christianity: it is also threatened by a series of attitudes and judgments that the Western spirit sends for correction and verification not primarily by Oriental sources, but rather by other Orientalist works. The Orientalist stage, as I have called it, becomes a system of moral and epistemological rigor. As a discipline represented by institutionalized Western knowledge about the Orient, Orientalism works in three directions—toward the Orient, Orientalists, and Western 'consumers' of Orientalism. It would be a mistake, I believe, to underestimate the strength of this three-way relationship, established in this way. Because the Orient ('over there', towards the East) is corrected, even punished for lying outside the borders of European society, 'our' world; The Orient is thus orientalized, and it is a process that not only marks the Orient as the Orientalist's province but also forces the uninitiated Western reader to accept the Orientalist codification (such as Erbelo's alphabetized Bibliothèque) as *the true Orient* ."[6] In other words, Orientalism

[4] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, translated by Drinka Gojković, Biblioteka XX vek, Belgrade 2008, p. 69–70.

[5] Ibid., p. 70.

[6] Ibid., p. 93.

as a Western European discipline—in accordance with the three-way movements in the process of study and knowledge (the Orient, Orientalists, and consumers of such knowledge) and in its efforts to correct and punish the Orient for its distinct differences in relation to the Occident—can stray into to one of the tempting backwaters, so that the question of comprehensiveness of this scientific discipline becomes extremely complicated and completely incomprehensible. Said's contribution to the understanding of such unfathomable epistemological searches, wanderings, and delusions is truly first-rate.

The amount of problematic implications of the basic problem raised by the act of 'orientalizing the Orient' is greatly increased in cultures, such as the Serbian one, which suffer long-term pressures from both the Orient and the Occident. It is interesting to note, however, that even such an act as the translation of Said's text, even the translation of the quoted fragment, is also exposed to this complex process of orientalizing the Orient. The well-established and experienced translator Drinka Gojković, who is truthfully most at home primarily translating from German, of course, kept the distinction between the terms Orient and Orientalism, but still, in some places, this distinction was, for some reason (perhaps it was a mere mistake?), ignored. Thus, in the sentence she translated as: *"Оријентализам није само прилагођен моралним потребама западног хришћанства"*, Said's original very clearly names not Orientalism but the Orient: "Not only is the Orient accommodated to the moral exigencies of Western Christianity."[7] The mistake is not so terrible, but it is more than obvious: Orientalism in itself means a rewriting of the original term Orient, so attributing adaptation of Orientalism to the moral needs of Western Christianity would act as a mere tautology and unnecessary highlighting of something already contained in the term itself; in contrast, the claim that the Orient is exposed to such a process is a full, informatively complete statement whose meaningfulness is not questioned. By the way, we can and must talk about the translation work of Drinka Gojković with full respect, but in the context of the conversation about the orientalization of the Orient, we would also have to state that the reason for such apparently petty semantic confusions, based on the drama of meetings of different cultures, was very often one of these mistakes. The phenomenon of "lost in translation" is well known, even exploited in an interesting way by the media, so it's not too bad to remember it on this occasion. When they are brought to consciousness, a considerable number of those translators who are not the most aware of how complex a creative discipline translation is, and how many

[7] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, New York 1985, p. 67.

questions a translator must successfully resolve in order for his translation to be truly good, then we will easily agree that we have touched on a not at all naive and innocent area of human activity related to the skill in communication mediation.

The difficulties of Serbian orientalists within this problem of orientalizing the Orient could be multiple. One difficulty is contained in the pressures of the bearers of the power system emanating from the Orient, which would imply that Serbs and members of Serbian culture are expected to express their willingness to agree with the ruling systems of the Oriental empires. Many professionals, primarily influenced by political agendas, those who readily act as domestic representatives of the power system of great oriental cultures and corresponding state communication structures have readily worked to support such demands, are currently working, and will continue to do so in the future.

The second difficulty is contained in the pressures that could be felt by the bearers of power structures emanating from the Occident, which would imply that Serbs and Serbian culture are expected to show readiness even for complete, uncritical compliance with the ruling systems of Western empires. Having considered both these temptations, we can say that the key dilemma of Serbian orientalists is whether they should constitute an oriental or an occidental notion of the Orient. The best and most authentic way out of this dilemma would of course be for Serbian Orientalists to constitute the Serbian concept of the Orient, to rely on both Oriental and Occidental Orientalists in that constitution, and to try to avoid the weaknesses and pitfalls of both approaches. Hence the name of the publication *Serbian Orient*, which, in Matica Srpska, was named, initiated, and edited by the doyen of Serbian Orientalism, Darko Tanasković, which represents a very instructive and healing way of constituting the most thoughtful and productive path of Serbian Orientalism. However, such a road is not easy to build, let alone travel on it regularly. This is not easy because Serbian Orientalism is not some kind of independent discipline that refers exclusively and only to Oriental sources: it is largely a discipline that directly builds on the scientific scope of Orientalism from different countries, and most often from those countries where the scientist acquired fundamental education on Orientalism. Thus, the founder of Serbian Orientalism, Fehim Bajraktarević, based his scientific work not only on the knowledge of the original Orient but also on the high reaches of German, French, and English, in other words, Western Orientalism as a whole.[8]

[8] About where he was educated and what kind of scientists he collaborated with, see Anđelka Mitrović, *Scientific work of Fehim Bajraktarević*, Faculty of Philology, Belgrade 1996, p. 5 and 261–264.

Every Orientalist has to face these and similar questions sooner or later, so at some point the central question will come up: what kind of concept of the Orient does he shape? Is it the Western Orient, is it the Eastern Orient, and what type of Orientalism has had the greatest impact on that term? This kind of questionnaire has a lot of unknowns, so it is not at all easy to solve the whole problem in principle. The only thing that is certain is that the teachings of Edward Said are very useful in the procedures of such a principled resolution of these serious disputes.

Božidar Karađorđević, Serbian culture and the postcolonial syndrome

If we are looking for the authentic roots of the Serbian Orientalist position, and the ideas of the Serbian Orient, we could find them in an extremely unexpected place: in one of the Serbian dynasties, in the Karađorđević ruling family. We are talking about Duke Božidar Karađorđević, an already almost completely forgotten writer, refined esthete, and interesting painter-watercolorist, a man with a very substantial biography, which corresponds to the true and charming bearer of the spirit of modernist decadence. When even the best connoisseur of Serbian literature, especially travel literature, reads *Enchanted India* by Duke Božidar Karađorđević (published in 1899 in the French original and in an English translation), he must be simply amazed by the refinement and subtlety of this linguistic, verbal weaving, and especially by his sensory-concrete and spiritual-refined observations, metaphorical-symbolic transfers and overflows, and thoughtful critical reflections. All these qualities testify to a writer not only of great erudition and culture, but also of refined sensibility, power of thought, and stylistic agility. So it seems unbearably harmful that such a writer, in a more complete, literary form in the Serbian language, is only available 110 years after his death. In 2018, Duke Božidar Karađorđević stepped into Serbian culture in an extremely convincing way, even with two books of travelogues: *Enchanted India* (edited by Aleksandar Petrović, translated by Aleksandar Petrović and Aleksandra P. Stevanović, Matica srpska—Zadužbina kralja Petra I, Novi Sad—Topola, Oplenac 2018) and *Putevima Balkana: putopisna proza* ("Braća Nastasijević" Library, translated by Sandra Tripković and Dejan Acović, Gornji Milanovac 2018). With this editorial, translation, and publishing act, an intolerable void was filled, and Serbian literature received a special writer who, admittedly, wrote in French, but who also belongs to Serbian literature, because, in his spirit and sensibility, in his way of understanding the world, in a large measure, he expresses precisely Serbian culture. When we add to that the fact that a book by Stevan K.

had previously appeared in the Serbian language. Pavlović's *Božid'art* (Clio, Belgrade 2012), which appeared in French, at Vladimir Dimitrijević and his house Laž dom (L'age home) in Lausanne, as early as 1978,[9] then this extremely belated presentation of an important creative however, he performs his work in full intellectual splendor and with a measure of persuasiveness that this unique creator from the ruling house of Karađorđević absolutely deserved.

It is only a wonder that Duke Božidar did not receive such attention from interpreters, translators, and editors much earlier. This is all the more strange because between the two world wars, and mostly during the 20s, a whole series of texts and fragments of his travel and narrative works were published in Serbian newspapers and magazines. Božidar Karađorđević's contributions to travel literature, and especially to the way in which India was seen and recognized in French, Serbian, and European cultures, are very large and even easy to understand, but this phenomenon has largely escaped the attention of Serbian researchers. Hence the most thorough researcher of travel literature among Serbs, Vladimir Gvozden, in his study of *Serbian travel culture 1914–1940. The study on the chronotopic nature of the meeting* (2011) will not even mention Duke Božidar. It should also be noted that even in the expanded, most comprehensive edition of the *History of Serbian Literature* (2007) by Jovan Deretić, there is no mention of Duke Božidar: he was not even mentioned as an interesting cultural phenomenon that essentially arose from Serbian culture, but drowned in the great ocean of French literature. Therefore, one can reasonably think that the Serbian literary historiography, almost without doubt or resistance, left this author completely to French literature and culture.

However, after the publication of two books, *Enchanted India* and *Putevima Balkana*, with accompanying texts by their former guides and scholars, the currents of interpretation of Božidar Karađorđević's oeuvre undoubtedly began to change.[10] When we bear in mind what Duke Božidar observed and described, experienced and commented on in his travelogues, then in his *Enchanted India* we can find similar, very strong and life-giving, cultural roots of what will, in an even more convincing form, later appear in the travelogues of Isidora Sekulić, Jovan Dučić, Miloš Crnjanski, Stanislav Vinaver, Miodrag Pavlović, and especially in the Indian traces of Serbian travelogues ranging from Milan Jovanović Morski (traveled to India in 1878–1882, the text of the

[9] Stevan K. Pavlowitch, *Bijou d'art. Histories de la vie, de l'œuvre et du milieu de Bojidar Karageorgevitch, artiste parisien et prince Balkanique (1862–1908)*, L'age d'homme, Luasanne 1978, p. 212.

[10] We can realistically expect that the announced doctoral dissertation of Aleksandra Stevanović will significantly shift the described receptive frames of the entire literary work of Božidar Karađorđević.

travelogue published in the book *Tamo amo po Istoku I–II*, Belgrade 1894–1895), through Jelena Dimitrijević, bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, Čedomir Minderović, to Stevan Pešić, Tvrtko Kulenović, Radmila Gikić Petrović and others. At the same time, Stevan Pešić, we must emphasize, raised the Indian stream of Serbian travel writing to the highest level of art, and to a large extent such an intention was also set in the *Enchanted India* by Duke Božidar Karađorđević: therefore, parallel reading of these two travel writers would surely provide very interesting and stimulating insights.

Regardless of the fact that there is very little and rarely written about Božidar Karađorđević in Serbian literature and culture, this writer should be unequivocally included in the corpus of Serbian literature. In the histories of Serbian literature so far, the absence of this writer is striking, but this does not have to be too disturbing: in some other national literature, there were cases where writers who, for various reasons, wrote in another language were sometimes included in those corpora. Mentioning the important facts of the determination of belonging to Serbian literature, it is certainly worth mentioning the fact that a very beautiful and meaningful essay about Božidar Karađorđević, written by Slobodan A. Jovanovic, exists in the *Lexicon of Writers of Yugoslavia* (1987; vol. III, letters K–Lj, Matica spska, Novi Sad 1987, pp. 69–71), so in this way an important act of legitimization of this writer was done in the Matica srpska in a truly persuasive way.

For all these reasons, it should be repeated that the appearance in 2018 of Serbian translations of two books by Božidar Karađorđević—*Enchanted India* and *Putevima Balkana*— represents a truly important cultural event and a major initiation in connection with the process of including this writer in the native, Serbian cultural corpus from which he, by his origin, came from. The Serbian edition of the book *Enchanted India* was created by a careful comparison—as the editor and translator of this book, Aleksandar Petrović, points out—of the 'two originals', the one from the French language and the one from the English language, and by creating a kind of special, specific in certain details, cross-textuality of these two versions.[11] The Serbian edition was also

[11] Aleksandar Petrović points out that during the translation "they found in the French text many sentences, statements, and parts of the text that are not in English, but also in English a number of passages that are not in French. First of all, it should be said that the preface that is in French is not printed in the English edition, for which there were undoubtedly reasons, perhaps no less important today than at the end of the 19th century because the English version is still being reprinted without a preface (the French edition has never been renewed). Without going into the reasons for this, it is important to us that the prince wrote in both languages, together with the translator he 'translated' what was and what was not in the French text, added and removed parts, changed a few things, which made the English version *volens nolens*

provided with a valuable accompanying text: two introductory texts were written by the then ambassador of India in Serbia, Narinder Chauhan (under the title "Witness of spiritual closeness: Introductory speech") and the editor of the book, Prof. Dr. Aleksandar Petrović ("A smile on the face of the world: Foreword by the editor"), and the afterword entitled "About the lovely Duke and his art: A note about Duke Božidar Karađorđević" is the work of Aleksandra P. Stevanović. The mentioned contributions are indeed valuable, first of all, in terms of a valid understanding and interpretation of this travelogue, through which the Serbian orientalist sensibility clearly manifested its broad, in-depth views of the world of India. In addition, an important incentive was offered by the publication of the travel book *Putevima Balkana* by Božidar Karađorđević: that book was edited and translated from French by Sandra Tripković and Dejan Acović, and the preface entitled "Travel Prose by Božidar Karađorđević" was written by Dejan Acović. Both of these books by Duke Božidar Karađorđević, together with the accompanying texts by their editors, offer valuable impulses for a new reflection and a completely different resolution of the status of this writer within the entire body of Serbian literature and culture.[12]

The offered opportunity should be used in the best and most productive way. First of all, this means that the question of who and what kind of writer he is, as well as what kind of artist Božidar Karađorđević is, should be asked again. What is the characteristic way in which he shaped his artistic world? What is his specific position not only in the literary and artistic communities in which he worked but also what is his cultural status, which culture does he belong to and how does his affiliation manifest itself? Thus, in the case of Duke Božidar Karađorđević, the necessity of re-examining the post-colonial status of his literary and artistic case, as well as his cultural identity and corresponding elemental affiliation, is clearly revealed. To say that Božidar Karađorđević is only a French writer would be too crude and inaccurate, and such a solution to this cultural puzzle would be the consequence of a particularly aggressive, imperial reasoning that considers itself entitled to the possession of small cultures, which, with all their specificities, should disappear

made it a special narrative." (See the editor's foreword "Smile on the face of the world", cited work, pp. XIV-XV).

[12] Among the more recent critical contributions, we should mention Nadja Đurić's text "*Enchanted India*, an impressionistic travelogue of Božidar Karađorđević", in which the author consistently described the impressionist poetic perspective, which in her opinion decisively shaped Karađorđević's work. (See the mentioned text in *India and Serbian literature*, edited by Nemanja Radulović, Zadužbina "Dositej Obradović", Belgrade 2021, pp. 101-121) Also appeared as the text of Slavica Garonja, "Two Indias—in the travelogue of Jelena Dimitrijević and Duke Božidar Karađorđevića", *Letopis Matica srpska*, vol. 198, book 509, St. 4, April 2022, p. 581–602.

within global, macrostructural entities ready to swallow smaller nations and all their creativity in the sphere of culture.

Pointing out the dangers arising from such cut-off and negativist projections of large cultural systems, Homi Baba called attention to both the dangers and the possibilities of a happier solution to the age-old equation of 'placing culture' in more suitable, appropriate contexts. This is why he, in his famous study *Locating Culture*, warned of the dangers of imposing inappropriate reasoning: "The activity of negation is, indeed, the intervention of that 'beyond' that establishes a border: a bridge, where 'existence' begins because it catches something from the alienating feeling of displacement of home and world—homelessness—which is a condition of extraterritorial and intercultural initiations. Being homeless does not mean being homeless, nor can 'homeless' easily fit into the well-known division of social life into private and public spheres."[13] Precisely bearing in mind the many specificities of Serbian culture and its relations with the big, global cultures, we must be ready to interpret in a more adequate and sensitive way the cultural status of some writers who, for various reasons, moved away from their native Serbian culture and became members of those other, global cultural units. Therefore, the specific literary and artistic case of Duke Božidar Karađorđević should be interpreted with the help of refined concepts offered by postcolonial theory and appropriate analyses of postcolonial discourse.

Serbian Orientalism and Western-Eastern incentives

Before the decisive act of placing Duke Božidar within the framework of Serbian literature, one should properly and carefully read and interpret the literary works of this writer. It would, of course, have been much better if his travelogues had been available to Serbian readers even earlier. Still, since we only have them now, the most important thing would be to start readily incorporating them into our aesthetic and intellectual sensibility. For Serbian Orientalism, and especially for its Indological branch, it is difficult to find such bright, brilliant examples before *Enchanted India*, with which we can see the specifics of seeing India, the British colonial system, and the way of sensitive reaction of a writer caused by such a situation in a colonialized country. The key hermeneutic challenges are contained somewhere in there, on the basis of which we can build the specifics of seeing and validly solving the question of the cultural status of that writer.

[13] Homi Baba, *Placement of Culture*, translated by Rastko Jovanović, Belgrade Circle, Belgrade 2004, p. 31.

It is difficult to say precisely what reasons led Duke Božidar to become interested in India, to want to travel to that challenging country, and to write a travelogue from that curious wandering and devoted search. The author of the precious monograph on Božidar Karađorđević, Stevan K. Pavlović quotes the words of Gidit Gauthier, a French orientalist, a person who was once close to Duke Božidar and who wrote an obituary on the occasion of his death, and in that obituary she wrote: "I don't know what fortunate circumstances enabled the duke to travel to India."[14] The most general political reason for this interest can certainly be recognized in the need of European countries to establish all systems of colonial power throughout the East, so in this respect, travel literature becomes very important. To that, we must add the fact that, especially since the era of romanticism, more precisely since Herder's ideas related to the awareness of the importance of authentic national languages, their cultures, and religious traditions, throughout Europe and the whole world, there has been an interest in eastern cultures, such as Islamic ones in the Middle East. as well as those more distant, located in the Middle and Far East. In this regard, the interest in India during the 19th century began to increase sharply, and from the point of view of this text, especially the Hindus themselves began to make an important contribution to that interest.

The wider interest in the cultural authenticity of India in the European West was particularly enhanced by the cults of Hindu enlightened people with important missions on the international plane. For this period in which Bozidar Karađorđević's interest in Indology was suddenly awakened, the work of two exceptional Hindu priests and missionaries: Ramakrishna (1836–1886) and Vivekananda (1862–1902) was particularly important. Swami Ramakrishna is a great saint of the Hindu faith and the bearer of the embodied teachings of Shankara Vedanta, with his spiritual activity he sought ways of mystical understanding that could be comprehensible to other religions outside of Hinduism. In his footsteps, his disciple Swami Vivekananda continued, forming monastic communities, as well as a corresponding type of missionary activity. As part of these activities, Vivekananda traveled and worked in Europe, and the first arrival on European soil took place in 1893, followed by the second departure in 1896, and then the establishment of the permanent Ramakrishna mission in Europe.[15] One of

[14] Stevan K. Pavlović, *Božid'art. istorije života, dela i okruženja Božidara Karađorđevića, pariskog umetnika i balkanskog kneza 1862–1908* before the veil from the French by Ljiljana Marković, Clio, Belgrade 2012, p. 149.

[15] On the operation of Ramakrishna's mission, see: Solange Lemaître, *Ramakrishna*, translated from French by R. Grimm, Rowohlt, Hamburg 1963, p. 151–155; the French original was published in Paris in 1959.

the most important events is, without a doubt, Vivekananda's appearance at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893.[16] It is evident that the decisive developments in the reception of Indian culture and its peculiarities in the West took place precisely in the decade during which both Božidar Karađorđević's journey and the publication of his travelogue *Enchanted India* were prepared and realized.

All of this greatly facilitated the later increased interest in European literature and culture, which not only opened its in-depth understanding to one Tagore, who is "a man with whom a true synthesis of East and West is created for the first time and who is recognized on both sides because of his universal values", so it can be said of him that he "found a middle way, a way to be a top writer by both Western and Indian standards, although the associations are different for us in the two cases."[17] Tagore's collection of poems *Gitanjali* was published in English in 1912, already in 1913 he received the Nobel Prize for Literature, and his extraordinary popularity grew even after the First World War (so, at the time when his brilliant personality manifested itself in full glory and the activities of Mahatma Gandhi), continuing in a reduced form to the present day. In European literature, it is, therefore, possible to follow how the Indian theme and in general the idea of the value of Indian culture appears in different ways, so significant writers such as Rudyard Kipling (*The Jungle Book*, 1894-95; *Kim*, 1901), Pierre Loti (*India*, 1900), Hermann Hesse (*Siddhartha*, 1922), Edward Morgan Forster (*Passage to India*, 1924), Romain Rolland (biographies of Gandhi, 1924; Vivekananda, 1929; Ramakrishna, 1930) and many others. A great wave of interest in the culture of the East, and especially in India, arose during the 60s, when many Hindu spiritualists and missionaries began to work in the West, such as Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977), Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (1918–2008) and others.

But let's go back to the time of Bozidar Karađorđević's awakened interest in India. Stevan Pavlović says about the very nature and personality characteristics of Duke Božidar: "Božidar was a born traveler and a born inquisitor. After wandering around Europe as a youth, he became a Parisian, of French culture, with a deep love for the land of his ancestors where he feels his roots, and with a sentimental attachment to Russia, where his father and grandfather served. He expressed

[16] For more on this, see the historical overview of Indian literature by Rada Iveković, in History of World Literature, Vol. 1, edited by Svetozar Petrović, Mladost, Zagreb 1982, pp. 323–324. Iveković rightly emphasizes the importance of the enlightenment and cultural movements within India itself, such as the Brahmo Samaj and Arya Samaj. From this kind of spiritual awakening, many positive acts emerged, which enabled India to represent itself more successfully in the West.

[17] Ibid., p. 339, 341.

himself most naturally and easily in French, fluently in his mother tongue, having also learned Russian and German in his boyhood years, and he must have mostly mastered both English and Hungarian since he wrote in English and translated from Hungarian. The irregular study, devouring reading material, and various acquaintances, all provided him with a broad culture but without order. He graduated from the Faculty of Law and attended academies and art workshops—a little Beaux-Arts and the Conservatory, with Julien and then Rollo. He took singing lessons with Jean-Baptiste Faure. He was already friends with painters and musicians."[18]

In several places in his study, Pavlović points to KaraĐorđević's closeness with the great traveler and writer Pierre Lotti: this closeness started at least from 1884, and "it is certain that from 1891 to 1893 Božidar was one of Lotti's closest friends."[19] That relationship had periods of strengthening, but also of weakening closeness, so Pavlović says about this: "After all, the friendship with Loti did not pass without collisions. Both of them were oversensitive, moody, and temperamental. At the end of 1891, in the fall of 1892, Juliet Adam regrets their quarrel. The travels that Božidar began in 1893 and the name he acquired slowly distanced him from the writer."[20] The friendship with Loti left a big mark on Duke Božidar, but it is indisputable that "Lotti's friendship opened many interesting doors for him",[21] and also pointed him to the interesting things of India: he was friends, for example, with Judith Gaultier, and she is "fiery a Wagnerian woman who writes about Eastern themes", she is also the author of that precious travelogue that the duke mentions in the Preface to *Enchanted India*. A few more names could be added to this certainly incomplete list. If there is a well-founded assumption that Duke Božidar could be inclined to some forms of secret teachings and secret societies, then some lines of influence could also lead to a Russian woman, Helena Petrovna Blavacki (1831–1891), a mystic and hermetic scholar, one of the founders of the Theosophical Society and the author of the book of travel around India *From the Caves and Jungles of Hindustan* (*Iz pešerъ i debrej Indostan*, Moscow 1883; English edition 1892): and in this story, and in many others, we can recognize the incentives that led the duke to India. It is obvious that generally speaking, the stimuli came from both the West

[18] Stevan K. Pavlović, op. cit., p. 96.

[19] Ibid., p. 102. Aleksandra Stevanović, writer of the afterword and translator of *Enchanted India,* makes a similar statement, and in the continuation of her presentation, she believes that Loti was most likely the key initiator of this journey of Duke Božidar. See her text "On Prince Charming and His Art", in *Enchanted India,* p. 421.

[20] Stevan K. Pavlović, op.cit., p. 106.

[21] Ibid., p. 107.

and the East, both from the sphere of art and spirituality, both from science and religion, both from the passion for travel and from the attempt to meaningfully shape such experiences into literary testimony, both from confirmed scientific knowledge and from apocryphal, hermetic teachings. According to all these facts, Duke Božidar was completely open to reality, so the mentioned incentives fell on really suitable ground.

Be that as it may, Duke Božidar set off on a ship from London in September 1896, and the following year, "on the way back, he started writing a book during the voyage." He returned to Paris with notes, sketches, and numerous photographs—some of which resemble his watercolors. Clichés included temples and tombs, palaces and statues, but also burning and starving. He submitted the completed manuscript to Kalman-Levy in June 1897."[22] As for the route of this trip, it is described in the travelogue itself without any ambiguity, so the editor of the Serbian edition and the translator Aleksandar Petrović wrote that route precisely on the geographical map of India. About the method of travel itself, Pavlović wrote: "In the era when European travelers often rented a special carriage, Božidar sometimes could not even pay for a luxurious compartment in first class, with large tables and deep leather armchairs." If the servant finally accepted to look at his master in the third class, he must have quickly believed that he belongs to a unique category of people—a duke, an artist, and a holy man, all in one, and who can afford it."[23] It is obvious that the strangeness and atypicality of the Serbian duke found the right complement in the originality and authenticity of India and Indian culture. It was a meeting of a man with a culture that had something important to tell him.

Imperial understanding of India and critique of colonialist discourse

In the case of Duke Božidar Karađorđević's travel book *Enchanted India* (1899) and in the case of an attempt to properly understand that work in its original cultural context from the end of the 19th century, as well as in today's circumstances and difficulties from the beginning of the 21st century, the interpreter and translator is forced to thoroughly review a whole series of very serious and complex topics and problems. One question would certainly need to be thoroughly examined, and that is the complexity of the relationships between colonizers and the colonized in the territories that European powers conquered and

[22] Ibid., p. 149–152.
[23] Ibid., p. 150–151.

established their colonial systems upon. In this context, it would be essential to keep in mind the basic terminological distinctions related to the semantic field of newcomers and conquerors—the field outlined by Albert Memmi in his study *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1961, 1985), where a network of terms such as colonist, colonial, colonizer, and colonialist appears. Leaving aside the possibility of problematizing the terms themselves, the relatively neutral concept of colonists should be singled out from these lexemes, and the remaining three should be understood as concepts essentially connected to the colonial system of the great imperial powers. On this, among other things, Memmi says the following: "A colonialist would be a European who lives in a colony, but without any privileges and whose living conditions would not be better than the conditions in which the colonized lives in the same economic and social position." By nature or ethical conviction, the colonizer would be a benevolent European, who would not behave like a colonizer towards the colonized. However, let us say this right away, even if at first it may sound excessive: the "colonialist" does not exist, because all Europeans in the colonies are privileged."[24] Unlike the colonist and the colonialist, the colonizer is already strongly and physically connected to the three essential factors of the colonial system (profit, privilege, usurpation), so we can only distinguish between a greater or lesser degree of networking within this field of interest, as well as a greater or lesser share of self-awareness about the functioning of the colonial system. All that, and a number of other factors and nuances, contribute to the fact that, regardless of the individual's intimate attitude, belonging to collectives is sufficient in itself, so "the solution of the colonizer who accepts himself as such inevitably turns him into a colonialist."[25] Purely empirically, but also phenomenologically, Albert Memmi's study is valuable in terms of the necessary, elementary understanding and terminological distinction of the complex relationship between the colonizer and the colonized.

When it comes to the travelogue *Enchanted India*, we can say that this relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is the focus of its author's attention. Therefore, the center of the literary-historical analysis and interpretation of this work must certainly be the way in which Duke Božidar understands India, its history, culture, and spirituality, but no less should we consider how India was once understood, and how we understand it today. Dealing with different ways of understanding and interpreting India and its cultural specificities, it is neces-

[24] Albert Memi, *Portrait of the colonizer and portrait of the colonized*, translated by Branko Rakić, Andrić Institute, Andrićgrad 2015, p. 39.

[25] Ibid., p. 77.

sary to have a good understanding of the nature of European Orientalist consciousness and science in the entire development process, from the time of strong and expansive imperialism at the very end of the 19th century, all the way to the spiritual-historical and political- ideological situation characterized by globalist processes from the beginning of the 21st century. At the same time, this includes the necessity of a valid understanding of the phenomenon of colonialism, as well as the transformation of the European opinion on that phenomenon, ranging from the open, propaganda form of colonialist projects, to the criticism of the colonial discourse as it appeared in the second half of the 20th century.

If, however, we compare the situation at the time of the publication of the Travelogue *Enchanted India* with the current situation, we could see certain, and very important, elements of similarity. These two situations are largely convergent, so it can be stated that they are equally marked by a kind of centripetal orientation of Western culture: fixated on itself, it seeks to define its own rules of a liberal-democratic society and the corresponding type of culture as universal rules by which all human social communities around the world not only should, but must measure themselves in their developmental courses. Therefore, it would be more than necessary to clearly see the currents of postcolonial criticism, and especially the specific forms of criticism of the colonial discourse, because such critical currents can be of great use in understanding not only this travelogue but also the way in which the colonial consciousness relates to the phenomenon of the Other. In this respect, the place of Orientalism as a discipline is of the greatest and most sensitive possible importance, so the book of Božidar Karađorđević represents a characteristic point of undoubted cultural divisions very important for today's social and humanist thought. We should certainly recognize the key factors of the extraordinary topicality and modernity of the travelogue *Enchanted India*.

For a valid understanding of the general orientalist attitude and approach to the phenomenon of India as expressed by Duke Božidar Karađorđević, it is of the greatest possible importance to carefully read the "Writer's Preface" to the travelogue *Enchanted India*. There is a very clear, but stylistically extremely refined criticism of that type of orientalist discourse based on the painful and burdensome, imperial and colonialist syndrome of Western conquest projects. t the same time, a framework is sketched out in broad strokes for what the author considers a valid, appropriate, non-violent way of understanding India, its spirituality, history, and culture. Despite, so to speak, his own belonging to European ruling circles, Prince Božidar Karađorđević does not hide his complete aversion to the imperial projects of great empires and kingdoms. He is particularly resentful of the persistent efforts of colo-

nial ideology to ruthlessly reorganize and reconfigure the entire tradition, history, culture, and way of life of the subjugated states and their populations. His *Enchanted India* arose out of the need to present the culture of the enslaved and humiliated Hindus in the light it deserves and with the respect it must deserve.

Duke Božidar dedicated the largest part of the presentation in the "Writer's Preface" to the literature about India and to the description of the way in which the Western, colonial powers imagine the conquered territory and the people on it. In this regard, the author has established a very clear distinction between undesirable and desirable approaches, implausible and plausible books, and their authors. Pointing out that he was in London preparing for a trip to India, and that there he was looking for books that would "best inform him of the country he was to see", he was showered with recommendations for a book whose title and author will not even explicitly mention it. It is, obviously, about a book and about an author that fully corresponds to the dominant, British colonialist way of thinking and expressing: "I was unanimously recommended a very large and serious book that at the end of each chapter had tables with densely packed columns of numbers that, for the year after year, followed the progress set in motion by the Anglo-Indian administration." In that book, a lot of things were done in a truly impressive way, and Duke Božidar does not hide his words of respect for that kind of exactness. Noting that "nothing has been left out in that amazing work", and that in it we can find a multitude of the most diverse data (history from the oldest times, areas, races, tribes, species, flora, fauna, mineral wealth, industry, wine trade, railways, roads, irrigation canals, revenues, etc.), he also notes that all procedures of quantitative presentation are regularly accompanied by a table "which provides irrefutable evidence for the stated figures."[26]

Throughout the history of India, the author of this important study has already "proceeded in authoritative sketches", and the epoch-making events of the arrival of the ancient Greeks, the appearance of Islam, the arrival of the Portuguese, the rule of the French, all of this has only been briefly mentioned. The detailed descriptions begin only from the time of the British conquests, and in that detail, Duke Božidar finds the real reasons for establishing a complete distance, and the birth of an undisguised revulsion in relation to such colonialist immoderation and arrogance: "In the end, to take a break from the rush and the rapid enumeration, the author begins to describe in detail the heroic history of English civilizing conquests. It is nothing more than a series of thwarted conspiracies; the rajas are criminals and traitors appointed as

[26] All quotes in this paragraph, Božidar Karađorđević, *Enchanted India*, p. 1.

shepherds of the people. And then, soon, as soon as India was conquered, abundance reigned. Wealth wisely managed expands without limit. Conquered peoples are financially endowed with an economic regime, an administration that has no equal in the entire world."[27] The elegant irony in this fragment simply has to win over any reader who knows how to distinguish linguistic and stylistic effects, and the translators have extremely skillfully and convincingly transferred it to Serbian, as the language of the third original of this manuscript, as pointed out by the editor and preface writer Aleksandar Petrović.[28]

The elegance with which Prince Božidar emphasizes the skillful use of false, ironically marked motivations ('to take a break from the rush and hurried enumeration') is particularly notable. This approach opens up perspectives on an evident shift in tone, and the increased detail in his depiction and critique of British rule. In that segment of the presentation, the author uses successful, ironically colored epithets, mentioning the "**heroic** history of the English **civilizational** conquest", without there being any misunderstanding regarding the ironic meaning of those epithets, the author adds descriptions that clearly say something about the nature of that conquest: the Hindus provided resistance, and the English crushed that resistance ("nothing but a series of thwarted conspiracies") while presenting the leading people in the worst light ("rajas are criminals and traitors").[29] It is clear that the British conquests are neither heroic nor civilizing, but the opposite: anti-heroic and anti-civilizing. The travel writer kept the ironic discourse all the time while commenting on that "big and serious book", that "amazing work", in which "nothing was left out", except that what was not and could not be true was consistently stated. Adopting the stance and pose of a seemingly naive reader and, supposedly, recounting the narrative of such an important book with trust, the author notes that as soon as resistance was broken and the rajas were either subjugated or defeated, "abundance prevailed." Given that "wealth wisely managed expands indefinitely," it is quite understandable that the conquered peoples can only celebrate being "blessed with an economic regime, a governance unmatched anywhere in the world."[30] From the basic, ironic intonation, it is clear that Duke Božidar considers these pages, written so confidently, to be pure propaganda lies, and in that sense, from that superficial impression full of respect and even admiration for the thoroughness of

[27] Both quotes, Ibid., p. 2.

[28] See the text of his preface "Witness of spiritual closeness", in Knez Božidar Karađorđević, *Enchanted India*, p. XVI-XVII.

[29] All three quotes, Ibid., p. 2. Emphasis is mine, I. N.

[30] All quotes, Ibid., p. 2.

the research and writing of these testimonies about India, now, after an authoritative critical check, it is already clear that there will be almost nothing left.

And after such ironic marks, Prince Božidar continues with sharp-witted observations that testify to how things stand in stark contrast to what is claimed in meticulously written books. However, the reader has already mastered his ironic discourse and can clearly perceive the semantic registers in which the author's observations and reflections operate. Hence, the sentence: "Strict care and attention have removed from the Indian lands all the miseries that once burdened them. Epidemics have been stopped. Cholera, plague—the horrors of old times—have been eradicated by expert sanitary measures, fleeing from India. Granaries, funds for the hungry, accumulation of immense capital—sources which, however, my author does not discuss in detail—have made it possible to bravely defy the terrible famine that previously periodically devastated entire regions, which is now successfully overcome and reduced to almost nothing—just a mere scarcity, from which the poor no longer suffer and from which no one dies anymore."

Thus, colonizers wish to present to readers that there is no more misery in India, no more cholera and plague epidemics, no more famine—none of the things that troubled India in the past. Furthermore, claims the colonial informant, factories have been "built everywhere, in the suburbs of all major cities, and supply India with everything it needs."[31]

Accustomed to ironic expression as a periodic stylistic norm of this Preface, the reader is already prepared not only to doubt the idyllic reality described by this "great and serious book" but also to completely disregard the entire imperial system that produces such lies. At one point, Prince Božidar even questions the foundation of what the colonial zealot speaks of by directly challenging the existence of "immense capital" used to form granaries and funds for the hungry. The travel writer momentarily steps away from the position of a naive reader, noting that "my author does not discuss these sources in detail." However, a full answer to these doubts about whether the claim of eliminating poverty, epidemics, and famine is true or not is given unequivocally in the text of the travelogue itself. In several places, Prince Božidar describes areas where there is indescribable poverty, where people are starving or exposed to epidemics of deadly diseases. After reading the entire travelogue, it becomes clear that the "great and serious book" is actually a false book filled with propaganda and colonialist fabrications.

[31] All quotes, Ibid., p. 2–3.

Prince Božidar describes his method of pure observation and contrasts it with a readiness for a strong, critical deconstruction of imperialist deception: "I do not interpret what I saw; I merely observe, despite the book, even disregarding a certain Anglo-American periodical that is also published in Paris, in which a correspondent from India, when visiting famine-stricken areas at the same time as I did, writes: 'I saw poor houses. I saw that they are clean and well-maintained. Poverty is great, that is true, but I did not find out that anyone died'—and this was written at a time when the number of deaths from famine, officially reported on that date in Anglo-Indian periodicals, was six million."[32]

Duke Božidar reads all the literature about India, therefore, extremely cautiously, suspiciously, with an alert critical attitude, and that is why his observations are really valuable for those who want to establish the truth about this colonialized country. His observations point to facts that were systemically hidden, so that says enough that the dominant, propagandistic imperial-colonial discourse is, above all, a discourse of deception and lies. If there is an attempt to hide the fact of the death of even six million people, then it is a discourse whose primary intention is to hide something big so that something much smaller and less important can be seen in the foreground. This fragment therefore clearly testifies that the impressionistic poetic layer is only the surface plan of this work, and behind this layer, not only in the hidden depths but also on the level of explicit statements, there is a strong deconstructive, critical intervention on the level of semantic structures. This means that, certainly, with great caution, this work should be linked exclusively to impressionist poetics, a poetics that (both in the field of painting and literature) primarily ties the semantic structure of the work to the freedom and expressive suggestiveness of the perceptive powers of human beings. Impressionism did not seek to recognize the semantic givens related to the historical-poetic dimension of reality, and on the contrary, this characteristic is related both to the realistic stylistic formation and, even more intensively, to some later stylistic formations (for example, expressionism, social literature, etc.). In this sense, Božidar Karađorđević shaped his travelogue both with a contemporary poetic form (impressionism) and with the experiences of a poetic form that had been exposed to disintegration processes in French literature for decades (realism), but also hinted at some closer and further historical-poetic challenges that go back to the end of the 20th century (expressionism, social literature, post-colonial theory). This ability to encode one's own text multiple times testifies to the

[32] Ibid., p. 8.

original giftedness of Duke Božidar, and that is the essential reason for his relevance today.

In the careful hermeneutical and literary-historical readings of the travelogue *Enchanted India*, we find answers to many additional questions that may arise for a careful and competent reader. Among these issues, the deconstruction of the British imperial-colonial system has an extremely important role. Thus, for example, the travel writer describes how after his first stay in Bombay, on his return to this city he simply could not recognize some parts of it, because all the houses where the epidemic took its victims had been burned ("houses, camps of small huts and tents, the whole part of the city was wiped out"), and some scenes of this type were witnessed by the travel writer himself: "In a garden, they were burning a bungalow where a man had just died—it was still burning. A group of policemen fanned the fire, and a cordon of soldiers kept people away from it."[33] This kind of testimony not only clearly stated how pure colonialist lies are that there are no more epidemics, but it also testified that the misery of the victims is further increased by burning their houses and huts instead of exposing them to sanitary protection measures. This kind of thing was, of course, only possible because the lives of the colonized inhabitants and natives were not taken care of, but only because the epidemic did not spread further.

Lies about civilizational progress portrayed India in such a rosy light that Duke Božidar developed a repulsive attitude towards such falsity and false perfection, and thus began to lose interest in traveling around India at all. Nothing specifically Indian could be seen in the descriptions of the "big and serious book", so the travel writer says: "According to my author, and based on the most precise calculations, there is such abundance, such order, such administrative perfection in India... and with a thousand page written in very fine letters, an immense boredom spreads, which erases in me any desire to see a country that is so methodically organized, so leveled and listed..."[34] In addition, Duke Božidar clearly sees how, in such a description, the main heroes of this country are actually the colonizers themselves, those proud, hard-working officials who see themselves as the bearers of order and progress with: "I imagined India as a grid of equal squares, like a checkered land where, at the corners of each square, diligent administrative officials keep watch, ensuring that everything proceeds as it should... and in the pages between the only chapters I got a vague desire to go down

[33] Both quotes, Ibid., p. 411 and 412.
[34] Ibid., p. 3.

to earth and return from that earth before I even got there..."[35] Duke Božidar could obviously conclude that by traveling to India he would find himself in some distant, boring copy of the orderly British society, so he lost any interest in seeing such a thing: he would not want to go to such a country, and if he by some miracle he left, he would like to return from it as soon as possible, even and before he got there. The story of the "perfectly governed India" seemed utterly uninteresting and equally false. The colonialist testimony about India and the reality of the land are in intolerable discord and discrepancy. Therefore, it is more than evident that the dominant colonialist discourse is fundamentally based on the art of concealment, mystification, and lies.

The goal of all these and such actions is to make the colonized population and their culture mute, unable to testify about themselves, their own being, and their own history, and that the only voice that can and must be legitimized as relevant is the voice of the Empire itself: only the conqueror has the right and the ability to supervise and punish, but also to praise and reward. That is why, discussing the relationship between empire and culture, and especially looking at the hermeneutic aspects of Joseph Conrad's oeuvre, Edward Said wrote in one place: "Thus, despite their refinement and stratification, cultural forms that deal with peripheral, non-European environments are distinctly ideological and selective (and even repressive) when it comes to 'natives', just as the picturesqueness of nineteenth-century colonial painting, despite its 'realism', is ideological and repressive: it very successfully silences the Other, reconstitutes difference as identities, dominates territories and depicts landscapes which are shaped by the conquering power and not by the sluggish Indigenous population."[36] To silence the Other, to bring the enslaved people to complete silence, to deprive them of the right to speak about themselves, about their living space, about the meaning and values of their existence, is the basic procedure that every empire tries to implement, by grace or force. Knowing full well that "not *all the natives* can disappear "and that "the natives penetrated more and more strongly into the imperial consciousness", "therefore after some time the idea arose that the natives—Africans, Malays, Arabs, Berbers, Indians, inhabitants of Nepal, Java and the Philippines—separated from the whites on racial and religious grounds, in order to reconstitute themselves as a nation that needs a European presence, either in the form of a colonial implant or in the form of the master's discourse, a discourse in which they can fit in and in it become

[35] Ibid., p. 3–4.

[36] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, translated by Vesna Bogojević, Belgrade Circle, Belgrade 2002, p. 303.

active."[37] Such an alternative implied very cruel solutions, and they were perceived differently from two points of view: "From the colonizer's point of view, maintaining the annexation apparatus requires constant effort." The victim of imperialism offers only one choice: serve or die."[38] Such a cruel choice can be recognized in many literary and non-literary, both written and unwritten, customary creations created in the horizon of the influence of empire and imperial culture on enslaved peoples and states.

Authentic understanding of India and the discourse of self-understanding

Fortunately, the mentioned "big and serious book" about India was not the only one that Duke Božidar Karađorđević read, and he singled out two books in particular that showed him the real and unique, characteristic, and recognizable India. Duke Božidar needs to mention those books in their full titles, as well as with the full names of their authors: *The Conquest of Paradise* by the French writer and Orientalist Gidid Gauthier and *The History of Indian Literature* by Jean Laor, which is one of the pseudonyms of the French physician, Orientalist, and poet Henri Casalis.[39] In those books, there is a very different India from the one depicted by British colonialist ideology: Judith Gauthier's book showed "an India that had changed so little over time that it was the one I recognized",[40] Jean Laor's book "conveyed religious songs, hymns to drinking and dancing, religions of lust and bloodshed, coming, little by little, with the Buddha's law, to the delights of nirvana, to the tranquility that is born from silent prayers to the calmness and meditation of the fakir. In those magical fables, as fresh as the scent and light of Indian nights, Jean Laur showed me the nature that profoundly poetic people turned into a religion: rain, sun, storms, days, nights... both women in an infinitely beautiful mythology"; in both cases appeared "an India of dreams, all of the imagination, in which evil and good are left only to the will of the gods for whom men are but playthings."[41]

While reading different books, Duke Božidar Karađorđević faced two completely opposite approaches to India and its specificities, but he did not have any serious dilemma about which side to find the deep truth.

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[37] Ibid., p. 304.
[38] Ibid., p. 307.
[39] The editors of the book provided valuable information in many places about the people, places, and events of the travelogue *Enchanted India*, so they wrote a short note about these two authors as well. See B. Karađorđević, op. cit., p. 4.
[40] Ibid., p. 4.
[41] Both quotes, Ibid., p. 4–5.

In the "big and serious book" you can find a description of changes in the sphere of material culture, i.e., civilization and the corresponding way of life, and in the two latter books a picture of culture in a deep, spiritual sense is given; in the first, it is India as the colonizers want it, in the second it is India as it is in all its cultural specificity and recognition; in the first book, the travel writer recognizes something false because "it seemed to him that all the claims from my official book about the organization—sanitary, charitable, administrative, were simply a *bluff*",[42] while in the other two books he recognized the ordinary life of real Hindus who live in a traditional and not the colonizing way.

Duke Božidar clearly perceives those two opposing images and stories about India—the one that calls itself "the perfection of colonial civilization" and the one that rests on traditional, authentic Indian culture and a way of life in harmony with that culture. The contrast between these two images can be recognized, among other things, to a large extent within the collision between the Indian village and the city, and the French travel writer with a Serbian soul directly testifies to this: this is the India that he first got to know and that he saw with his own eyes. Therefore, he refuses to see only the embellished colonialist reality and even chooses to see the old, traditional India as well; more precisely, he observes the collision of those two Indias, but he does not fail to say that his sympathies lie on the side of what is the true authenticity of India, namely its culture and its spirituality. In that culture and that spirituality, one can recognize the great values of the world as a whole, while civilizational progress, brought about by the violence of a cruel and deceitful colonizer, is only a form of copy of a world that exists in its full form on the British Isles and in Europe.

About the collision of the traditional Indian village and the colonialized city, the travel writer says: "I saw slow-moving railways, giant buildings called factories with primitive looms on which thousands of dark-skinned people wove low-quality cotton fabrics that were sold in unknown corners of the Himalayas or on islands, while everyone people in the cities wear English cotton, and the main chic is to have the factory mark on the clothes as a decoration: a monkey, an elephant, an anchor, or simply 'Made in Manchester', 'Made in Sheffield' written in big blue or red letters. It is worn on the lapel, on the belt, or, even better, across the back or across the chest."[43] Therefore, the so-called working conditions in factories are no better than they were in traditional crafts, and the only difference is that production has become mass, within the same production organization, and is no longer a

[42] Ibid., p. 6.
[43] Ibid., p. 6.

family business. In addition, such still traditional production remains in use only in the countryside and in the provinces, and in the cities, English goods are marketed, bearing the marks of an English manufacturer. Therefore, with this fragment, Duke Božidar clearly shows how incorrect and false is the sentence from the "great and serious book" that "today factories are built everywhere, in the suburbs of all large cities and supply India with everything she needs."[44]

In addition, the lucid travel writer perceives a phenomenon that has remained to this day a semiotic signal of strong cultural collisions, even cultural wars, within which relations of dominance and subordination are defined in the sphere of clothing and fashion. Namely, it is not enough to wear clothes made of English cotton in the cities, but it is necessary (it is the "main chic", as Duke Božidar says in the language of the fashion world) to clearly emphasize this in the clothes themselves, either with a characteristic mark of the factory (monkey, elephant), anchor, etc.) or an indication of the English (by no means Indian!) place of manufacture ("Made in Manchester", "Made in Sheffield", etc.). The cultural subordination of the colonized world is manifested in a very distinct way, and such fashionable details still today contain a strong message in the semiotics of clothing and fashion. Even today, across the entire Serbian cultural space, in the domain of social relations, the most important fact has become the brand of clothing, where a garment must have a clear label of a prestigious, preferably foreign manufacturer. This ensures not so much a technological or qualitative criterion as it grants a special social-status dignity, which is of immense importance to people with a fashion-conscious and trend-sensitive taste.

Certain complications in this type of communication with fashion labels can create extremely comical situations in connection with the phenomenon of brand identity. The first such situation is contained in the fact that sometimes branded goods do not contain any visible marks of special quality, either woven, cut, or designed, and people inclined to fashion wear with pride nevertheless such insignificant rags: in that case, the only thing of value on that rag is the manufacturer's mark itself as a status symbol. Another situation is related to the fact that the market less appreciated producers, not only in our country but also around the world, often choose names that are very similar to the names of those producers who have obtained the highest mark of firmness, so for certain consumers, even such proximity is enough to warm their gentle Pomodarian heart, while for those with stricter pomodari requirements, it only causes additional disdain. The third situation is related to Serbian producers who, as a rule, choose some words from

[44] Ibid., p. 3.

the international lexical fund for their names, very often in English or another foreign language, even in a situation where they are not directed to foreign markets. They are obviously counting on fashionable consumers who "fall" more easily and strongly on foreign names, and domestic goods, especially goods with Serbian names, are mostly avoided as undesirable. These fashion games are brought to a real grotesque, but also the ultimate absurdity when it comes to some domestic products that are really of the highest quality but are less valued because they are, simply, domestic: such a domestic producer necessarily loses the market match because he does not even have a domestic population that would support it, and it is very difficult to enter the world market even in the case when the quality undoubtedly exists.[45]

All that we have mentioned represents the obvious semiotic confusion and suffering that arose in the transition period at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, but this new situation also affects the anti-colonial discourse of Duke Božidar Karađorđević: it seems, namely, that he was already clearly aware of such fashionable whims and absurdity back in its time, that is, hundreds of years before it became the cruel reality of the global world market. The globalist project can, namely, be understood as a softened version of earlier, much harder imperialist systems. Opposing everything to that "big and serious book" and its expressive capacities, Duke Božidar only testified about what he saw in India, and how what he saw was in complete contrast to what was described in the aforementioned study. This is how he testifies to the wanton destruction of India's architectural and urban beauty: "I saw beautiful engineering structures that demolished dream castles, and extraordinary pagodas demolished to cut roads that lead nowhere, to build shapeless barracks from the remains of a wondrous past for *sepoys*."[46] The destruction of traditional values and its undoubted beauty is covered up by the idea of the progress of the entire nation, and the civilizing of the ancient culture that that nation created. At the same time, Duke Božidar positioned himself extremely gently and discreetly, but objectively and unbridled: he, namely, only observes and describes what he sees, so he cannot be accused of being ideologically or propagandistically blinded. However, he can seriously object to authors who express a desire to hide the true reality of India and its

[45] Such, for example, is the case with the high-quality knitwear production realized in the company "Todor" from Vrnjačka Banja: that company simply disappeared from the market, even though it represented the true value of knitwear incomparably better quality, healthier, and visually more attractive than many industrial, branded and of extremely successful companies in related activities. In other words, in a developed market economy, it is not the true quality of goods that is bought, but the success and attractiveness of its image.

[46] B. Karađorđević, *Enchanted India*, p. 6–7.

inhabitants with "big and serious books", with a lot of data and statistical constructions.

Describing those aspects of Indian life that the official, colonialist books do not register and acknowledge, the Serbian travel writer also faced the silent facts of hunger, epidemics, and mass death. That is why he openly wonders how it is possible to believe those "big and serious books" and, at the same time, see everything around him: "If that semi-official book is to be believed, how did it come about that I saw people infected with the plague, that I saw many such people—all very well cared for, I admit—that I also saw the dead, how every evening they were carried in continuous succession to the pyres and cemeteries? How I saw the abominable famine that made hideous living skeletons eaten up by wounds roam the earth; the hunger that sowed corpses barely covered by skin along the roads...'[47] By revealing such antitheses and aporias, Duke Božidar shows the unsustainability of colonialist propaganda and its cruelty in relation to the human reality it falsifies. At the same time, the facts themselves show their inexorable, iron eloquence that does not need any additional words, comments, or interpretations. That's why the travel writer points out that it is perfectly enough to, without any comment, just testify to what he saw, and to make careful observations, i.e., the images of the reality that he travels through and that he describes contain a very clear critical attitude in themselves.

However, regardless of the fact that he emphasizes the sufficiency of the observation method, Duke Božidar will regularly carry out deconstructive comments that show how things are. So that there is no misunderstanding, very discreetly, but perfectly clearly, the travel writer shows how the colonialist discourse implies the free use of half-truths and untruths, all of which are supported by quantitative data and tables. Ideologically, the imperial goal Machiavellianly justifies all means used to achieve such a goal. The travel writer has seen through this linguistic game from the very beginning to its end, which cannot even be anticipated. Duke Božidar, of course, left his most important testimonies not for the introductory parts but for the travel core of his book. Thus, in the final sequences of the travelogue, he will describe his third visit to Bombay, and on that occasion, the consequences of a large epidemic of plague were repaired. And although the horror of the arrival and rampage of the plague had already passed, the terrible consequences and testimonies of the horror that the victims went through remained. In addition to the systemic need of the Jalist order to eliminate such traces at all costs, Duke Božidar very refinedly perceives exactly that:

[47] Ibid., p. 7–8.

a determined effort to eliminate any evidence of suffering from consciousness. That semiotic minus—the process of not acknowledging what actually happened—was revealed throughout the stay in India. The records from the very end of the journey are particularly striking. Upon returning to Bombay, the Serbian traveler notes: "In the evening, when I went to dinner with a friend near Malabar Hill, I could barely recognize some parts of the city: houses, camps of small huts and tents, a whole part of the city was wiped out."[48]

Having written down what the final colonialist act of this cancellation of testimonies about human misfortunes looks like, Duke Božidar immediately takes two more next steps so that the picture of the event is clear enough and becomes unforgettable. On his first step, he finds a completely fresh event that he can describe first hand, without any subsequent constructions and imaginations, so that he clearly shows what the event of the sanitary destruction of living space and human property looks like: "In a garden, they burned the bungalow where a man died—it was still burning. A group of policemen fanned the fire, and a cordon of soldiers kept people away from it."[49] This was immediately followed by the next step, which we can evaluate as a form of ecological awareness of our travel writer because he points out the consequences of such acts on the living environment: "A heavy reddish-brown cloud hovered over the field of funeral pyres." Drums and bells were heard in the distance, and as we approached the noise grew louder and louder in the stifling air, steamy and motionless. And when we got quite close a frenzy of beating and chanting, and a strong smell of burnt fat, pungent and sickening."[50] So, apart from the strong visual images of the burnt house, not only additional visual but also fragrant, olfactory details are added here, which complement the image with those sensory impressions that we usually do not have in mind when we talk about the act of burning the dead or when we imagine it.

From this kind of criticism of the colonialist political system and the corresponding type of discourse, a whole series of concretizations of this general attitude follows quite logically. For example, as part of such concretizations, it is very interesting to observe how Duke Božidar portrayed the role and importance of the police in India. Quite in keeping with the basic, dominant ironic discourse he nurtured, he will first heap praise on the police: "I have seen the police work—the amazing and in any case the highly respected Indian police." The key testimony, however, is related to an act of colonialist violence, but also to the sin

[48] Ibid., p. 411–412.
[49] Ibid., p. 412.
[50] Ibid., p. 412.

that he, a French-Serbian travel writer, committed. That is why he narrates all these events as a form of remorse, or only ironic remorse, for the gesture with which he crudely demonstrated the impotence of the Indian police in relation not only to the colonialist government but also in relation to any European of the white race: "And I will admit the ugly things that I did, the damage I caused to a poor *sepoy* who was appointed to guard the gardens of Bombay high society. Since I knew that an Indian policeman had no right to arrest a European, I picked the most beautiful flowers from those gardens in front of that poor man's nose. He kept up with me, shouting that what I was doing was forbidden, that if the superintendent of police found out, etc., etc..."[51] Based on this description, we can conclude that the Indian police is indeed amazing, but if it is not "highly respected" but on the contrary: it is a kind of mere decoration of the colonialist system, so it is not respected by anyone other than the enslaved Hindus. For whites who act as part of the colonialist system, that police does not exist, as it were, and this is what Duke Božidar showed to the poor Indian policeman with his demonstrative act.

The travel writer did this until he drew out sufficiently strong and obvious consequences of the attitude he wanted to show and prove. That is why he continues his presentation in that spirit: "And I gathered a bouquet for myself and then said goodbye to him until tomorrow." He eventually resigned himself to the fact that he could not stop me, and I believe that if I had stayed a few days longer in Bombay, he would have offered me a ribbon to tie the bouquet."[52] This is how Duke Božidar brought his ironic discourse to grotesque, sarcastic proportions, and at the same time showed all the freakiness of the colonialist system in which there is an "incredible" police force without basic competencies in its basic function: that is why the policeman cannot arrest the perpetrator of a criminal act just because he knows that the perpetrator of the crime is a colonialist white man, and because the Indian policeman has a line of limitations drawn over him, beyond which he must not rise with his powers. In truth, Duke Božidar is aware of the existence of another type of police service, different from the one that takes care of flowers and gardens. It is about the secret police, about which there are no public testimonies, so he could not say anything about it. It is obvious, however, that he is fully aware of the existence of such a secret service, which is why he writes about it with suspicion: "As for the other police, the one whose task is to 'discreetly' monitor 'suspicious foreign-

[51] Both quotations in this passage, Ibid., p. 7.
[52] Ibid., p. 7.

ers', there is no mention of it."[53] All these cases and forms of stylistic shaping of statements clearly show how Duke Božidar made a distinct discourse circle: from an easy ironic form of exposition, he moves to directly disempowering the lies and mystification of the colonial order, and showing the corresponding type of discourse as fundamentally untrue and aimed at concealing the reality of the colonialized world. This clearly stated the assessment that the colonialist discourse cannot and must not be trusted and that an effort should be made to reach an authentic understanding of India through the discourse of Hindu self-understanding.

Anti-colonialist attitude and premonition of post-colonial discourse

If the official colonialist discourse cannot be trusted, it is clear that a truthful travel writer like Duke Božidar Karađorđević has no choice but to establish his own truth about the real India. And that truth is always more complex than it seems at first glance. On the one hand, there are devastating testimonies about the behavior of the colonialists, as well as painful testimonies about the suffering, pain, and humiliation of the native, Indian population; but, on the other hand, there are testimonies of virtuous and honest people, and they are everywhere. In this sense, Duke Božidar Karađorđević acts really honorably, with intellectual honesty, and extremely responsibly as a writer. Namely, he did not create a mechanical division of roles by completely reversing, i.e., deconstructing the sign system that the colonialist discourse firmly establishes. Against kindness, efficiency, and all positive qualities, against the colonizers who try to firmly establish the colonialist discourse as a norm, the travel writer did not make one constant and unambiguous deconstructive turn, reversing the places, roles, and values of the established binary relations. On the contrary, he primarily tries to establish a relationship with reality itself and to see how things really are. That is why he says in the final words about that "big and serious book": "I will not continue to repeat or refute the book that was so recommended to me when I went to India. My advisor spent seven years creating his monumental work, and I spent only seven months in the land of jasmine, roses, plague, and famine. I had the opportunity to come up with figures that are much more stretchable than those of my acquaintance, in this Indian country where you can never finish anything from the first, to get an accurate notification immediately."[54] Thus, Duke Božidar Kara-

[53] Ibid., p. 7.
[54] Ibid., p. 10.

đorđević established perfectly clearly that you cannot get to the truth about a colonial country in a simple way, because the basic function of the colonialist discourse is to prevent the truth from coming to light. Therefore, the truth must be persistently and skillfully searched for, and the discourses of lies must be deconstructed.

Within such an approach to unraveling the colonialist discourse, Duke Božidar will point out the fact that there is a whole series of very bad, negative examples as well as a large number of extremely good, positive cases. Thus, he, on the one hand, "saw some high-ranking persons who perfectly calmly set an example of insensitivity to a misfortune that did not touch them" and he saw "certain civil servants who took double pay for overtime during the famine, and let the disgusting *babies*—gobblers to steal rice and *cowries* from people who are dying of hunger."[55] On the other side, he also saw many bright and honorable examples: "admirable self-sacrificing people who did not belong to the administration." Pastors who gave all their possessions, collected alms from around the world to help the hungry who arrived in continuous processions and lay exhausted around overflowing hospitals and poorhouses; Salvation Army sisters, so amusing here as they collect money with the accompaniment of a large drum, performing miracles of mercy in the famine-stricken areas, saving thousands of human lives; officers—who, it seems, do not see it as their job—officers who wholeheartedly dedicated themselves to saving plague victims, spending their time and entire earnings on this task."[56] Such antithetically positioned characters could, in Albert Memmi's classification, be called, on the one hand, colonialists and even 'masters of colonization'; and on the other hand, they would be 'colonizers of goodwill'. This second class belongs to a man who succeeds in "discovering the economic, political and moral shame of colonization", he "is not able to forget, he cannot accept to become what his compatriots have become", so there is a tension that can "simmer and lasts forever or ends with his defeat or return to the colonizing flock."[57]

Under the pressure of negative examples, the travel writer still does not forget these bright and positive figures. He cannot forget individuals like a brave officer "who had already participated in several military campaigns and experienced many atrocities," but who, with tears in his eyes, "told of the unbearable horror from a hunger camp where he worked in Ch." Additionally, "besides all the sufferings, cholera and dysentery also arrive to slowly finish off the unfortunate, and the

[55] Ibid., p. 8–9.
[56] All three quotes, Ibid., p. 9.
[57] Albert Memmi, op. cit, p. 48–49.

horror caused by the plague seems to lose its meaning where, out of a thousand three hundred people who were alive last night, only six hundred remain today." To make the horror even more complete, "a whole train arrives from the cursed regions bringing a caravan of madmen who fill the carriages with their laughter and chanting."[58] All positive examples are always intertwined with the horrific realities of suffering, pain, and loss, yet they are also marked by noble efforts, often made by ordinary, unremarkable people within the colonial system, like the aforementioned brave officer: he "was not 'someone important,' he was 'just an officer,' [...] even so unrefined that he didn't need to be reminded of the horror he witnessed, as he was, fortunately, able to suppress those images from memory so as not to see them raging."[59] Duke Božidar Karađorđević, therefore, clearly saw where to look for and find the real India and the true testimony about it: he knows that the truth about the collective and individual lives of people, about their meaning and fulfillment of meaning, about the joy and light of the existence of everything should be found in this world, but also everything in the other world. Statistics will be the least able to say about these phenomena, especially not if they are falsified and false.

Somewhere there is the real India that Duke Božidar wants to testify about. What he is talking about is not colonial India, nor a desirable colonialist image of India, but his India is the one that speaks for itself with its own being and its own culture, and which constitutes a unique, unrepeatable language and discourse that can and must be used to talk about that cultural being. And in such a search for an authentic, Indian discourse with which to talk about India, the Serbian travel writer finds himself and his authentic speech about India. For such a standpoint of deep empathy (*einfüllung*) into the world of the Other, he feels that he belongs to the sphere of the ineffable, and that limit of ineffability can be crossed then, and only then, if the Other is allowed to speak with a pure discourse of self-understanding. This means that the cognitive subject must open up to the Other in such a way that the Other speaks through the discourse of self-knowledge, which Duke Božidar successfully realized: "In enchantment, which I feel I cannot express, I sensed that land of dreams and sensual pleasures, loving longing and barbaric cruelty. I felt the hymns of *the Rig-Veda flickering within me in contemplation* on the storms of the raging Himalayas, on Mount Meru, incredibly ravishing under the glittering eternal snow."[60]

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[58] All four quotes, B. Karađorđević, *Enchanted India*, p. 9–10.
[59] Ibid., p. 10.
[60] Ibid., p. 10-11.

In such a perspective, the travel writer does not feel any triumphant, colonialist superiority over the Other, nor does he feel contempt for a different culture. Supported by those books that he felt were true, he "continued his discovery of former India, eager for its solitary wonders of color and harmony, what remained of its past."[61] That is an approach that comes not from the outside but from within, from the very nature of India and its cultural essence. Therefore, in *Enchanted India*, we will not find any rebellions or protests about India being what it is, and especially no forceful demand that it be shaped according to the patterns of Western cultures. On the contrary, Duke Božidar shapes his travelogue as one big 'yes' to India and its specificities, and one big 'no' to attempt to master India, to conquer it, and to reshape its nature. That's why the word 'admiration' is the right word to describe the nature of Duke Božidar Karađorđević's experience of India: "I admired the rajas who were happy to receive me, still surrounded by their former opulence. I admired the unforgettably graceful *bayadere*, in dances similar to dreamscapes, summoned and then disappearing in a game of changing colors."[62]

In the process of feeling and merging with the Other, some neuralgic moments can sometimes arise. One of the Indian cultural specificities that causes the greatest resistance among Westerners is, without a doubt, the caste division of society, but this social and psychological fact did not cause resistance among the French-Serbian travel writer, but even caused real sympathy and, again, admiration: "Brahmins, proud and full of contempt for the impure stranger, the carnivorous; the fakirs in perpetual devout ecstasy; and what I admired most was the division into castes—the immutable order opposed to egalitarianism is gaining strength, which in the name of universal equality lowers Brahmins and Kshatriyas below European soldiers."[63] It is interesting the attitude of the Brahmins that Duke Božidar sees in the unity of pride due to their own spiritual culture that dictates not to eat meat, as well as contempt for the imperfection and impurity of foreigners who are unable to incorporate such a simple fact into their way of life. From the European perspective of reading travelogues, the fact of criticism of European egalitarianism is even more interesting, i.e., the equality of all people before the law, as well as the democratic principles of government in which every person has the same right to vote. It is obvious that Duke Božidar believes that there are natural differences between people and that these differences require different ways of life. However,

[61] Ibid., p. 10.
[62] Ibid., p. 11.
[63] Ibid., p. 11.

these differences do not necessarily require a difference in elementary rights that people assume in front of the entire community, but the travel writer does not discuss these finesses.

He discusses something else, however, which is the unusual durability of Indian society: "And it is marvelous and shows—in spite of what is said about the complete degeneration of the Indian race—one great force which keeps intact the ancestral religion, the division of subservient castes each other."[64] That respect for ancestors is an element of the continuity and stability of the social system, and the mutual respect of castes is a factor in the harmonious organization of that system: "Everyone respects consecrated Brahmins because they are priests, they possess wisdom, honesty, modesty, and guard the cult of the gods." Kshatriyas—warriors, conquerors, and defenders of the land, rajas, maharajas, princes, and kings, all obedient to the Brahmins who alone rule the hymns, addressed to the merciful gods. Then come Vaishyas, artisans, businessmen and merchants, and finally, below all three mentioned castes—Shudras, servants who perform menial jobs, remaining, like Kshatriyas, Vaishyas or Brahmins, always where they are, from generation to generation in the caste in which they were born, and which they cannot leave unless they wish to become pariahs, who are out of caste and who are condemned, together with their posterity, to eternal contempt."[65] In this place, however, there was, undeniably, an opportunity for Duke Božidar to express at least one element of doubt and reserve in relation to his admiration and fascination with India. If not when describing or commenting in another place, now the travel writer could express his protest against the immovability of the caste order and against the fact that a member of a social group remains forever bound to the caste in which he was born and in which his ancestors also had their own place and role. The French-Serbian travel writer misses that opportunity and thus sends the message that he has merged with the nature of Indian society to such an extent that he is unable to make a difference even in places where it is not so difficult to do so.

Nevertheless, certain caste relations cause the author's astonishment, but it is primarily related to the strangeness of the established harmony within Indian society; more precisely, that strangeness is a consequence of the firm hierarchical order and the willingness of the lower castes to recognize the distinct supremacy of the higher castes. That's why Duke Božidar points out: "Amazement occurs when one observes shudras, meek and humble in front of a Vaishya, who again

[64] Ibid., p. 11–12.
[65] Ibid., p. 12.

slavishly respects a brahmin, and when one witnesses such scenes, which, after all, are repeated every day."[66] That meekness and humility in front of the higher caste is what the curious travel writer focuses his attention and wonder on. It does not seem strange at all that this surprise is so pronounced since he, Duke Božidar, even comes from Europe, where the spirit of the French civil revolution and democratic processes gained serious momentum: the Serbian revolution of 1804 introduced the spirit of freedom to the Serbian people, brotherhood, and equality of all people.[67] Against the Turkish, and Ottoman idea of enslavement and blind obedience to the authority of the conquerors and their state and military authorities. Such obedience, i.e., meekness and humility, in the Balkans, is primarily a consequence of either medieval heritage or conquering pressure and violence against free people, and the fact that such social characteristics are built in a society that did not arise as a result of enslavement, causes sincere admiration for Duke Božidar. Hence his fascination not only with the hierarchical and harmonious arrangement of relations between castes but also with the whole of Indian society and Indian culture.

According to Duke Božidar's vision, the problems in Indian society and culture are primarily due to the inappropriate and violent influence of the Europeans, i.e., of the British colonialist political system, and because of the depravity that this collision of two cultures—native and authentic, on the one hand, and foreign and conquering, on the other—necessarily produces. The travel writer testifies to this phenomenon of the collision of two cultures with a very suggestive story from the very end of the "Writer's Preface" in *Enchanted India*. It is a first-hand story, which means that he is only testifying about the events that he personally witnessed. It is about an event in the home of an Indian raja who showed hospitality to Duke Božidar, and "he came to his house without any announcement, simply because there was no

[66] Ibid., p. 12.

[67] The natural consequences of the Serbian ideals of freedom, fraternity and equality were clearly manifested in the Sretenje Constitution of 1835, the first constitutive declaration of Serbian state-building thought in the newly acquired autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, and in that constitution, Chapter 11: General rights of Serbs, with articles 108-131, among which are the provisions that "every Serb has the right to choose his way of life according to his will, as long as it is not to the detriment of the entire nation" (Article 117) and that "when a slave enters Serbian land, from that moment he becomes free, or who brought to Serbia, or did escape to it. A Serb is free to buy goods but not to sell" (Article 118) (See, *Serbian constitution from 1835 to 1990*, edited by Miodrag Radojević, Gramatik, Belgrade 2004, p. 48) We should not overlook the fact that this act of abolishing slavery takes place well before Russian Tsar Alexander II abolished serfdom in Russia in 1861; as well as considerably before the American Civil War of 1861–1865, after which slavery was formally abolished in the USA.

European-style hotel in the city, some English sergeant".[68] He came with his wife (the travel writer notes that she is a "former bar beauty"), with a small child and her wet nurse, and settled in the house of an Indian nobleman without any need to explain anything. In order for the scale of colonialist arrogance not to remain unclear, Duke Božidar pointed out several details: everyone settled with the raja without question, in addition to that, they made a number of demands, i.e., orders, "to be served every day as in a hotel", and at the same time "they do not have to indicate the duration of their stay."[69] At the same time, as the days progressed, the unworthy behavior of the British sergeant and former bar lady became more and more aggressive and in relation to the host, the Indian Raja, more and more reckless. The culmination of such arrogance and all its colonialist absurdity was shown by Duke Božidar with the image of noisy and mindless living "on a poor piano in a large hall where two very high armchairs imitated thrones", so when it was requested that the aggressive colonial troupe calm down a little, "that the sergeant, knowing that the request was Rajin's, politely explained that he was doing whatever he wanted and that he would like to be left alone."[70] With a strong stylization of antitheses and deceived expectations, Duke Božidar ended this narrative passage very effectively, with his personal involvement in the mentioned events: "And the trio (the sergeant, the beauty of the bar and the screeching descendant—cf. I.N.) continued with hilarity all until he was informed that I, a European, had demanded the same kind of peace as the soldier had previously melodiously demanded."[71] What Raja's soldier failed to achieve because the request comes from an enslaved, colonial magnate, i.e., Raja, Duke Božidar succeeded only because he is a European and his word carries more weight than that of Indians.

Duke Božidar Karađorđević could not agree with such contempt of people from a great and honorable culture such as that of India: in him, a Serb with a European, French spirit, everything revolted against such arrogance. Therefore, he branded colonialist violence without any restraint, so he wrote: "I must admit that with certain Jains, founders of hospitals, I often felt a greater fraternal closeness not only to people but also to animals than with the aforementioned sergeant, or with someone from the 'public administration' who received a double salary, and that 'earned' in famine-stricken areas."[72] The special point of view and position of the narrator brought Duke Božidar's travelogue into an

[68] B. Karađorđević, *Enchanted India*, p. 12.
[69] Ibid., p. 13.
[70] Both quotes, Ibid., p. 13.
[71] Ibid., p. 13.
[72] Ibid., p. 13.

obvious and completely antithetical relationship with the colonialist image of Indian events and the corresponding type of discourse, and for these reasons, the author could not rely on the approach, way of thinking and expression that he found in the "big and serious book". The Serbian travel writer recognized a powerful, fundamental closeness in a Jain, "while in the eyes of my learned (i.e., colonialist—cf. I.N.) writer, a Jain is almost an apostate from humanity, a kind of scumbag."[73]

Somewhere there is a complete dividing line of two views of the world: one that sees in the world of India, in people, culture, and all mineral wealth, only material factors worthy of being plundered and used, and the other that in the same world sees above all its neighbors, sees of the great spirit that lives among people and in them, recognizes a soul that cannot be killed even when the body, in which that soul should live, is exposed to various forms of violence and torment. One is an imperial, colonialist perspective, and the other is a perspective of human solidarity, cultural self-awareness, and a universal humanistic vision that knows no borders. One is the perspective of the writer as a propagandist of the colonialist system, and the other is the perspective of a humane travel writer who resists imperial and colonial violence and fights for general human freedom and for the values of such freedom. One is the force of the British colonial system and its disciplined and cruel defender, and the other is the attitude of the members of a famous ruling house of Karađorđević, a small but famous freedom-loving people like the Serbs, a people who fought mercilessly for their freedom, but were always ready to recognize the right of others to their freedom.

The writer Božidar Karađorđević and his cultural status

If we strictly, objectively, and consistently ask ourselves about the nature of Indian society, culture, and history in the vision of Duke Božidar, then we must state that it is to a certain extent based on the idealization of this phenomenon, and the observation primarily of its undoubted and powerful spiritual aspects, and for placing purely social and material factors. Duke Božidar Karađorđević formulated his anti-colonial stance very gently, unobtrusively, and almost apologetically to his robust, colonialist arrogant readers. He even reports his anti-colonialist position to the readers as, ironically, "his great shame" because, allegedly, he cannot reach the aggressive, colonialist mind that recognizes true values only in material factors and civilizational innovations. He is not the kind of man, nor does he possess the mentality that would

[73] Ibid., p. 14.

support colonialist policies. However, he has the insight to recognize the profound values of Indian culture and elevate its lasting cultural significance as something worth living for, and something worthy of fostering harmony in social relations. That is why Duke Božidar writes at the end of his pre-speech: "And I also admit, to my great shame, that I admired the Jasmin tower more, that lace made of airy marble, so light that in amazing moments of twilight one can believe that it will fly, or the ruins of Qutb, rather than some great waterless canal, or a cog railway that climbs the Himalayas towards Darjeeling."[74] Duke Božidar, therefore, does not want a colonialist idea of India but wants an India that speaks for itself and defines itself with its nature, understanding, and culture.

At the very end of his Preface, the author says that his book is "not a book of objections and accusations, especially not a book of assertions or questions"; it is a book that rests on the immediate experience of India and on following the very language of India: "I have tried to record, as they presented, the images of light, architecture, dances and harmony, and this is what I apologize to my reader for—that I noted so little where others saw so much."[75] Loyalty to the true, authentic India and full intellectual resistance to imperial-colonialist mentality and discourse led Prince Božidar to observe the world around him with wide-open eyes and describe what he saw: in this way, the full truth about a powerful spiritual culture was achieved, a culture from which much can be learned. At the same time, the writer rejected the arrogance and recklessness of the colonizers in order not to achieve spiritual maturity, the ability and willingness to bring the world of the Other into himself and to recognize it as something intimate and his own, as in deep foundations similar to what can be recognized in the most spiritual currents of Serbian, Slavic, European and Christian cultures.

Because of such profound convictions, Duke Božidar recorded so few impressions of colonial India: he was not interested in it because he did not recognize anything worth remembering and studying. That colonial India can only attract a colonialist consciousness eager for imperial conquest and self-affirmation, ideological arrogance, and the need for self-love, i.e., for the recognition of oneself in the Other. For the colonialist discourse, the Other exists only to assert the power of identity and the suggestiveness of an imperial being eager to conquer every foot of the entire planet Earth in its narcissism. For the deeply humanistic, anti-colonialist discourse of Duke Božidar, it would be said that the Other exists in order to teach us something that we are not, to

[74] Ibid., p. 14.
[75] Both quotes, Ibid., p. 14.

involve us in dialogue and communication from which should arise the exchange of energy and goods that elevates the beings participating in such an act of communication to the heights above the level of our ego and mundane will to power. Therefore, Duke Božidar's apology should be understood as deeply ironic: he knows well that it is fortunate he "recorded so little where others saw so much." His intellectual elegance knows very well that the journey makes sense if, by confronting the Other, one comes to higher, universal values. And that is why the editor, translator, and writer of the foreword, Aleksandar Petrović, says: "Božidar goes as a free man to the crossroads of Serbian and Indian culture, which have been hijacked and stolen by the same enemies who have destroyed and insulted them for centuries." He wove into his travelogue the Serbian spirit of rebellion against the two-century slavery of India and thus freed his eyes to its true nature. His great ancestor, leader Karađorđe, was a ray of freedom because in 1804 he started the first anti-colonial revolution in the world, and his true descendant, led by the same insatiable desire to get out of the darkness, goes to India as the source of the spirit of freedom."[76]

Based on everything that has been said within this authoritative hermeneutic procedure, we could draw at least a few conclusions of far-reaching importance. The first could be the conclusion that Božidar Karađorđević is, at the same time, a francophone and a Serbian writer. According to cultural criteria, he is fundamentally determined by his belonging to French culture, which shaped his worldview and his corresponding literary patterns that we know first of all in France: these are patterns determined by Western cultural models and corresponding codes into which Duke Božidar fits relatively successfully. According to the communication criteria, he as a writer is fundamentally determined by the French language, in which he most often wrote, thought, and experienced the world, and with such language and style system he expressed himself most successfully. According to literary codes, he was also primarily connected to French culture, so he shaped his travelogues in a way that he could dominantly recognize first of all in French literature, but also in other Western cultures with which French culture, as part of the general community of cultures of the western circle, was in intensive communication. Duke Božidar spent most of his life in France, which is why he is most connected to this cultural environment.

The French language and French cultural affiliation, however, are not the only factors that are completely and without any residue incorporated into the creative being of Božidar Karađorđević. His ethnic

[76] Ibid., p. XVIII.

origins are undoubtedly Serbian: he is the child of Serbian parents, father Đorđe Karađorđević and mother Sarka, née Anastasijević; his grandfather is Aleksije Karađorđević, and his great-grandfather is none other than Karađorđe himself, the leader of the Serbian people in the fight for freedom from the Turkish Empire (1804–1813) and the initiator of the resurrection of the Serbian state; his maternal grandfather was captain Miša Anastasijević, a great Serbian businessman and one of the biggest benefactors important for the creation of today's Belgrade University.[77] Božidar Karađorđević was born in Belgrade on January 6, 1862, he spent part of his childhood in Romania, and his family moved to Paris in 1869; since then he has lived in France or in some francophone regions (Switzerland), but also in Vienna, for example. He was educated in Paris, where he graduated from high school and the Faculty of Law, and also attended the Academy of Arts. He traveled a lot, and on such occasions, he stayed on the Adriatic coast, in Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Greece (Thessalonica, Holy Mountain), Bulgaria, Turkey (Constantinople), Romania, Austria, Germany, then in Russia, then England (London), Sweden, Denmark, Norway, he traveled in Africa (Tunisia, Algeria), India and other countries. He was close friends with French writers such as François Cope and Pierre Loti, he knew a large number of famous writers, artists and musicians (Sarah Bernard, Maria Bashkirtseva, Edmond Goncourt, Gilles Bastien Lepage, Alfred Philippe Rolle, Anton Bruckner, Hugo Wolf and others), and he translated from various European languages, including writers such as Leo Tolstoy, Mor Jokai and Ernst von Wolkogen.[78]

Duke Božidar's mother tongue is Serbian, and the feeling of belonging to the Serbian people has not disappeared despite the fact that he lived the longest in France, where he died. As a man who originates from the Serbian people and Serbian culture, and was moved to French culture, while readily crossing paths with many other cultures (Russian, Hungarian, German, etc.), Božidar Karađorđević is an excellent example of that multiculturally marked subject in whom—in the words of Homi Baba—"the moment of the homeless connects the traumatic ambivalence of personal, spiritual history with the wider divisions of political existence."[79] From this kind of mental and cultural matrix, we can largely explain why Duke Božidar so sensitively felt the specificity and tragedy of the colonized Indian people and was ready to deeply

[77] Stevan K. Pavlović, *Božid'art* , p. 9–93.

[78] We know so much about all these biographical facts today thanks to the already mentioned monograph by Stevan K. Pavlović, and in the systematically written index "Karađorđević, Božidar" in *the Lexicon of the Writers of Yugoslavia* (vol. III, 1987), the data are mostly taken from the same source.

[79] Homi Baba, *Placement of Culture*, p. 33.

empathize with the suffering people and the entire nation. In this regard, we can distinguish at least three possible aspects of this phenomenon, which help us to understand more easily the issues of cultural identification of this writer. On the one hand, as a member of French culture, he would most easily identify with the power of the French Empire and its colonial system, which, in that case, would seek to build models of empathy with the colonizer, not with the colonized. On the other hand, as a member of Serbian culture, Duke Božidar received strong libertarian impulses that belong to every person and all nations, regardless of their size and importance: Serbian history and especially spiritual culture are all about the strong, consistent, and persistent struggle for freedom that is in the order of values, it occupies the highest place within the folk culture. On the third hand, the fact that Duke Božidar shaped himself as a francophone writer of Serbian origin means that he was created according to some kind of hybrid model, as one of the examples of an apparently weak, identity-mixed subject that becomes current and even dominant precisely in times of emphasized multiculturalism and multilingualism, which came to the fore both in the times of the colonial past and in recent times of neocolonialism, postcolonialism, and even globalism.

If, within the postcolonial theory, we would try to find a completely acceptable hermeneutic pattern according to Western criteria, then we could once again refer to Homi Baba and his theoretical descriptions. In one place, he says: "Private and public, past and present, spiritual and social, develop an interspatial intimacy." It is an intimacy that calls into question the binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are connected by an "in-between" temporality that measures the stay in the home while creating an image of the world of history. It is a moment of aesthetic distance that enables a double-edged narrative, which, like the colored South African subject, represents hybridity, a difference 'within' a subject that lives on the edge of an 'in-between'-reality."[80] From a Western point of view, this general hermeneutic formula could quite nicely and convincingly explain the phenomenon of the writer and travelogue writer Božidar Karađorđević.

This type of interpretation, however, could not fully satisfy those who know the nature of Serbian literature and culture in depth. Duke Božidar's ties with Serbian culture, and even with the political culture of his people, are not reduced only to the question of the origin of his family roots and certain sympathies for the people and culture from which he came: he remained a Serbian writer with his libertarian spirit,

[80] Ibid., p. 37.

uncompromising fight for justice in international relations, and the willingness to pay the price that must be paid for the positions he advocates. The nature of Serbian culture and its spirituality played a fundamental role in establishing a strong connection and understanding between the francophone travel writer and Indian history and culture. As literature that is culturally historically and poetically constituted in the space of constant collisions of fundamentally different types of cultures (paganism-Christianity, Christianity-Islam, Orthodoxy-Catholicism, traditional Christianity-Protestant denominations, Christian society-secular society, atheism-nihilism, constant religious conversions-tolerance, etc.), it could certainly be concluded that the spiritual-religious and cultural-historical experience of the Serbian people is fully connected with the experience of complexity and culture of hybridity in a way that began to be more actively recognized in the West only during the 20th century, and emphatically ideologically legitimized at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

Because of all this, Serbian culture, generally speaking, is perfectly prepared for such processes, but its main problem is contained in the fact that all earlier forms, due to the mud shocks of cultural hybridity, regularly went to the detriment of the Serbian people and their survival. This concretely means that during their history, and especially in the 20th century, the Serbs were perfectly able to understand and accept the fact that certain parts of the Serbian people through religious conversions gradually built some of their own cultural peculiarities, due to which they become not only a culturally distinctive social group but even (which is difficult to accept) a special nationality explicitly anti-Serb oriented. What the Serbian cultural and scientific community cannot easily understand, let alone accept, is the fact that such cultural differences become the basis for major undertakings in the creation of not only special nations but also, in relation to the Serbs, antagonistic nations. It cannot be understood in any other way than as a form of imperial power of the great powers which very gladly, they often and very successfully use unformed emerging nations as a means to create various crisis foci that serve primarily to preserve colonial, imperial supremacy, which will exist even in the declaratively defined, anti-colonial and post-colonial era. Some of this world-historical drama, i.e., process of long duration in world history, can also be recognized by carefully reading the precious travelogues *Enchanted India* by Duke Božidar Karađorđević. This francophone and Serbian writer understood, in this respect, the phenomenon of India in depth, with great fullness: he did so by sharply criticizing the colonialist system and deconstructing its recognizable discourse, advocating openly for a discourse of self-understanding,

and even sensing the specificities of the postcolonial discourse. Therefore, reading his travelogue *Enchanted India*, we strongly feel that this writer is a contemporary of all of us from the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century.

Translated from Serbian by
Vid Kecman

NEMANJA RADULOVIĆ

WHERE THE ROSE AND LOTUS BLOOM THE IMAGE OF INDIA IN SERBIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE

Mahatma Gandhi and the Serbian Interwar Intelligentsia

Abstract:The paper explores the image of India in Serbian literature and culture of the 19th and 20th centuries. Emphasis is placed on the reception of similarities and differences in the works of Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore within Serbian culture. Through a review of the perspectives of poetically diverse domestic authors up to World War II, regardless of their differences, a conclusion emerges that Mahatma Gandhi symbolizes, for all of them, the authoritative voice of India.

Keywords: Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, India, the East, culture, religion.

We will begin by recalling a scandal. In 1926, Rabindranath Tagore gave a lecture at the University of Belgrade. The poet's visit to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, where he spent four days as part of his European tour, was met with great interest. The poet met with Nikolaj Velimirović, was introduced to the audience by Pavle Popović, interviewed by Stanislav Vinaver, and Ksenija Atanasijević had the opportunity to ask him a question about feminism. Branimir Ćosić drew a portrait that the poet signed. At the lecture, as reported by the newspapers, the hall was packed, and a large number of people remained outside. In his long yellow robe, Tagore apparently did not disappoint his audience. However, from the gallery, whistles and shouts were suddenly heard: "Down with Tagore, long live Gandhi!" Flyers were thrown, in both Serbian and English, accusing the Indian Nobel laureate of

bowing to Western civilization and not supporting Gandhi.[1] The performance was carried out by the Zenitists, about ten of them, led by Ljubomir Micić, his brother Branko Ve Poljanski, and the painter Mirko Kujačić.

Tagore's visit has been written about multiple times.[2] I particularly highlight Svetozar Petrović's review (mentioned in the section on interwar literature), according to which the poet's visit was a partial misunderstanding: on the one hand, there was Tagore's somewhat commercialized tour; on the other, the audience's expectations to hear not just a poet but also a teacher from the East. In that sense, if we understand what Tagore meant to the audience, we can, in a paraphrase of Hamlet's words, ask about the Zenitists in the gallery: what is Gandhi to them, and what are they to Gandhi?

In the *Zenit* publication, they explained their attack: for them, Tagore was a "false prophet" and a "traveling actor", denounced alongside Krishnamurti and the Theosophical movement, apparently as a traitor to the Indian spirit. The Zenitists asked only one thing of him: to bow to Gandhi when he returned to India.[3] Mirko Kujačić, with significant temporal distance (in 1985), described the action as follows: "About ten of us came and started shouting, among other things: 'Down with you, go to your friend Gandhi, how dare you, what are you doing here while he is in prison...' and we began throwing flyers."[4] (Đorđe Kostić, who himself was at that scandalous literary evening, almost half a century later believes that Micić overheard something about the divergence between Tagore and Gandhi, but did not understand "the essence of the conflict".)[5]

The message is clear.[6] For the avant-garde artists, Gandhi was seen as the expression of true India, while Tagore's appearance was viewed as some sort of salon distraction. But why, in the first place, do Belgrade poets care about Indian politics, and what do the noisy Zenitists have to do with the preacher of non-violence? This becomes clearer if we recall the fundamental poetic and ideological stance of Zenitism: Europe is collapsing, and the renewing power is brought by the new man—the Balkan barbarogenius. Poetic primitivism has merged with

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[1] "An Unprecedented Scandal at Rabindranath Tagore's Lecture", *Vreme*, November 17, 1926; *Politika*, November 17, 1926.

[2] See: Pejčić, "Rabindranath Tagore".

[3] "Open Letter to Rabindranath Tagore", *Zenit* 6, 43 (1926), unpaginated; "Tagore and the Zenitist Demonstrations", same issue, pp. 15-16.

[4] "New Avant-Garde in Old Delay. A Conversation with Mirko Kujačić. Interview conducted by Marta Vukotić"; *Ovde* 17. 198 (1985), p. 27.

[5] Kostić, *To the Impossible*, p. 25.

[6] Setting aside the mistake in Kujačić's recollection: in 1926, Gandhi was not in prison.

national messianism. In defining what the East is, as the antithesis of the West, the Balkans, Slavicism, and Soviet Russia often appear as interchangeable terms, both among Zenitists and more broadly. Since Romanticism, marked as a special place—of alternative religiosity, the new narrative of the origin of European peoples—India was imposed on Zenitists as a paradigm of the East, to which "we" belong—Slavs, Serbs, Balkan people, South Slavs—and Gandhi is its true voice.

In his *Indian Letters*, Nikolaj Velimirović also referred to this incident—where Gandhi is mentioned several times very positively, as a "holy person"—stating: "And when the famous Indian poet Tagore spoke at the university, he said that Europe would perish if it did not return to God, the students screamed in anger and called him a reactionary, shouting: Long live Gandhi! At that point, Tagore explained in surprise that Gandhi was his student and best friend, and that there was perfect harmony between them in everything" (Letter 20).[7] (In an interview given to Vinaver, Tagore truly spoke highly of his compatriot: "India today sends humanity a new light, and that is Gandhi.")[8]

The bishop also returned to Gandhi in other instances. One of the *Missionary Letters* is stylized as a response to the question of the "English boyar Charles B.": "What does the personality of Gandhi signify for India?" The bishop's response is that through Gandhi, Providence sends a warning that means such as fasting, prayer, and silence should be used in politics. This is essentially a Christian method, and the fact that a non-Christian uses it should jolt the Christian world.[9] *Satyagraha* is somewhat simplified here, as the primary intent of the letters, as their title suggests, is missionary. In the *"Christmas Greeting to the Godless",*[10] Gandhi is mentioned in the same manner: "Heed the words of our honorable relative from India, the famous and mighty pauper Gandhi. Look and see a man of faith, who, without your violent methods, governs a people twice as numerous as all the Slavs combined... Thus, India reminds the Slavs of the right path, of their true mission." A similar thesis appears in the article *"Christ, Come to Asia",* where Gandhi is cited as an example of Asian reverence for Christianity and the unworthiness of Christians to represent it in the East. Gandhi suggests that Christians should live as Christ did.[11] In addition to invoking Gandhi as a role model in a preaching context, this also reflects a

[7] Nikolaj Velimirović, *Indian Letters*, Selected Works Vol. 2, p. 219.

[8] Stanislav Vinaver, "The Poet's Mission in the World", *Vreme*, January 16, 1926.

[9] Nikolaj Velimirović, *Missionary Letters*, Selected Works Vol. 8, pp. 129-130. First published in installments in the 1930s.

[10] *Bratstvo* 1931, in: Nikolaj Velimirović, *Homilies*, Selected Works Vol. 4, pp. 344-346.

[11] Nikolaj Velimirović, "Christ, Come to Asia", Collected Works Vol. 10, Himmelstir, 1983, pp. 59-63.

certain fascination with India, which Velimirović had demonstrated as early as in *The Word on the Universal Man*, as well as elements of Slavic messianism.

Jelena Dimitrijević, in her travelogue through India, published two years after her visit, also, through a dialogue between two Indians, presents Tagore and Gandhi as antitheses.[12] This dialogue contains something exemplary, intended to represent the two main currents of the national movement, as the writer perceives them.

This introduction helps us understand the image of Gandhi. Regardless of all the differences among Serbian authors—and the differences between Velimirović and Micić were certainly not insignificant—for all of them, the Mahatma was the authoritative voice of India.

In part, Gandhi's image was linked to Tagore's image, which is not surprising considering the great respect the Bengali writer enjoyed both in our country and in Europe. Hence, Gandhi, who appeared before the public after Tagore had already become famous, was inevitably viewed in comparison to the poet. The opposition between Gandhi and Tagore, found in the works of several domestic authors, was primarily influenced by the image presented by Romain Rolland, whose book on Gandhi served as their main source. Rolland also published a selection of Gandhi's articles, which they also used, as we can see from the notes. Our topic is not the historical relationship between the two great Indians—which had various phases of agreement and disagreement—but rather the perception of Serbian intellectuals.

There was an image of Gandhi based on news and his political activity. Newspapers reported on him, just as they did in other countries. An article about him from 1930 begins with: "I believe it is unnecessary to introduce Mahatma Gandhi."[13] His article "What Does India Want?" was also translated.[14] The magazine *Ženski pokret* reports on Sarojini Naidu, the poetess and Gandhi's follower, speaking at a suffragist meeting in Berlin.[15] Some of the original or translated articles go beyond an informative character.[16] Perhaps the most interesting, though now forgotten contribution, is an interview with Gandhi by a Serbian author.

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[12] Jelena J. Dimitrijević, *Letters from India*, Library of the National University in Belgrade, Belgrade 1928, pp. 14-16.

[13] Milan Marković, "Mahatma Gandhi and His Action in India", *Društvena obnova* 2. 3 (18. 1. 1930), 7

[14] *Pravda*, 22. 2. 1930 (on the front page!).

[15] "Sarojini Naidu", *Ženski pokret* 11. 5-6 (1930), 3-4.

[16] For example: John Gantner, "The Incredible Mr. Gandhi", *Smena* 1.8 (1938), 494-501; Dim. Kurilić, "Contemporary India", *Pregled* 4.76 (1930), 277-283. Kurilić's article was written precisely because the journal wanted to present the struggle of young India as one of "colossal dimensions" and Gandhi was described as one of "those strange Asian spiritual leaders whom we must not measure by European standards" (although the article mostly discusses the past rather than current events).

Nikola Bogdanović, who, according to his own article, "by mere chance" spent two years in India, that is, visited it twice, and learned "Indian" (probably either Hindi or Hindustani), had the opportunity to talk to Gandhi and ask him about his goals.[17] He says that he also met Tagore and mentions an audience with the Viceroy. It is possible that the author of this article is the same Nikola Bogdanović (1894?-1962), an interwar journalist and social democrat who became a radical in the 1920s. Biographical data on Bogdanović do not mention a stay in India,[18] so this would need further investigation. Radovan Kazimirović, in his well-known book on magic and divination (1940), includes a photograph of the yogi Rambir, with the comment that it was brought from Dehradun near Calcutta in 1923 by Nikola Bogdanović, an "investigator of mysterious phenomena".[19] In the chapter on panhumanism, it is mentioned how Nikolaj Velimirović describes Bogdanović as part of a small circle of Serbian Indophiles. The meeting occurred in 1925 at a train station, where Bogdanović accidentally came across Gandhi, whom he knew only from newspapers, and asked to join him on the train. Gandhi and his companions were initially reserved, focusing more on questioning Bogdanović about Yugoslavia while avoiding discussion about India. His knowledge of English and Hindi surprised them but also apparently aroused suspicion, so it was only after he showed them his passport that they became more approachable. In the conversation, Gandhi, using fairly simple arguments of justice, asserted that Indians had the right to self-govern their country like other nations and rejected European paternalism. Illiteracy and religious and ethnic diversity cannot be obstacles. Gandhi particularly addressed the economic exploitation of the average Indian. Bogdanović also mentioned that Mahatma Gandhi was well-acquainted with the Serbian people, having read extensively about them during World War I, and admired their bravery and self-sacrifice. Unlike Jelena Dimitrijević, who was somewhat disappointed by her encounter with Tagore in Santiniketan, Bogdanović was deeply impressed by Gandhi ("Truly, there is something mystical about him, something innate, something powerful.").

[17] "My Meeting with Gandhi", *Vreme*, May 6, 1930; May 8, 1930; May 9, 1930; May 10, 1930; May 11, 1930. For context: January 26, 1930. The Congress, based on Gandhi's proposal from December 1929, announced the Declaration of Independence, affirming the decision for complete separation from Britain, instead of seeking the status of a dominion. March and April were the period of the famous "Salt March", and in early May, Gandhi was arrested.

[18] See the Serbian Biographical Dictionary, Volume 1. He told Gandhi himself that he was not a journalist.

[19] Radovan Kazimirović, *Mysterious Phenomena Among Our People: Magic, Divination, Sorcery, and Prophecy Among Our People*, published by the Milorad P. Milanović Bookstore, Belgrade, 1940 [facsimile edition: Arion, Belgrade, 1986, p. 159].

Romain Rolland's book about Gandhi was published in Zagreb in 1924 by the Stjepan Radić bookstore, with a foreword by Radić himself addressed to the Peasant Party base, although the Francophone intelligentsia among the Serbs was already familiar with the original work. Nikola Banašević published a review of Rolland's book (the original) in 1925, which largely expressed admiration for Gandhi himself.[20] Surrealist Đorđe Kostić mentions that he translated Rolland's biography.[21]

Less well-known than Tagore's visit is the one made to Serbia in 1927 and 1928 by Shoran Singh,[22] introduced as an Indian sociologist and a convert to Christianity. As a guest of the Christian Association of Young People (the local branch of the YMCA-Young Men's Christian Association), he delivered a series of lectures. One was about Gandhi and Tagore (January 25, 1927, at the Christian Association of Young People), and another focused solely on Gandhi (March 21, 1928, at the New University).[23]

In 1932, two small books about Gandhi by local authors were published. Teacher Andrija Aždajić provides an accurate account of Gandhi's life and a highly favorable portrayal of his anti-colonial activities, with particular emphasis on his nonviolent methods. Interestingly, Aždajić warns against stereotypical perceptions of India: "Europe has learned to expect the East to supply it with messiahs, prophets, and God's emissaries; every intelligent person from the East is, at the very least, the son of God or His prophet, who has come to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Thus, deranged English adventuresses seized upon the Indian philosopher and poet Krishnamurti and tried to forcibly proclaim him a messiah and establish his religion. The man barely escaped from Europe alive..."[24] For Aždajić, the true image of India is one of poverty and the struggle against foreign rule. Nevertheless, as we will see, a large number of texts about Gandhi are marked by a messianic exaltation. (Here, we are not addressing the texts chronologically, but it is worth noting that Aždajić's book was published after some of these articles about Gandhi, so it is possible that it also represents a polemic with local authors.)

Dušan Aleksić's (1905-1943) brochure *Mahatma Gandhi* reveals the indecision, if not confusion, faced by those who attempted to explain Gandhi using well-known political concepts. This uncertainty is evident not only among his contemporaries but also among later writers

[20] Nikola Banašević, "Rolland and Gandhi", *Letopis Matice srpske* 303 (1925), 130-132.

[21] Kostić, *To the Impossible*, 93.

[22] I cite the name in the form in which it was presented by the press of the time.

[23] *Vreme*, January 25, 1927; *Vreme*, March 21, 1928.

[24] Andrija Aždajić, *Gandhi and His Movement*, self-published, Belgrade 1932, 5-6.

who approached him with temporal and scientific distance. As a result, the extensive literature contains highly varied assessments of Gandhi as a revolutionary, reformist, anarchist, anti-modern revivalist, essentially a religious leader, Hindu reformer, and as a skilled, manipulative politician. Aleksić describes him as a revolutionary—but with a divine mentality; as a socialist—but utopian; as a middle ground between pacifism and revolution. He resolves these uncertainties by highlighting the European perspective as the problem, arguing that it is only within the Indian context that Gandhi is revealed in the true light. If he appears to us as a demagogue or if we fail to understand his goals, it is because they are tailored to the Indian soul, which also explains Gandhi's "cloak of mysticism". For this reason, the Indian way of struggle can only be as Gandhi sees it. Aleksić reiterates something that was criticized from the left regarding Gandhi—that the British tolerate him precisely because he is not an outright revolutionary. Yet, Aleksić's pamphlet is not purely political: he admires Gandhi's philosophy, which "awakens latent forces", "purifies the soul", and suppresses the animalistic and crude. At the very end, Aleksić reveals his expectations: "I believe there is no person in the world today faced with greater deeds than Gandhi's, nor a person bearing greater responsibility than Gandhi did."[25]

In the same, even stronger tone, is the brief foreword by Radovan Kazimirović, with the expressive title "The Colossal and Apostolic Figure of Mahatma Gandhi". It is telling that in this one-page introduction, the adjectives "colossal" and "apostolic" are repeated twice. Both Kazimirović and Aleksić write about Gandhi as a representative of yoga. At first glance, this appears to be an attempt to explain the new through what is known from Indian culture, whether directly or indirectly, and Indian culture is—according to the expected clichés—ancient, philosophical, and mystical. However, it doesn't have to be just that. Gandhi's activities can be viewed as *karma yoga* (action), which he himself articulated in his interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita*.[26] Evidence of this interest is also found in Kazimirović's remark that he gave a lecture about Gandhi at the Club of Independent Writers and Artists in 1931. This kind of idealization is even more striking among other intellectuals who, in their attempts to understand Gandhi, were actually creating their own image of him in their writings.

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[25] Dušan Aleksić, *Mahatma Gandhi*, Novi Mir, Belgrade, 1932, p. 15.

[26] Some scholarly works also view Gandhi through the concept of *karma yoga*: Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence: The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1965, p. 111; similarly, in the brief, popularly written biography by George Woodcock, *Gandhi*, Fontana/Collins, London, 1972, p. 11.

Vasa Stajić, in the same issue of *Letopis* as Banašević, publishes a contribution regarding the French translation of Gandhi's articles, with a foreword by Romain Rolland. While the French writer served as an intermediary, Stajić's article significantly surpasses the format of a review or mere introduction to Gandhi's work. It is an essay that portrays Gandhi as a prophet and reformer: "the radiance of love... the saint of India today illuminates the entire world". With extensive excerpts from his autobiography, the emphasis is placed on Gandhi's struggle against the status of the untouchables. But Stajić sees the significance of Gandhi for Europe as well. Today's India, with prophets Gandhi and Tagore, "exposes the lie" of aging Europe with its claim that religion is outdated. While ideals are dying in Europe, new religions are emerging in India that "illuminate our souls". The Indians are our brothers, oppressed but capable of great feats, and through Gandhi, the oldest culture of humanity speaks to us. The expectation of renewal from the East could not have been expressed more clearly.

In the figure of Gandhi, as seen by Stajić, ancient Eastern wisdom becomes alive and contemporary. Gandhi is meant to testify to this living antiquity as an antidote to the "crisis of the West", clearly understood as the spread of secularization.

According to the same book of texts and Roland's biography, Stajić published an article titled "The Message of India: Mahatma Gandhi" in the same year in *Nova Evropa*, where he provides a chronological overview of Gandhi's activities, concluding that the struggle for *Swaraj* is simultaneously a struggle for truth and the freedom of humanity. "In this lies his liberating mission for so many consciences that do not know how to howl with the wolves in Europe."[27]

Nova Evropa sought to present both sides, so in response to Stajić's article, a piece was specially commissioned from H. Verney Lovett, a long-serving senior official in the Indian Civil Service and a professor of Indian history at Oxford. According to him, the conditions in India are not conducive to democracy and confirm the impossibility of the country being without British rule.[28]

Pavle Radosavljević, an educator and psychologist, professor at New York University, and a friend of Tesla and Pupin, also commented on Gandhi, being otherwise deeply interested in Hinduism. He begins with a general overview of Hinduism, which he sees as essentially dynamic, tolerant, and focused on inner fulfillment. Radosavljević does

[27] Vasa Stajić, "The Message of India: Mahatma Gandhi" (1925), *Nova Evropa* XII 2 (1925), pp. 33–42. In the same issue, Stajić also has an article about Romain Rolland—the two names were linked in the contemporary reception of Gandhi.

[28] H. Verney Lovett, "Great Britain in India", *Nova Evropa* XIII 2 (1926), pp. 49–55.

not separate Buddhism from Hinduism here, nor does he emphasize the differences brought about by the reform movements of the 19th century. Against this historical backdrop of *Sanatana Dharma*, which encompasses both Buddha and Vivekananda, he places Gandhi. For Radosavljević, Gandhi is a saint, the greatest man of modern times, but one who does not bring anything new; rather, he testifies to the ancient truths of Hinduism, which, according to Radosavljević, are fulfillment, harmony, and the sanctity of life taking precedence over the sanctity of property (here, the Serbian author relies on Gandhi's statements in which he identified himself as a Hindu, although Gandhi's Hinduism is undoubtedly reformist). However, Radosavljević's text does not explain Gandhi through cultural context alone. He goes beyond that, questioning what Gandhi means for Europe, the Slavs, and the Serbs, and sees him as a bearer of a message for the entire world—a message of nonviolence and unity above all: "Gandhi is as great as life itself"... "he gave the whole world the power of unification." His truth is not merely the voice of Hinduism but of all religions. Radosavljević views Gandhi's thought as rooted in tradition and, in that sense, distinct from modern cosmopolitanism, while being both universal and Indian. In doing so, he builds upon the thesis of India's universalist mission, popularized in the West by Vivekananda.

In 1924, Vladimir Velmar-Janković wrote an enthusiastic article about Gandhi; it is essentially an overview of his activities based on Romain Rolland's book. However, Velmar-Janković was also inspired to explore broader questions regarding the relationship between East and West and the historical missionary role that Slavs would have in turning toward Asia.[29] When false news of Gandhi's death arrived in 1928, he published an obituary in which he stated that he would extol Gandhi as a superhuman only if that "hysterical term" could be applied to the Indian soul. He even concluded that Gandhi, more than some Christian saints, deserved the title of a God-man. Fascinated by the principle of nonviolence, Velmar-Janković hoped it would resonate in Europe as well.[30] He praised Gandhi's reformist activities ("noble liberalism") in an article discussing castes and the position of women, viewing them as manifestations of the "New India", but remained entirely objective in presenting Gandhi's stance on the caste system.[31] Ratko Parežanin also published an obituary in *Preteča*, the journal of Mitrinović's pan-humanists, which included selected thoughts from articles in *New India*, according to Rol-

[29] Vladimir Velmar-Janković, "The East in the West", *Misao* 16, no. 3 (1924): 1240–1248; 16, no. 4: 1406–1415.

[30] Vladimir Velmar-Janković, "Gandhi's Death", *Novi Vidici* 1, no. 2 (1928): 78–79.

[31] Vladimir Velmar-Janković, "Social Inequalities in India", *Pravda* (January 14, 1927): 6.

land.[32] For him, Gandhi is a saint who united "the genius of vision with direct action". When Gandhi was mocked at a masquerade ball in Belgrade, Vladimir Vujić reacted angrily, condemning the fact that members of a nation "fighting for freedom and the Kingdom of Heaven" were ridiculing a great man "so spiritual that, in his struggle against oppressors, he proclaimed a principle—essentially Christian—of doing no harm".[33]

It is noticeable that Serbian authors easily adopted the honorary title Mahatma (Stajić also writes "Great Soul", Parežanin "great soul, the soul of countless souls"; Radoje Marković, inspired again by Rolland and the Gandhi-Tagore relationship, in a pro-Gandhi article also uses "Great Soul", as the embodiment of the Indian soul).[34] This is not merely an adoption by inertia but a stance of respect and siding with the Indians in their struggle for *svaraj* (self-rule).[35] For Stajić, Radosavljević, and Velmar-Janković, Gandhi is the voice of contemporary India, which—like Tagore in their perception—should serve as an example and guide to "Western materialism".

Miloš Đurić, the creator of the concept of "Slavic-Indian panhumanism", mentions Gandhi only in passing but eloquently. Alongside Dostoevsky and Tagore (whom he writes as Takur, striving to stay as close as possible to the original pronunciation), Gandhi is one of the "great standard-bearers of liberating and salvific ecumenical ideas".[36] Gandhi's connection of religion with politics is cited as an antithesis to the Western political demonism of individualism and imperialism. In Gandhi, "the god of Hinduism became the synthetic personality of India".[37] In the conclusion of his study on the problems of the philosophy of culture, specifically in the final paragraph, Đurić cites Gandhi as

[32] R. P. [Ratko Parežanin], "Mahatma Gandhi", *Preteča*. St. Sava Edition (1928): 71–72.

[33] Vladimir Vujić, "On What Should People Be United Today", *Narodna Odbrana* 7, no. 8 (1932): 115. Gandhi's name is not mentioned, but it is clear who is being referred to.

[34] R. M. M. [Radoje Marković], "Mahatma Gandhi", *Raskrsnica* 3, nos. 17–18 (1924): 82–86.

[35] Although Gandhi's movement was one of several in the struggle and negotiations with the British, the significance of using this title is highlighted by the fact that, after Indians were granted higher positions in local governance, one of the instructions to subordinate Indian and British officials in one region was that Gandhi should henceforth be referred to as *Mahatma* in official correspondence (Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi: The Years That Changed the World, 1914–1948*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2018, pp. 509–510). Incidentally, a popular version claims that Tagore was the first to call Gandhi *Mahatma*. However, according to Ramachandra Guha's new biography, Gandhi was referred to as *Mahatma* even before his meeting with the poet (Guha, *Ibid*., p. 158). Nevertheless, for understanding the image of Gandhi, the perception that connected these two Indians in this way is more significant.

[36] Đurić, *Preg slovenskim vidicima*, 53.

[37] In: *Problems of the Philosophy of Culture* (doctoral dissertation defended under Albert Bazala in Zagreb), in: *Cultural History and Early Philosophical Writings*, 408.

an example—alongside Lao Tzu, Rousseau, and Tolstoy—of "redemptive knowledge" through a restorative connection with life itself, as an antidote to the analytical nature of academic philosophy. How well Gandhi's ideas truly fit into Đurić's vitalism is less important for understanding these texts than his desire to create a canon of thinkers that supports his *Lebensphilosophie*.

Incidentally but commendably, Branko Lazarević also compared Gandhi and Tolstoy, to Tolstoy's detriment. In the Russian, there is disbelief and anger, while in the Indian, there is faith, peace, apostleship, silence, sanctity, and innate holiness.[38]

Here, Tin Ujević can also be mentioned, as he was connected to the Belgrade milieu in the 1920s. In 1931, he published *Two Principal Bogomils: Tolstoy and Gandhi* in Sarajevo, with the central thesis that Gandhi preached the same principles as the medieval Bogomils: nonviolence, celibacy, and adherence to truth. We cannot now delve into the complex question of sources and topoi about the Bogomils; what is far more significant is that in South Slavic cultures of the 19th century, the image of the Bogomils played a role in shaping the concept of national identity. Ujević offers a historical explanation suggesting that the Indian heritage reached the Bogomils through Manichaean, or Persian, intermediaries. Modern studies of Bogomilism are more cautious regarding such genealogies, but that is not particularly relevant here, as Ujević was certainly not a historian. Like some other authors, such as Dvorniković, for instance, Ujević sees in Bogomilism something native, something of their own, which is simultaneously a legacy of India. Gandhi serves as a vivid testimony to such a connection.

Some texts about Gandhi were written in a different tone. Early in Gandhi's postwar campaign in India, Dimitrije Mitrinović wrote in 1921 in London, in a text in English published in *The New Age* magazine: "That honorable and great man who embodies the profoundest essence of India and the East in general, Mr. Gandhi, is antithetically and tragically mistaken; he is mistaken, yet great and indispensable. He is even more opposed to Western civilization, Europe, Christianity, and Nordic Aryanism than to the rule of Anglo-Indians and British industrial centers... Therefore, Western values must be imposed on the East, imposed with love and force, through the means and desires and reason[39] of the West."[40] The article is intended for a British audience but can be mentioned due to Mitrinović's influence on the Serbian group of pan-humanists. Mitrinović was undoubtedly an Indophile.

[38] Branko Lazarević, "New Moon" (1938), *Questions and Wonders*, Collected Works 6, 159.

[39] Or "reason"—Mitrinović's English style is distinctive, as is his Serbian.

[40] Mitrinović, *Certainly, Future*, 162.

However, while living in London, gathering English students, and writing about Albion's mission, he acknowledges Gandhi's greatness and sees in him the "true" East. Yet, he does not derive from this a reason or support for immediate anti-colonialist struggle. Although the article is only fully comprehensible within the broader context of Mitrinović's synthetic historiosophy, it is notable that Gandhi is again placed within the framework of the opposition between East and West. According to some references, he met Gandhi somewhat later, though we were unable to confirm this.[41]

Pavle Jevtić, who was close to Mitrinović and the first (and almost the only) Serbian Indologist with a doctorate from London, was perhaps the most qualified to pass judgment on Gandhi. He published several articles about Gandhi that demonstrate his awareness of contemporary events in India, but also the same ambiguity that is noticeable in Mitrinović's views. Jevtić emphasizes that Gandhi's doctrines and movement cannot be understood within European political categories but must be viewed in the Indian context. And in this context, he reveals a deep, millennia-old static and conservatism. Jevtić's portrayal of contemporary India is far from idealistic: he highlights issues such as religious conflicts between Hindus and Muslims, poverty, untouchability, and multilingualism. Being aware of the differences between Gandhi and Nehru, he notes at one point the decline of Gandhi's influence and the dissatisfaction of the younger generation, although he cautions that due to Gandhi's great influence, he is indispensable in any future resolution of India's status. Economically, Gandhi is assessed as a dilettante (though he is right in regard to domestic industry). He does not go beyond the Indian idea of universalism, working for India and humanity. However, under Indian conditions, Gandhi acts as a revolutionary. And more than that: for Indian nationalists, revolution is a spiritual movement, with the starting point that man is a spiritual being. *Swaraj* is spiritual liberation. This understanding, along with the concepts of karma and dharma, has kept India immobile for centuries and prevented the development of political thought. Jevtić acknowledges that India is the land of the purest spiritual and "ethereal" thought, the homeland of the most developed philosophical and religious thought, but that it is necessary to break away from abstract wisdom for the sake of social progress. Gandhi is both a fanatic and an ascetic, a nihilist and a phi-

[41] "A Short Biography of Dimitrije Mitrinović" (University Library "Svetozar Marković", materials of the New Atlantis Foundation); Nenad Petrović, *Dimitrije Mitrinović*, 24; Palavestra, *Dogma and Utopia*, 337. The secretary of the Mitrinović Foundation, Mike Tildsley, was kind enough to verify and inquire with the descendants of Mitrinović's students, but no one was aware of whether this meeting had ever taken place.

losopher, a mystic. His movement is not merely politics but a vision of the moral transformation of Hinduism (in other words, he is primarily a religious reformer)—this applies to all Indian leaders. The movement aims to achieve ancient Indian moral ideals, with the foremost being inner peace and spirituality. Moral education, as provided in Gandhi's ashram, is the core of India's future generations.[42]

In *Narodna odbrana*, where Jevtić published, some texts were also signed with pseudonyms (Del, Pars), which Dobrilo Aranitović does not include[43] in the bibliography of Jevtić's works. However, based on the themes, viewpoints, and style, it is possible that these are also Jevtić's writings.[44] According to them, the Indians learned nationalism from the West, but spiritual values remain their priority rather than political ones. Indian nationalism is a moral revival, a spiritual discipline, and a universal human duty that stems from Indian tradition, or rather, it is just a phase in universal human progress. On a more secular level, the author observes that the country's independence would not bring freedom due to internal problems, and it could even happen that India falls under foreign rule, harsher than British rule.

Jevtić highlights the specificity of Gandhi's movement and the necessity of cultural contextualization, but his seemingly sober analysis also relies on stereotypical representations of older Orientalism regarding the perceived static nature of the Indian spirit. In this vein is also the emphasis on spirituality. While other authors see in this Gandhi's essential virtue, Jevtić merely acknowledges it. He readily grants India every spiritual superiority but remains reserved when it comes to current political demands. It appears that, for the spiritual Indians, it is better to leave the practical English to burden their karma with earthly matters such as governance. Behind this, we sense Jevtić's Anglophilia.[45] His admiration applies to the ancient and spiritual India, while the modern and political one evokes discomfort. Jevtić came to know India through England, and thus his Anglophilia and Indophilia had to be separated in some way. Although there is noticeable ambivalence about Gandhi, the article *"The Meaning of Indian Nationalism"*

[42] Pavle Jevtić, "The Meaning of Indian Nationalism. Is Gandhi a Revolutionary or a Mystic?", *Narodna odbrana* 6. 83 (1931), 617-618; "The Role of Mahatma Gandhi in Contemporary India", *Narodna odbrana* 12. 16 (1937), 248-249; "Contemporary Issues of India. Mahatma Gandhi as a Reformer", *Narodna odbrana* 12. 4 (1937), 54-56.

[43] Pavle Jevtić, *Karma and Reincarnation in Hindu Religion and Philosophy*, Literary Community of Novi Sad, Novi Sad 1988, 111-120.

[44] The interest in Indian themes in the journal is also reflected in, for example, "The Enigma of India" in the "Foreign Review" section, also in issue 6 (1931): 116-118, unsigned.

[45] By way of illustration, *Narodna odbrana*, in the same year of 1937, which published Jevtić's articles, features on the front page of issue 25 an article titled: "Our Friends: Great Britain". See also issue 26.

from 1931 nevertheless reveals a deep respect.[46] Jevtić, like others, recognizes the religious and universalist character of Gandhi's doctrine, but he hesitates when it comes to its political effects: he does not doubt its strength, but rather questions whether the departure of British rule is its ultimate goal. Although he speaks of the unity of the religious and the political, although he respects Gandhi's ethics and sees in them the seed of future India, he himself does not write about him as a prophet, unlike Radosavljević, Stajić, and Velmar-Janković.

The article "A Review of Contemporary India: The Meaning of the Nationalist Movement" from 1932 shows how Jevtić attempts to soften the perception of the revolutionary nature and the desire for independence of the Indian national movement, presenting it instead as a reformist movement aiming to remain within the British Empire. "Educated Indians know that India is not ready to govern itself", and the "moderate elements" fear that the country may fall under another rule (evidently Japanese). In addition to listing various reasons why India is not ready for independence, which were commonly cited during that period, he also mentions that for Indians, the main values are spiritual, and that Gandhi's conflict with the English and his desire for self-rule stem from moral principles, aiming for "settlement" and "mutual repentance" between the two nations.[47] The article can be read as a praise of Gandhi's high ideals. When Jevtić writes that one Indian's speech on nationalism links the idea of the nation to "universal humanity", he seems to view this as a manifesto of Indo-Slavic panhumanism.[48] But it can also be understood as a reinterpretation of Gandhi's views in favor of the British. The same views will be repeated in 1938: that Indians learned nationalism from Europeans, and that Gandhi does not seek hostility or a break with the English, but mutual respect. "Whether the current that sees Gandhi as a saint and herald of a new era will prevail, or the current guided and inspired by the teachings of Europe [i.e., nationalism—N. R.], the near future will show."[49]

A special place is deserved by the comparatist Milan Marković, who obtained his PhD on Gandhi in Paris in 1928.[50] His mentor was

[46] At the beginning of that year, Gandhi was released from prison, and the talks between him and the Viceroy in February and March would lead to the so-called Gandhi-Irwin Pact. He spent the autumn in Britain attending the conference on the status of India as a representative of the Congress.

[47] Pavle Jevtić, "A Review of Contemporary India: The Meaning of the Nationalist Movement", *Misao* 38. 3-4 (1932), 206-212.

[48] The term he uses for universal humanity (*lokasamgraha*), from the *Bhagavad Gita*, is also used by Mitrinović in articles that were published in the early 1920s in the journal *The New Age*.

[49] Pavle Jevtić, "Contemporary Indian Nationalism", *Smena* 1.2 (1938), 78-80.

[50] More precisely, the title of Marković's doctoral thesis is *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Tolstoy* (1928), and *Tolstoy and Gandhi* (published the same year) was

Fernand Baldensperger, and the commission members included the Indologist Alfred Foucher (an expert on Buddhist art) and the comparatist Paul Azar. Marković's main method was comparing the writings of Tolstoy and Gandhi and determining the similarities through themes such as non-violence, sacrifice, patriotism, relations with the state and its authorities, religion and morality, asceticism, and especially contemporary civilization (science and technology, education, art, and medicine). The conclusions of Marković's comparisons can be summarized as Tolstoy's influence on the Indian leader, which is sometimes even overstated. He also notes some differences: Tolstoy rejects the state, while Gandhi rejects an unjust government; Tolstoy refuses to address the potentates, while Gandhi enters into negotiations with them. (Additionally, which Marković does not mention, and which perhaps was not as emphasized at the time, *satyagraha* implies the change of the other party in the conflict or the change of the satyagrahi themselves if, in confronting the opponent, they realize they are in the wrong.) In the rejection of contemporary civilization and the belief in human goodness, Marković recognizes the legacy of Rousseauism. It is interesting to note his observation about reception: just as Tolstoy's Christianity was strengthened by reading Indian texts, Gandhi's faith was reinforced by reading Tolstoy. If further developed, this standpoint could have led to broader reception and imagology studies. The largest part of the thesis consists of neutral comparisons. Marković's own judgments and broader framework of thought are shown in the introduction and conclusion. Namely, he views the ideas of Tolstoy and Gandhi within the context of the East-West antithesis, strengthened after World War I, when, as he himself states, the "crisis of the West" was seen in its turn toward the East. (In his literature, he also mentions the pro-orientalist Hermann Hesse, as well as Henri Massis, who wrote *The Defense of the West*, against the influence of Eastern thought.) As a common characteristic of both Russian and Indian cultures, Marković highlights the subordination of the world of action to the spiritual world and universalism; aside from such a degree of generalization, and even stereotyping, characteristic of earlier academic tradition, this would mean that Marković sees Tolstoy and Gandhi as typical representatives of the two cultures, which is debatable.

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the "supplementary thesis". Both were published in the *Library of the Comparative Literature Review* series. A copy of Marković's thesis in the University Library "Svetozar Marković", which Marković gifted to Aleksandar Belić, was found uncut, which speaks less about Belić's lack of interest in Gandhi and more about the poor reception of Marković's thesis in our country. A copy with a dedication is also found in the legacy of Vladeta Popović and Mary Stensfield Popović at the English Department of the Faculty of Philology.

In the East-West contrast, which was equated with other antitheses (modern civilization/tradition, materialism/spirit, activity/contemplation, mechanism/organicism), Marković clearly sides with the West as he sees it, at the end of his thesis. He criticizes Gandhi for inconsistency (and he is not the only one in this) in that, for example, he uses the railroad despite his anti-technologism. But when he points out that the West also has spiritual figures like Pascal and Francis of Assisi, that modern science is not "parasitic" but involves self-sacrificial research, and that Westerners do not strive for a constant blending of the spiritual and the worldly, he is actually not talking so much about Gandhi and Tolstoy, but writing about them as carriers of general principles of "Easternism". (However, if Gandhi is influenced by Tolstoy, and Tolstoy by Rousseau, then the Eastern character of these ideas is questionable.) Marković acknowledges the legitimacy of Eastern aspirations for recognition but denies that Europeans have the desire to destroy the greatness of Eastern religions. (Again, as if the East is reduced only to spirit: there is no mention of the legitimacy of the political aspirations of colonized peoples.) Although he does not believe in the spread of these ideas (he even considers their anti-modernism potentially dangerous), he acknowledges that they elevate the spirit with idealism and a sense of universal brotherhood.

The thesis did not become more well-known or accessible in our region, but Marković addressed the Serbian audience with the same topic. He delivered a lecture on Gandhi at the Workers' Chamber and published an article in the *Letopis Matice srpske*, in which he summarized the ideas of the thesis on the Rousseauist origins of Tolstoy's and Gandhi's doctrines.[51] This genealogical interpretation is supplemented by Marković's value judgment, expressed more freely than in the thesis, describing it as the dreams of great children and moralistic exclusivity. He particularly criticizes the Russian and the Indian for their rejection of the autonomy of art, insisting instead that art must serve moral improvement. He also delves into Gandhi's views on health and his critique of medicine, particularly his rejection of vaccination. What Marković defines as anti-Westernism, we would likely describe today as anti-modernism and anti-Enlightenment. In the same year, in *Društvena obnova*, the semi-official publication of Mitrinović's pan-humanists,[52] he published a series of articles presenting the core ideas (nonviolence, satyagraha), reiterating the genealogy of ideas, and offering criticism—this time more political in nature. While respecting Gandhi's character,

[51] Milan Marković, "Rousseau, Tolstoy, and Gandhi: Three Opponents of the West", *Letopis Matice srpske* 324 (1930), 145–159.

[52] See the previous chapter.

Marković criticized him for rejecting democracy and parliamentarism. Gandhi's understanding of pacifism is utopian, like that of Rousseau and Tolstoy, as it overlooks the darker side of human nature, which had already manifested in events Gandhi envisioned as peaceful but which turned violent. Starting from this pessimism (or realism), Marković observes that India, "both against Gandhi and with him", nonetheless embarked on the path of Western democracy—which would prove true less than twenty years later—and expresses the hope that it would not take the path of communism.[53]

(Incidentally, Milan Marković and Pavle Radosavljević are connected by one name and an indirect Indian link: Nicholas Roerich. I have written extensively about this elsewhere,[54] so I will only repeat the basic information. Radosavljević was in contact with the key figure of the New York branch of Roerich's society and exchanged seven unpublished letters with the Russian painter, praising him as a cosmic and Slavic teacher. Marković, on the other hand, was the secretary of the Yugoslav branch of Roerich's society. At that time, Roerich not only lived in India but also preached Indo-Slavic syncretism.)

In Marković's assessment, the influence of the French rationalist school is evident. Nevertheless, this was poorly received on the left. Velibor Gligorić (who also addressed the Mitrinović followers and pan-humanists with caustic articles) ironically dubbed Marković's lecture as "apostleship" and criticized him for his "theological enthusiasm" for Gandhi. Gligorić also reproached Gandhi himself for his advocacy of labor, "which could contribute to sustaining the colonialist spirit from below". However, his target was more the Belgrade enthusiasm for Gandhi than Gandhi himself (Gligorić, 1932).[55]

When it comes to translations, one can also mention the book by Karl Barz *England Conquers India* (1937), one chapter of which is entirely dedicated to Gandhi. With the onset of World War II,[56] several political brochures and books about India were published (*Where is India Heading?* 1940, by Vladislav Savić, a diplomat and husband of

[53] Milan Marković, "Mahatma Gandhi and His Action in India", *Društvena obnova*, 2 (January 18, 1930), 7–8; 4 (January 25, 1930), 7; 6 (February 9, 1930), 5–6; 7 (February 16, 1930), 11–12.

[54] Radulović, "The Roerich Movement".

[55] Velibor Gligorić, "Apostleship in Our Literature and Philosophy", *Vreme*, March 1, 1932.

[56] The war caused a crisis in India when the Viceroy, Linlithgow, declared India to be a participant in the war on the side of Britain, without any prior consultations with Indian politicians. Since the Viceroy rejected Indian proposals for an agreement, the Congress turned to demanding complete independence. In 1940, the Muslim League passed a resolution calling for a separate Pakistani state; the same year, Nehru and S. C. Bose were arrested.

Jela Spiridonović-Savić; *India: The World's Largest Colony*, 1940). Different sides presented their views on India. *Thirty Days*, a left-wing magazine edited in Zagreb by Vladimir Dedić and Vladimir Vitasović, published several pro-Indian and simultaneously pro-Soviet articles translated from English.[57] On the other hand, German propaganda publications appeared, such as *The Position of Workers in India* by Hermann Fritsch (1941) and *English Rule in India* by Reinhard Frank (1940), both published in Berlin in Serbian as part of the "England Without a Mask" series, under the German Information Bureau. The pro-British *Humanity* (also published as *Britain* and *Danica*) published an article by Edward Blunt defending British rule against accusations that the "divide and rule" policy maintained poor relations between Hindus and Muslims.[58] Through the translation of Nehru's article, readers were also able to become acquainted with the Congress's stance on the war.[59] The pamphlet *The Rebellion of India: What Gandhi Demands Today* (1940), published in a series dedicated to contemporary political issues, specifically focuses on Gandhi's struggle, presented accurately. During the occupation, the German collaborator Danilo Gregorić, better known for *The Suicide of Yugoslavia*, published an anti-British book in 1942 titled *India: The Strange Continent*, where more pages were also devoted to Gandhi.[60]

It is notable that, despite the admiration, Gandhi's own books (autobiography, articles) were not translated. The first selection of works, translated by Zora Minderović, would not appear until 1970.

To conclude: the idealization of Gandhi came from the undeniable impression his personality left, but the creation of such an image was influenced by the historical and cultural context in which the Serbian intelligentsia operated. The affection for Gandhi undoubtedly reflects sympathy for a people fighting against foreign rule. The experience of their own national history, liberation in the 19th century, the wars of 1912-1918, and the creation of a new state, as well as the continuity of ideas that shaped and followed these events, contributed to the pro-Indian stance. However, far more than just a political figure, Gandhi was seen by some authors—often alongside the then-popular Tagore or in

[57] A. Brown, "India and the Current War", *Thirty Days*, 1(11) (1940), 5–14; "Strategic Importance of India for the British Empire", 1(12) (1940), 40–50; "British Empire—India—Soviet Union", 1(13) (1940), 40–50.

[58] Sir Edward Blunt, "Relations Between Hindus and Muslims in India", *Humanity*, 1(3) (1940), 5–7.

[59] Pandit Nehru, "India Struggles for Its Freedom", *Selection of the Best Contemporary Articles*, 5(7) (1940), 702–712.

[60] That same year, Gandhi started the campaign known as "Quit India", after which he, Nehru, Patel, and many other Congress members were arrested.

contrast to him— as an expression of Indian tradition (even if understood in terms of "barbarogenius") and as a messianic figure of universal significance. Vinay Lal observes that Gandhi entered the canon of world history as the apostle of nonviolence, while his criticism of the West and materialism in reception remained subdued.[61] Gandhi's critique of the West received significant attention from Serbian authors. More broadly, the Serbian reception is not so unusual and should be understood within the interwar ideological context of the "crisis of the West"—a time when Spengler was in vogue—against which certain images of the East were contrasted. However, these East-West oppositions were also, for Serbian writers of that period, an occasion to reflect on their own cultural identity, which is evident in some of the works on Gandhi. On the other hand, there were also more distanced views, some purely critical and others analytical. They ranged from anglophile through pro-Western rationalist to leftist. The scope of interest and the variety represent an insufficiently known chapter in domestic cultural history, as well as in the global reception of Gandhi.

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Although the image of Gandhi in our country after World War II falls outside the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning that a group of Yugoslav students visited India after 1945, in the final period of British rule, and met with Gandhi. This was a delegation from the Central Council of the People's Youth of Yugoslavia, which, together with the delegation of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, toured Asian colonies. They spent two months there with clear political and propaganda goals, participating in anti-colonial and workers' demonstrations. Although the Non-Aligned Movement had not yet come into being, the report notes that they were welcomed with the cries of "Comrade Tito Zindabad". Gandhi was met in the village of Haymchar (Bangladesh), where he had gone to mediate the conflict between Muslims and Hindus that had erupted just before independence and the division of India and Pakistan. According to the detailed report and travelogue by Rajko Tomović (1947; presumably the future informatician who later maintained contacts with India), they arrived in the evening, when Gandhi was going to prayer, but they could not approach him due to the police, so they observed him reading several prayers from different faiths. Later, he received them for about ten

[61] Vinay Lal, "Gandhi's West, the West's Gandhi", *New Literary History* 04 (2009), 307. Also, Robert Deliège, *Gandhi*, PUF, Paris 1999, 99-100.

minutes and answered their questions. When asked by the delegation about his views on the role of youth in the struggle for liberation, Gandhi warned that the soul of India is not the youth, which is under foreign influence, but that the soul of India lies in the village. After Nikola Bogdanović, this is one of the rare examples of someone from this region meeting Gandhi in person.[62]

Translated from Serbian by
Svetlana Milivojević-Petrović

[62] Tomović, "Notes from a Journey Through India".

GORANA RAIČEVIĆ

ABOUT INDIA, WITH RESPECT

The book *About Indian Literature* by Svetozar Petrović was published by "Akademska knjiga" in Novi Sad in 2011, under the auspices of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA)—Branch in Novi Sad.

Several years ago, while writing about Svetozar Petrović's book *Concepts and Readings*, I noted that our scholar was ahead of his time and that the self-imposed curse of a small culture and a minor language "preserved" him from the fame that figures like Jauss, Barthes or Eagleton achieved globally in the second half of the 20th century. This curse implied, above all, the impossibility of being read by theoretically educated individuals, who were undoubtedly scarce in our region. Reading today, as an incompetent reader, the book on Indian literature, it is inevitable to conclude that the works of Svetozar Petrović represent the avant-garde of theoretical thought in our country.

Svetozar Petrović sought to fill the significant gap in our knowledge of Indian literature, specifically the literatures written in 15 modern languages[1]—some of which have traditions spanning several millennia, as rich and intriguing as European literatures. Drawing on his extensive understanding of India's history and culture, Petrović was acutely aware of the challenges and difficulties that Western and Eastern individuals face when attempting to engage with each other in an equitable and unbiased manner. Long before the emergence of so-called postcolonial or imagological criticism (and it should be noted that in 1955, when the text which delves into the very core of the problem of Occident-Orient relations was written, Petrović was only 23 years old; yet in a work

[1] From the text "Indian Literature of the 20th Century", we learn that "the inhabitants of India speak 179 different languages (and 544 independent dialects)..." (p. 21).

characterized by an abundance of information, maturity of thought and an ability to perceive the problem and propose solutions, not falling behind in any way compared to those written in the seventh, eighth, and ninth decades of the 20th century), Svetozar Petrović, decades earlier, recognized the unjustifiably arrogant attitude of the Western intellectual toward India! Regarding the prejudices with which we approach the Other, our scholar spoke without emphasizing issues of ideological power and subordination, or notions of superiority and inferiority, as did the founder of so-called "Orientalism" in literary studies, Edward Said (1935–2003), and his followers. And that, I believe, constitutes his advantage as a member of a culture which, from a postcolonial perspective, is also considered small and subordinate—a culture that, particularly in relation to Indian literature and culture (with which, as stated in this book, contacts were rare and almost always accidental), could not adopt the arrogant position of a colonial conqueror, as was the case with powerful Britain. What I actually want to say is that Svetozar Petrović, writing about India and its literature, as someone who knew that culture well and was profoundly devoted to it, was in fact free from the traps of bias that ensnared both Westerners—when, from the heights of their arrogance and ignorance, they looked at Orientals through the distorted mirror of prejudice (as lazy, irrational, promiscuous... I won't list all the epithets that Edward Said identifies in the so-called Orientalist discourse of the West)—and the rebellious spokespersons of the postcolonial theoretical revolution, such as Said himself, who believed (while disregarding the challenges faced by the pale-skinned islander in the Indian climate) that by the late 19th century, the British retired their officials at the age of 50 solely to convince the indigenous population of their eternal youth.

Svetozar Petrović was deeply aware of the differences between the West and the East. To illustrate the extent of this misunderstanding, I will recount a vivid anecdote from an essay about the Indian poet Nirala (whose name translates to 'the strange one'):

> Before I read a single poem by Nirala—I had only been in India for a short time—I saw him on the street. I was walking with a friend. He pointed out a tall, decrepit man and said: "That's Nirala. You must know him. He's mad." I didn't know him, so my friend told me the story: "One day, Nirala was walking around his house. Under a rotting tree, he noticed a cat with her kittens. Both the mother and her young looked miserable—skinny and emaciated. Nirala immediately understood: the cat was afraid to leave her young alone and couldn't go hunting. He quickly approached her and said, 'Listen, you go hunting, and I'll watch your young ones.' The cat stared at him inquisitively and then, indeed, left.

> When she returned, Nirala was playing with the kittens. From then on, he came every day to watch over the kittens until they grew up and disappeared into the labyrinth of the courtyard. "So," my friend concluded, "now you see for yourself. Would any cat entrust her young to a man unless she knew for certain that the man was mad?"

And it is precisely here, where we, as Westerners, alongside our author as the first listener of the anecdote about Nirala, might have expected that a poet's madness would be judged by people rather than a single cat, that the story of the long tradition of Western reception of Indian literature can begin. A story that perhaps reaches its most striking moment in the description of the attitude toward the renowned Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (or, as his surname would be correctly transcribed phonetically, Tagora, with a long o). In three exceptional texts about this Bengali poet (one of which deals with the history of the reception of Tagore's literature among the Yugoslav peoples, created in the context of correspondence with a certain N. Chatterjee, a mysterious Indian whose traces are so elusive that even the most intelligent internet search engines like Google have overlooked him), the poet, who "in the second and third decades of our century" was "a figure in the West, one of the writers much celebrated, often mentioned, seldom read, and rarely understood". As Svetozar Petrović once said, "He was greeted as an oriental mystic descending from the clouds of introspection to pose for photojournalists with a smile; as an Oriental fool—he sharply added—who attracted attention mainly with his long robe, blue socks, and his beard like that of a biblical prophet." (139)

The reader of this book will learn how, according to Spengler, the old and exhausted culture of the West approached Tagore in a vampiric manner—as an infusion of fresh blood to be used and discarded—without truly understanding him, often lacking the attention and patience required to engage with something new and different. Writing about the German reception of Tagore (noting that since Romanticism—from Schlegel and Goethe, through the philosophies of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer in the 19th century—German culture has shown significant interest in Indian literature and philosophy), Svetozar Petrović states:

> Many confused European petty bourgeois, in the upheaval of traditional values during and after the First World War, sought in Tagore a teacher of spiritual harmony and a guide to secret truths, searching in his works for a balm for the emptiness of their tormented souls. The ailments were varied, and the balm had to be multifaceted: at times a form of black magic; at other times, mystical ecstasy akin to that of Krishnamurti; at another time, pseudophilosophy as indebted to us by

> Count Keyserling; at yet another time, pseudoscience like that of Rudolf Steiner. At one point, in the early 1920s, the Central European bourgeoisie thought they had found in Tagore the prophet they had long awaited, and they were as hysterically enamored with Tagore as they would be, a decade later, hysterically contemptuous of him, concluding that what they needed more than a spiritual prophet was a leader of the Reich, discovering that this oriental mystic, like all his like-minded theosophists and anthroposophists, was merely a Semitic invention intended to lull the healthy Aryan capacity for action, for deeds, for initiative. The poet, who in Germany in 1921 surpassed all German writers, both living and dead, in the total number of copies of his published works, fell into complete oblivion in that country in the 1930s, forgotten even before he was banned. (139-140)

In general, according to our scholar, Tagore's success in the West was conditioned by "countless misunderstandings that accompany the fate of a poet in a foreign literary sphere", misunderstandings that were merely "inevitable consequences of his unstable position in the new environment". Although in our regions—those of present-day Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia—Svetozar Petrović does not find the basis for Tagore's popularity in any religious or philosophical mysticism (whose rise in Europe and America coincided with interest in Tagore)—which perhaps says something about us, whether good or bad, I'm not entirely sure?—the story of Tagore among the Yugoslavs reveals the significant influence of categories such as "fad" (a superficial interest without deeper understanding) among the so-called Tagoreans on one side, and "politics", or ideological reasons that prevailed in condemning the uncritical popularity of the Indian poet, among the anti-Tagoreans on the other. In this book, the reader has a wonderful and unique opportunity to learn about Tagore's visit to Zagreb and Belgrade in 1926, as well as the political context of that visit, which overshadowed and eclipsed Tagore the poet. For today's readers, the intriguing episode of the Zenitist protests that interrupted his lecture in Belgrade with slogans such as "Down with Tagore, long live Gandhi!" is, in fact, merely a paradigm of the inadequate reception of the works of this Nobel laureate in literature. His novels saw multiple editions even in our region, and his poetry collection *The Gardener* captured the attention of many generations of readers throughout the 20th century, and it seems to me that it continues to do so today.

However, from a broader perspective, it was not political reasons that hindered the proper understanding of Tagore and Indian literature in general on the Balkans. Rather, it was primarily the proverbial carelessness of our people, including scholars, to dedicate the devotion and

attention, which consumes their precious time, to the subject of their research. The extent to which our arrogance in ignorance, or haughtiness in lack of knowledge, can go is evident from the sharp critique that the reader of this book by Svetozar Petrović encounters—a critique of the manner in which an *Anthology of World Lyric Poetry* was compiled in the late 1950s. By presenting in a highly entertaining way the extent of ignorance displayed by the editor and commentator, who wrote about a certain jack-of-all-trades poet—now mostly interesting, as S. Petrović notes, for his pornographic texts—as if he were akin to our Dositej (just one of numerous absurdities offered in the anthology as supposed scholarly studies of Indian literature), the author ultimately concludes that the compiler of the review and the editors "do not have the faintest notion of Indian literature, they know so little that it wouldn't suffice even for the most innocent, private, amateurish engagement in literary philately". He adds, pessimistically, that "writing about Asian literatures in our country, with very rare exceptions, has been done in this way for over a hundred years." (51)

This book is, in that regard, an exception among exceptions—in it, the curious reader will find an abundance of information: about the development (if it can indeed be called development)[2] of the history of Indian literature, the languages in which its tradition was created, and the particularities shaped both by historical circumstances (India before, during, and after British colonial rule) and by the social structure rooted in the caste system. We will learn (in the story about the writer Jainendra Kumar) about the Jains, members of an ancient Indian religious movement, about whom even Kant, weaving a series of childish, prejudiced notions, wrote as people who "build hospitals for goats, horses, cows, and dogs when they are injured or have grown old. In addition, there is a hospital for fleas and bedbugs. They hire a poor man to let himself be bitten by them for one night", while an English missionary, no better than the genius of German philosophy, described Jainism as a religion "whose main tenets are to deny God, worship man, and feed vermin". (62) Perhaps even stranger (and "barely comprehensible") to us Westerners than the essence of the Jain teaching, which asserts *that all living beings have the right to exist*, is the centuries-old coexistence of Jainism with Hinduism. "Never finding themselves in the role of despised outcasts from society", Svetozar Petrović says of the Jains, "they did not develop feelings of tragic and resentful isolation; yet, always remaining a minority and constantly in opposition

[2] Whether there is development in Indian literature—such as the succession of styles and eras in the way it is observed in European literature—is discussed in the first essay of this book, *Indian Literature and Literary History.*

to the beliefs of the majority, they cultivated a profound awareness of their unorthodoxy and heresy, developing nonconformity as an ideal of human existence." (63)

Without knowledge of Jainism, a Westerner could not possibly understand one of the key figures of 20th-century India—Mahatma Gandhi. In this book, Gandhi rightfully receives attention in an essay where Svetozar Petrović, both informatively and inspiredly, discusses the life and work of this reformer and political fighter for India's independence. It was only after reading this text that I understood why it was necessary to present Gandhi to the Western world—whether to a powerful figure who exercises their authority through power or wealth, or to the humiliated and offended fighter for social rights, achieved through revolution and bloodshed—why, then, was it necessary to portray Gandhi to all of them as a ridiculous fakir with a stick, practicing his willpower by sleeping between two naked women? Because the story of Gandhi as the creator of the idea of *satyagraha*—a technique of active nonviolent resistance, mass civil disobedience against unjust laws—is always subversive and dangerous to any authority. Here we read the story of a man who, even when recognized as a leader, remained an individual and continued to act as an individual, risking not only being misunderstood and despised but also paying for his consistency with his life—as it truly happened. A man who believed that the Hindu caste system was just as much "Devil's work" as British rule over India left, as Svetozar Petrović says, a message meant for the individual—"not for the people, not for the political movement", but for the individual, and it contains "a summary of Gandhi's experiment on the theme: how *homo politicus* can continue to be a human being". (81)

In the analysis of the relationship between Yugoslav literatures and Indian literature, the reader of this book will learn that the medieval story of Barlaam and Josaphat is actually an ancient Indian story about Buddha, and that the Catholic Church, by canonizing Josaphat, made Buddha one of its saints. Additionally, we will learn, as laypeople, that the story of the Dark Kingdom originates from *The Alexandriad* and serves as a testimony to the campaigns of the great Greek commander in the distant Orient. The story of the little devil from Vuk's dictionary (as an echo of the story of Barlaam and Josaphat) will, however, lead us to a certain author's statement, which is addressed precisely to experts—and to experts in folk literature. By asserting that the analysis "which frees itself from the naive belief in a common style of our entire oral literature" (91) will show how written literature influenced the oral tradition, Svetozar Petrović sets folklorists a task that requires painstaking and demanding study of thematology, which may eventually help to find an answer: how is it possible that in such different and

distant cultures as the European and Indian the same motifs and stories are found? Doesn't this support the existence of something that all our differences and misunderstandings lead us to deny: that would be some kind of universality of human nature (whether we call them Jungian archetypes or something else)?

Seeing the world as a whole, however, as Svetozar Petrović shows us in this book, is not such an easy task. The main problem lies in presenting its two (or more) sides as authentic to one another—so that the others see them just as they are—but this is impossible unless the new and different is translated into the language of something already known and familiar. Thus, according to our author, even a figure like Tagore would have been much better accepted here if his translators had found a "particular style", one that is close to us and familiar from the European tradition. In any case, this, in his opinion, would have been better than the distortion of the original nature of Tagore's poetry, which resulted from attempts to satisfy the traditional European prejudice about what oriental poetry should look like. (This issue is discussed in a letter published in the correspondence between S. Petrović and N. Chatterjee, which can be found at the end of this book, by the Russian poet Pasternak, who attempted to render literal prose translations of Tagore's poems "poetically" and was extremely dissatisfied, even embarrassed, by what resulted from that.)

We are certainly closer here to answering the question of why—once in the territory of former Yugoslavia and today in Serbia—we lack interest in and curiosity about India, and why this interest is limited to the dedication of a few enthusiasts and admirers, such as Svetozar Petrović. In any case, bringing two cultures closer requires long and arduous work. If we wish to achieve the "higher unity" that our author spoke of, it requires a subtle effort, a skill needed to hone fragile things like trust. Professor Petrović wrote prophetically about this as early as the first half of the last century, in connection with that unfortunate anthology:

> The world is undoubtedly, and perhaps always has been, one. In all peoples of the world, literature fulfils roughly the same needs. However, I believe it would not be reasonable to forget that Europe and modern America, over centuries, from the Greeks and Romans through Christianity to the present day, have created, for literature and language, despite all the differences in verbal signs, something essentially unified. This includes roughly the same circles of associations around certain words and an almost uniform repository of metaphors. And this language is different from that of Asia and Africa. Ignoring these differences and striving for a universal literature at any cost merely encourages a

> vague, sentimental cosmopolitanism. I am not sure if there is any benefit to such a toasting-glass "world-making". It is unwise to conceal cultural differences, as they can easily backfire on humanity. A superficial identification of non-European literatures with those of the European tradition obscures every nuance in their expression, eliminating the subtle meaning of their poetry. Is it any wonder, then, that we cannot truly experience that poetry? The boundaries between cultural and literary domains are, of course, not eternal. They can be overcome, but this requires both time and effort, as well as an understanding that differences do indeed exist. (pp. 52–53)

Unity, therefore—yes, but not the unity of crusading globalist conquests on the one hand, or extremist campaigns against infidels on the other—only in quiet learning, grounded in effort and labour, about who the Other is and what they and their culture bring to us as an equal contribution to the shared history of humanity with a capital H. To abstract humanism, which serves to mask very selfish interests, and all those oaths to European or other values, when they act as a denial of the authentic right of the other and the different to exist, along with their specific tradition and culture—not a humanism that erases history and historical memory, but genuine respect for otherness based on knowledge and understanding—those are the values this book brings to us. Had Said been able to read Svetozar Petrović, he might have (as we could today) guarded himself against the prejudices that ensnare not only the powerful and wealthy but also the angry and oppressed—those who have been wronged so many times by the former. In any case, beyond bringing us the joy of reading, this book is also healing—it shows us that we should not be arrogant in making hasty judgments about people and cultures we know little or almost nothing about. That is why Svetozar Petrović is the best embodiment of Isidora's famous maxim: before oneself, work; before others, humility; under the stars, knowledge. And this book of his is a profound confirmation that all the books in the world speak about me, about you, about us.

Translated from Serbian by
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WHERE IS INDIA IN SERBIAN LITERATURE AND CULTURE?

Nemanja Radulović, *Where the Rose and Lotus Bloom: The Image of India in Serbian Literature and Culture of the 19th and 20th Century,* Fedon, Belgrade 2023.

In the history of our literature and culture, a gap existed in understanding the development of Indophilia until the publication of the monograph *Where the Rose and Lotus Bloom: The Image of India in Serbian Literature and Culture of the 19th and 20th Century* by Nemanja Radulović. This monograph, written over 534 pages and published in 2023 by the Fedon publishing house, provides an exhaustive and detailed overview of the currents in Serbian literature and culture inspired by Indian heritage.

To dedicate five hundred pages to the understanding of a single topic is no longer a common research approach in a time marked by the pursuit of short and concise insights that demand little time and commitment. Our astonishment is all the greater given that the monograph *Where the Rose and Lotus Bloom: The Image of India in Serbian Literature and Culture of the 19th and 20th Century* examines the not-so-visible influence of Eastern traditions, particularly those of India, on the currents of Serbian literature and culture. The choice of this topic is, in itself, a commendable feat, and this rich study serves as an excellent starting point for all researchers wishing to deepen their understanding of the influence of Indian oral and written thought on Serbian literature and culture, facilitating their further scholarly work in this field.

The monograph *Where the Rose and Lotus Bloom: The Image of India in Serbian Literature and Culture of the 19th and 20th Century*

offers a synthesis and further development of the author's previously published research on Indian tradition, spirituality, folklore, esotericism, and Dimitrije Mitrinović, reinforced by new insights into the multifaceted influence of Indian culture on the Slavic world and Serbian academic circles. The book's title itself is intriguing. The verses by Vojislav Ilić, "where the lotus and rose bloom", lend this serious scholarly study a romantic touch, prompting readers to recognize early on the idea that the themes of the Eastern world are characterized by untamed thought and the richness of creative streams that do not always flow into the same channel but often overflow into unexpected landscapes.

In the introductory section, the reader is thoroughly informed about the book itself, its title, structure, methodology, and transcription. The author guides readers through the topics addressed in the monograph and provides an overview of what they can expect in the subsequent chapters. For a comprehensive work like this monograph, a well-organized structure is particularly important. Thus, the monograph is divided into twenty-two chapters, with occasional appendices. Its clarity is further reflected in its dual division into thematic units and historical periods. The thematic units include: "The Study of Sanskrit in Serbian Philology", "The Image of India in Serbian Literature of the 19th Century" (with an appendix, "Vivekananda's Passage Through Serbia"*),* "India in the Mystifications of Milojević and Verković", "The Image of India in Serbian Literature of the 20th Century", "Slavic-Indian Pan-Humanism", and "Mahatma Gandhi and the Serbian Interwar Intelligentsia". Regarding the historical division, the chapters are categorized into the 19th and 20th centuries, with the latter further divided into the periods 1900-1914, the interwar period (1914-1945), and 1945-2000. The largest thematic section is dedicated to the 20th century. Following the description of these three major periods, "Slavic-Indian Pan-Humanism" introduces several interconnected chapters: "The European Context", "The Balkan Context", "The Formation of Pan-Humanism", "The Core Tenets of Pan-Humanism and Its Variants", "Pan-Humanism in the Social Context", "Pan-Humanism: The Ideological Core and Its Expansion. Mitrinović's Circle", and individual chapters on Dimitrije Mitrinović, Dušan (Jovan) Stojanović, Vladeta Popović, Nikolaj Velimirović, Miloš Đurić, Pavle Jevtić, and finally, "Conclusion", which offers a final commentary on this complex topic. It seems that the chapters could be read as standalone scholarly works, while together they form a well-connected monographic whole. Particularly highlighted are travelogues and diary entries about India, which in part serve to depict the real India, as opposed to the imagined one that the Serbian world constructed based on knowledge and legends about the East.

This study begins with the history of Sanskrit studies in Serbian philology and among those interested in this ancient language, which has often been compared and linked to the Serbian language. This overview of engagement with the ancient language is particularly valuable, as Sanskrit could not be formally studied in Serbian culture due to the absence of Indology. The chapter "The Study of Sanskrit in Serbian Philology" introduces us to the topic of Indology through the study of Sanskrit, which flourished in the 19th century when the first academic departments offering its study were established. Sanskrit studies in Serbian philology never gained an institutional framework, but there was significant interest in this language. The author mentions figures such as Platon Atanacković, Pero Budmani, Đura Daničić, Kosta Ruvarac, Milan Dimitrijević, Pavle Jevtić, and many others among those interested in learning Sanskrit. However, while the transition from the 19th to the 20th century was not marked by a lack of interest in this subject, formal frameworks were absent at the University of Belgrade, with the notable but unfortunately short-lived example of Sanskrit studies at the Faculty of Philology. In the 2000/2001 academic year, a lectureship in Sanskrit was established within the Department of General Linguistics, which continued until the untimely death of the instructor, Radoslav Mirosavljev, the following year (36–37).

The next chapter, "The Image of India in Serbian Literature of the 19th Century", after a brief introduction on the flourishing interest in India within the European context, further examines the first mentions of India in Serbian culture and literature, as well as missionary activities. The image of India during this period is revealed primarily through contrasts between East and West, "with the notion of India as the cradle of nations also becoming widespread" (46). In this century, the author particularly identifies reinterpretations of Indian narrative prose, especially themes of reincarnation, nirvana, antiquity, sensuality, and hubris. However, he also emphasizes that a significant portion of the sources for these Eastern themes were, in fact, translations originating from the West. In other words, he notes that secondary literature on India significantly shaped 19th-century Romanticism. The author highlights the Ilić family, for whom India reflected an idealized East opposed to the West. "Anti-modernism and skepticism toward the contemporary West, which influenced the themes of Jovan, Vojislav, and Dragutin, already noted by critics, turned them toward an imaginary East" (57).

The image of India in 19th-century Serbian literature is multifaceted: while it represents the source of knowledge, it is also sensual and sensory, on the one hand imaginary, and on the other, real. Real India is found in the travelogues of writers, starting with Milan Jovanović

Morski, author of the book *Here and There in the East,* whom the author highlights as the first travel writer to describe India. However, he does not fail to mention that before him, painter Pavle (Pavel) Petrović had published four letters from India (70). As the third 19th-century travel writer, the author also mentions Prince Božidar Karađorđević and his *Notes on India* (published in instalments in the *Paris Review* and later as a complete travelogue in the original French and in English translation in 1899). The author of this monograph defines India as described by Prince Karađorđević as sensual, but it would have been more interesting if he had at least partially compared the prince's notes with those of Milan Jovanović, as both visited India in the second half of the 19th century. This chapter concludes with the observation that the 19th-century travel writers created "three images of India: a land of the senses, a land of origins, and a land of knowledge" (88), along with an addendum describing Swami Vivekananda's passage through Serbia (88–90).

The next chapter, "India in the Mystifications of Milojević and Verković", presents a comparative overview of the folkloristic mystifications by these two authors, highlighting numerous similarities between them. In their ideological work, both sought to draw parallels between India and its mythology with the Slavs, aiming to create an image of a shared cultural identity, despite the many shortcomings of their theories and arguments.

The following section, "The Image of India in 20th-Century Serbian Literature and Culture", introduces new ideas, although it also encompasses some from the previous century. Changes brought about by historical, social, cultural, and political circumstances shaped Indian themes and images, which, as in the previous century, mostly entered Serbian culture and literature indirectly. The Indophilia cultivated in Serbian circles partly stemmed from a shared sense of national consciousness, justice, and the struggle for freedom. Various paths were sought that would not require abandoning the national course, and India seemed to be the ideal and sole direction.

As part of the thematic unit on representations of India in 20th-century Serbian literature, the chapter "The Golden Age: 1900–1914" begins with an exploration of the fascination with nirvana. The author presents an intriguing trajectory of its interpretation, viewed in both optimistic and pessimistic terms—either as liberation from suffering and a state of bliss or as destruction and nothingness. Through an analysis of Dis's poem "Nirvana" and his understanding of the concept, the author provides a rich overview of the evolution of this idea within Serbian intellectual and poetic circles, emphasizing that "Dis's poem emerged as central to the formation of nirvanism" (140).

The chapter "Between the Two Wars" discusses the growing interest in India after 1918. "A new impulse to the life of Indian themes was given by the Western 'alternative', such as the Theosophical Society, formed in Yugoslavia as an unofficial group in 1924 and officially in 1925, with its headquarters in Zagreb" (151). The author lists several members, including playwright Đura Dimović, Ksenija Atanasijević, and Zora Stanković, and writes about the founding of the Yugoslav Anthroposophical Society, which immediately gained the participation of Miloš Radojičić. During this period, there was increased interest in Indian religions, reincarnation, occultism, and yoga. Works by Western writers about India, as well as original Indian works, were translated. This chapter thoroughly explores the people, works, and events that stirred interest in Indian themes and revived a new India as an alternative to traditional knowledge within Serbian alternative circles. "It is no longer a petrified past, eternal wisdom, or antiquity, but India speaking with its own voice" (161). There is great interest in Gandhi and Tagore within the Serbian community, which views them as contemporary avatars of freedom from Western materialistic constraints. The author also refers to the travel writings of Jelena Dimitrijević, her depiction of India, as well as her descriptions of encounters with the Indian Nobel laureate Tagore.

The final section of this chapter, "The Years 1945–2000", builds upon the previous periods that nurtured the image of India as a friendly country, which also influenced the political atmosphere. There were more cultural exchanges, and books by Indian authors and Western writers dedicated to India were translated. The increased interest in Indian culture, philosophy, politics, religion, and social practices is divided into academic and popular categories. The author thus lists various influences of Indian gurus on Yugoslav culture. Various groups and currents were formed, leading to the "formation of an alternative from the seventies" (238), where the author examines the permeability of the boundary between countercultural trends and popular culture. This chapter discusses the search for alternatives through the "search for India" and provides a significant list of authors who visited India and whose works were inspired by those experiences. Particularly interesting is the observation of the connection between such alternative quests for enlightenment and communism, where some "children of communism" ended up in high-ranking positions after traveling through India. The historical overview presented in this chapter, "from Tito's diplomats to yoga instructors" (243), is ultimately summarized from the perspective of literary history.

The next chapter, "Slavo-Indian Panhumanism", a phrase coined by Miloš Đurić, provides a detailed overview of the development of

the idea of the West as a fallen European spirit. European intellectuals search for the causes of the crisis, which leads them to dialectical thinking about the West-East relationship. From the idea that the West is in crisis and that the solution should be sought in its antithesis—the East—through various changes and paradigm shifts, where culture increasingly replaces religion, fascinations with the East become more frequent. This chapter presents the interwar European, Balkan, and Serbian context of panhumanism at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. The search for the cause of the crisis in the European spirit led to the rational thought that "if the West is in crisis, and the crisis stems from the spirit, it must be a fresh infusion from the other part of the world" (303). As one moves toward geographical boundaries that are almost at the crossroads of East and West, the question of crisis is viewed with different eyes, starting with the questions "Who are we?" and "Do we belong to the East or the West?" Balkan countries grapple with the same questions and provide the same answers—Eastern.

The Slavic world's question of identity and pan-Slavism in many cases relies on Indian teachings. In the Serbian cultural circle, among many prominent intellectuals such as Dimitrije Mitrinović and Nikolaj Velimirović, India stands at the crossroads of history and the future. The panhumanist core of ideas can be found in almost all areas of intellectual activity. "In Europe," the author concludes, "there is a prevailing sense of crisis", while "in domestic debates—optimism, faith in the future prevails" (320). In the section of the book "Basic Theses of Panhumanism and Its Variants", we are presented with authors driven by the idea that the West has "sunk into materialism, in contrast to the *spiritual* East" (321).

The author pays special attention to Dimitrije Mitrinović in the review of the ideological core of panhumanism and its spread, a figure whose life and work are also explored in a number of his other writings. Mitrinović, as a representative of universalism and a person who gained experience from both the East and the West, gathered the core group of panhumanists, including Miloš Đurić, Nikolaj Velimirović, Vladeta Popović, Pavle Jeftić, and Dušan Stojanović. Since Mitrinović knew many people and had an extensive network of friends, his teachings indirectly and directly influenced many during that time. "It is justified, for all these reasons, to ask what Mitrinović's place was in the specific hopes of Serbian panhumanists", writes the author (356). He sees in Mitrinović the Indophilic and universalist ideas from his early phase, as well as the frequent use of the term "Slavo-Indian spirit", highlighting the significant influence of theosophy. The reconciliation of the East and the West is found by these authors among the Slavic peoples, thus

overcoming the meaninglessness and chaotic order of the world. The authors presented here did not want to sacrifice the Slavic character for the sake of visions of the Western world but believed that the West would only be healed when it touched the East.

This chapter addresses the growing interest in esoteric currents and contributes to the study of the spirit of esotericism in our environment. The author delves into the hermetic, ritualistic, and symbolic interpretation of texts from prose and poetry works by significant authors, such as Mitrinović, who are concerned with the conquest of a new and broader consciousness. In addition to Mitrinović, the author separately examines pan-Slavism in the works of Vladeta Popović, Nikolaj Velimirović, Miloš Đurić, and Pavle Jeftić. In the conclusion of this work, it is emphasized that India was more present in the interwar Serbian intellectual milieu than it might seem, and that the source of the sense of affinity with this culture is spiritual. "Indophilic Slavophiles identified with India as the ideal civilization of the spirit" (462), where the similarities highlighted include humanism, pacifism, and spirituality.

The reception of Gandhi's socio-political activities, as well as Tagore's international rise on the literary scene are also discussed in this book, not only because of the time frames outlined in this work but also due to their significant influence on Serbian culture, literature, society, and politics. The final chapter of the book, "Mahatma Gandhi and the Serbian Interwar Intelligentsia", describes an incident during Tagore's visit to Serbia, when the Zenitists, led by Ljubomir Micić, shouted at his lecture, "Down with Tagore, long live Gandhi!" (464). While Gandhi was celebrated as a great liberator not only of the East, Tagore faced criticism for embracing many Western ideas. In this chapter, the author explains the opposing views of the Serbian intelligentsia towards Gandhi and Tagore and the reasons for such thoughts.

This monograph undoubtedly represents a valuable contribution to the study of this underrepresented topic in our academic environment. Moving between literary-historical and cultural studies, the author also emphasizes the peculiarities of the political atmosphere that largely shaped the first two. Particularly focused on esoteric currents, which are also the subject of his earlier works, the author presents various movements that influenced the formation of the image of India in Serbian literature and culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. The abundance of data, names of authors and works, and dates, although sometimes overwhelming for the reader due to their sheer volume and challenging to remember or even organize, serves as a rich source for those particularly interested in this topic or for researchers who will study the

mentioned authors and works. Finally, the impressive list of archival materials, press sources, and both domestic and foreign literature confirms the seriousness of this work and the author's determination to comprehensively summarize an important era and present the full characteristics of a tradition that shapes and enriches with its spirit.

Translated from Serbian by
Svetlana Milivojević-Petrović

THE ENDLESS BLUE CIRCLE LITERARY AWARD

VLADIMIR PIŠTALO

SUMATRAISM AND ANTI-GLOBALISM

Recently, after a reading held in Kruševac, a man in the audience stood up and started talking about Sumatraism. I believe he was excited. He pointed with both his hands in front of him and exclaimed:

"Those distant summits of the Urals. They are here."

In the First World War, the world was wounded. Crnjanski had an urge to caress it. Joseph Campbell said that if you do not experience eternity in the present, you will never be able to feel it anyway. You can chase infinity like a dog chasing its tail, but you will not meet it unless you experience it at your own space. Life is not elsewhere, but all lives are here. That is the mystical comprehensive interconnectedness of the world that Crnjanski felt. All the rivers are sacred. The Danube is the Ganges and the Sava is the Jordan. That was suggested by the poet.

* * *

A handsome young man is looking at us from Šumanović's portrait, resembling the one from the famous photograph with two waterfalls of hair. The young man's name is Miloš Crnjanski. One his lapel is black, another one blue, his tie is black and his shirt is blue. With the corner of his mouth, he seems as if he drags a fishing hook. Both the whites and the irises of his eyes are gray. The image is divided between light, which is blue, and the shadow. His eye in the dark side of the painting is light. There is a small black pupil in it. The eye on the light

side of the painting merges with the temple. A half of that man is able to see things most clearly; the other half can see nothing. The war still gapes within him.

The train bringing him home was rattling. The distances whistled along.

The young man wanted to caress the world that had been wounded.

The hills and frozen mountains.

He was determined by cherry blossoms from the other side of the planet. He felt the butterfly effect.

It resonated and resonated and resonated.

His new poetry rejected all hygienic duties. Explicated thoughts. Versemongering pastime.

Out of smithereens, Crnjanski put together an entire avant-garde movement—Sumatraism. He described how it came to pass:

On that day, the Senegalese and the Annamites, were passing by; I met a good friend of mine, who was returning from the war. When I asked him where he had come from, he told me: from Bukhara! ... I remembered how a friend of mine described the snowy mountains of the Urals, where he had spent a year in captivity. He went on to describe that region of the Urals for a long time, but also very gently.

The blue seas, and distant islands, of which I knew nothing at all, ruddy plants and corals, of which I probably knew from my geography classes, all appeared in my thoughts...

I felt all our powerlessness, all my sadness. "Sumatra," I whispered, with a degree of affectation.

Soldiers were straddling from one carriage rooftop to another.

Look, even the colors, both of those cherry trees and of the corals are the same, even up there, among the stars! Everything, in this world, is connected, "Sumatra," I said mockingly to myself, again.

Crnjanski experienced huge transposition, along with mystic connectedness.

As well as a sense of pursuit.

He wrote:

But in my soul, deep down, despite all my opposition to admit it, I felt immense love for those distant hills, for snow-covered mountains, up to the frozen seas. For those distant islands, where things we possibly caused, come to pass. I lost the fear of death. Connectedness with the surroundings. As if in some distraught hallucination, I soared into the boundless, morning mists, stretching out to caress the distant Urals, Indian seas, to where the ruddiness from my face had gone. To caress the islands, enamored, pale apparitions. All these complexities became one immense peace.

* * *

The poem of the Three Worlds is a metaphor of pursuit and hope, a novel about the great blue circle, and about being cast into existence.

The novel is in free verse.

The main character, Ozana Bolica, was born in Perast at the time it was a Venetian colony. At the beginning of the 18th century, she was abducted by pirates. Against her will, she got acquainted with North Africa, New France and New England. She never got to Sumatra. But she did go to Venice, Tunisia, Montreal. In each of these worlds, she was given a new name. Among characters brave enough to kill, Ozana Bolica was brave enough to understand.

All over her body, new eyes were opening. She saw everything as forms of her own self.

Such experiences would not be given to a cyclops.

The poem about the Three Worlds is a story of fires and skirts. Of madness, of witches. Of savages and embroidered collars. Of an empire. Of masters and teachers. Of Europe, Africa and of America. Of Venice, Tunisia and Salem. All of it echoed and echoed and echoed. Venice in Boka. Boka in Tunisia. Tunisia in America. In the New World. The New World in the hills over Boka.

Crnjanski said:

We allow the forms of cosmic shapes to exercise influence over our own forms: over clouds, over flowers, over rivers, over streams.

Ozana Bolica said:

I was a seagull and I fought the ravens. A tranquil sea and an infidel. A Slavic woman and a Venetian woman. An Indian woman and a Moorish woman. A noble woman and a wild woman. A centaur, and a mermaid.

She said:

I understood with my own blood, I learned quickly, I turned towards energies, like a plant leaning towards the sun. There was a fissure in the deception. One could recognize the sparks in people.

The spirit of a distant Indonesian island was spilling over from the avant-garde into reality, from poetry into prose. The poem about the Three Worlds is inspired by the spirit of Sumatraism. This is what one calls a global novel.

New themes still require new rhythms.

Deep insights are not instantaneous.

Sumatraism cannot pass.

It still resonates. And resonates. And resonates.

* * *

Yes, the world is comprehensively interconnected. Cultural values are exchanged, just like commodities are exchanged for gold. But is this exchange carried out under the conditions of equality? It would be difficult to agree with that. After the fall of the Tower of Babel, the common language did not die. The sparks still remained within people. The dream of universality survived under the conditions of division and of conflict. Each country boasts its culture as proudly as firefly boasts its behind. And each culture is inseparable from its barbarism. Cultural interactions take place under the conditions of greater power for some and, consequently, of lesser power for others. We simply have to bear that in mind. Cultural exchange cannot be dictated. The Poem of the Three Worlds is a Sumatraistic, but also an anti-colonial novel.

Translated from the Serbian by
Ivan Filipović

MLADEN ŠUKALO

TOWARDS THE POETICS OF THE TITLE

Vladimir Pištalo's fifth novel—*Poem of the Three Worlds*—yet again attracted public attention immediately upon its publication, winning the "Endless Blue Circle" award, and then was shortlisted for the "Belgrade Winner" award, i.e., the NIN Critics' Award for the Novel of the Year. These circumstances point to a possible opportunistic approach, or even to an attempt to justify the reasons for its distinction from other novelistic production (it is worth recalling that in 2023, over 200 novels appeared in the Serbian-speaking area!). Both orientations could represent some form of covert subjectivization in which an interpretative act would take place, the intention of which is to direct (or perhaps impose?) the way in which Pištalo's novel is read.

This may make us stumble at the very first step: how do we read *a novel* that contains the word *poem* in its title? That is, how do we talk about *a novel* that is a poem, if it is *a poem* at all, or if it is *a novel* at all? The first thought is that this kind of questioning leads us into generic considerations. However, we will return to this aspect later, because the mere mention of the basic (*sic!*) *title of the book* by skimming through it leads us to a completely different type of reflection: how the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds* is divided into three parts, as well as the series of chapters to which the titles are "assigned", the question of the logic of Pištalo's narrative titling procedure arises. Since this is the fifth novel by this author, looking back, we are faced with the fact that right here before us, in his entire opus to this date, we have over 600 differently functionalized titles, not counting subtitles and inter-titles. A truly sizeable library catalog!

Why discuss the title/titles?

Vladimir Pištalo tells us that such talk should not be accidental, the very least considering the critical trick of the author's narrative

methods. In the chapter "Allegory", the heroine of the novel mentions the book called *The Secret of Colors*, emphasizing that "the titles were interesting". The very next chapter is titled "The Secrets of Colors", followed by 23 titles printed in capital letters, as a kind of table of contents. This author's self-awareness in giving these titles will be confirmed by some of the titles, both those preceding and following: although they are not listed in the aforementioned chapter ("On Gold Making", "On Painting of the Pale the Crucified", "On Making of the Good Gold Color", "Orange", etc.), their affiliation to the book *Poem of the Three Worlds* confirms their alignment with the book *The Secret of Colors*, thereby nullifying its eventual fictitiousness. Almost four decades ago, the French theorist Gérard Genette published an unusual study titled *Thresholds* [Seuils, 1987] in which he attempted to examine the so-called paratextual (perhaps it would be better to say extra-textual) aspects or functions in books, such as names of their authors (including, of course, pseudonyms), titles and intertitles, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, notes, etc., elements that the reader encounters the moment one picks up a book, that is, when reading. Although he had indicated his theoretical paths some ten years earlier, referring to Julia Kristeva's research and her distinctions between *phenotext*, *genotext*, and *intertext*, and indicated his theoretical trajectories in his treatises *Introduction to the Architext* (1979) and *Palimpsest* (1982), it was only in this book that he framed his ideas about *para*textuality. Genette's metaphorical designation of the reader's encounter with *thresholds* (with this term he replaces Borges's designation of the "preface" as the reader's *vestibule*) that must be crossed before the act of reading could be indirectly linked to Umberto Eco's study *Lector in Fabula* (1979). In both cases, regardless of the differences in their theoretical intentions, the assumptions of the reading act ("der Akt des Lesens")—after the title of a 1976 study by Wolfgang Iser—are considered, that is, what the reader is confronted with from the first moment of encountering a particular book.

Introducing us to modern *titrology*, named after Claude Discher, a discipline that deals with the study of titles, to the development of which Theodor W. Adorno, John Barth, Colette Kantorowitz, and even Umberto Eco contributed, the Dutch scholar Leo H. Hoek considers the nature of titling throughout history as a kind of artifact of reception. On the margins of these considerations, Gérard Genette has attempted to systematize the directions of thinking about this literary phenomenon. Starting from the fact that the text is intended for reading, unlike the title, which serves as a means of communication, or rather as a subject of conversation, he draws out the three basic functions of titling as marking, indicating content, and leading (or seducing). Due to the nature

of this text, most other theoretical aspects will not be mentioned, especially since, despite all their terminological inspiration, individual aspects often give way to what Pištalo's novel offers.

The title page of the book in question, according to librarian norms, states the following:

"Vladimir Pištalo
POEM OF THE THREE WORLDS
a novel
ΑΓΩΡΑ"

In this case, we will push the naming of the author and of the publisher into the background, especially since the "domain of publishing" is not a subject of interest for Genette, but also because no question arises from them. However, following his statements, the title (*Poem of the Three Worlds*) and the subtitle ("a novel") of this book remain the subject of consideration.

The interpretative process can take place on several levels. Within the framework of the intentions of this presentation, it would be appropriate to talk about the meaning of the title itself in the first place: at the very beginning, it is difficult to push into the background its juxtaposition with the subtitle, although it seems that the reader, in his first encounter with the title page, will not react to the generic paradoxical relationship between the terms *poem* / *novel*. (This kind of thinking is led by the "forgetfulness" or "oversight" that Chekhov's *The Seagull* is labeled as *comedy*!) However, the first task would be to point out what is *poetic* versus *novelistic*, that is, which of these two aspects is more primary to the author. Vladimir Pištalo tried to make this search not at all simple; his main character and narrator Ozana Bolica says at the very end of the book: "*I was a poem. A poem of the three worlds.*" And she narrates her hundred-year biography from her abduction to her death, organized in more than 150 titled pictures and thumbnails. This gallery of narrative excerpts seems to follow the logic of presenting the content used in comics (let us not forget that Pištalo also authored the novella titled *Corto Maltese*), where visual and verbal expression confront each other. Even Ozana's presentation is reminiscent of this medium, although—in a stylistic sense—Sartre's description of Camus's narrative may be the most applicable, highlighting short sentences, "each of which refuses to use the momentum gained by the previous ones, each is a new beginning," adding that "each sentence of *The Stranger* is an island," perhaps those small islets with which one can jump across the water. It could be said that Pištalo's

approach, no matter how much it rests on narrative, strives to conquer a kind of poetics, that is, storytelling is in fact a kind of singing. A treatise on the merging of *a poem* into *a novel* and *a novel* into *a poem* could be built on this trail.

Why is there singing about three worlds?

It seems that the easiest way to get to the answer is to use the elementary school literature lesson, which begins with specifying answers to questions that should identify both the *time* and *place of action*.

A more complex question immediately arises: does Pištalo's title summarize these two elements into one? In Bakhtinian terms: is a kind of watercolor *chronotope* spread out before the readers, but not exactly according to the recipes offered by *The Secrets of Colors*?

The first year provided is 1700, when pirates raid Perast. Earlier attacks on the town will also be mentioned, even by citing a folk epic. The heroine of the novel has already turned eighteen. And the closing date is 1797, when Napoleon's troops enter Perast: "*The world was like a child that fell and did not know whether to cry or laugh*." In other words, the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds* encompasses the entire 18th century, which we most often refer to as the age of rationalism or the age of enlightenment. An age that is enveloped by the metaphor of the "noble savage." Just as literary theorists have been invoked in other aspects, here it would be appropriate to recall a cult philosophical treatise, the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. Not only because of the basic theme, but also because of an unusual analogy: the conclusion of this study is represented by "Notes and Sketches," actually a series of fragmentary sketches whose titles can establish an analogy with the way of titling of Vladimir Pistalo. I am not sure that one could find a real connection between our writer and German philosophers, except, perhaps, for the fact that such time, the time of the dying medieval spirituality and birth of a new era, cannot be spoken about in any other way than in fragments and in terms of the poetic: "*I witnessed a new era*..."says Ozana.

Ozana Bolica, called Bojana at home, both with all her names ("*The Arabs called me Zana. the French Jeanne. The English Bo. Cabianca Barocco.*") and with her life, testifies to the existence of a multitude of worlds to which she belonged without her own will, no matter how much she adapted to them, even by learning various languages. It is precisely this aspect that contributes to Pištalo's novel fitting into what marks the basic interest of both artistic expression and the interpretation of those expressions at the end of the last and the beginning of this millennium: it is about expressing (is it?) the encounter or clashes of cultures or civilizations, what we designate as *us and others*, mine and another's, exoticism, or rather everything that we reduce to the concept

of identity or similar categories. There are many indications of this type of interpretation in the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds*.

However, precise and clear *chronological* determination gives way to *topological* insularity: Perast and Boka Kotorska, which in their horizons also include Venice, then the North African deserts of Tunisia with the memory of the vanished Carthage, make a full circle on the North American continent. The traces of the story of the Salem witches overlap with the destinies and wars of the English, French and Indians, all through the conditionally arduous experiences of Ozana Bolica, closing the circle with her return home via London and Venice. Or, perhaps, opening it?

This retrospective reflection points to the fact that after the title page, the entire book must be read in order to return to the very beginning. To the beginning of the poem, the poem that is everywhere. Perhaps it is only safe to repeat Ozana's words: "I am a poem!"

After the title page, the novel should open. It opens with the title of the first part, or the first chapter, followed by two other titles of identical function. Then the cataloging of the titles in each chapter for itself...

One can sense the path towards the poetics of titling.

Translated from the Serbian by
Ivan Filipović

MINA ĐURIĆ

HOW ONE CEASELESSLY *SINGS OF THE WORLDS* IN THE OPUS OF VLADIMIR PIŠTALO?

As much as one inevitably raises questions about possible poetic metamorphoses or re-emphasis of some of the previously established directions in each new work throughout the creative flow of the author's writing career, which is the focus of the research, equally often the latter is interpreted among literary achievements as the one which—of all the previous ones—somewhat selects the paths of textual foundation and—through striving towards certain intersection of the summary overarching—also offers one of the potential roads towards comparative realizations of the writer's previous work. It seems that *Poem of the Three Worlds*, the latest novelistic achievement by Vladimir Pištalo,[1] is well within the inspiring niche of works that resonate even on a micro level with deeply rooted macropoetic strongholds of intersections between recognizability and innovation, noticeable even during contextualizations of the literary and artistic manuscript considered as a whole.

Considering how important the poetics of the title itself is for Vladimir Pištalo's creative opus, primarily as a kind of hermeneutic indigo of the merits of some of the key aspects of the text, the awareness of which is also confirmed in autopoetic discussions on potential (meta) literary transformations, as already emphasized in the "Introduction" in *Čajevi Marsa*: "This collection was first published under the title *Slikovnica*. And it remains as such—a book made of pictures. However, I believe that the new title better reflects the Daliesque bizarreness of

[1] Vladimir Pištalo, *Poem of Three Worlds: A Novel*, Agora, Novi Sad i Zrenjanin 2023.

my first literary attempt",[2] and it continues particularly convincingly through considerations of the title of the book of essays *Značenje džokera*,[3] it seems that certain interpretative perspectives could be actualized on the occasion of Vladimir Pištalo's *Poem of the Three Worlds*, already inspired by the titles chosen.

Namely, what might be indicated with the metapoetic determination to have a novelistic whole bearing the hallmark of a poem? This type of genre resemantization has been gradually spreading ever since Vladimir Pištalo's *Čajevi Marsa*, where prominence of the marginal vacillation of the poetic prose is indicated by the hybridity of both rhetorical and morphological turns: "The student who wrote these lines kept his eyes fixed on Rimbaud's *Illuminations*. This is poetry. This is a grotesque",[4] and it unwaveringly persists within dynamic poetic translations until the coda of the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds*, in which the identity of the poetic is not only one of the characters of the text, but also the one which creates it and exists through it: "I was a poem. A Poem of the three worlds".[5] Playing with the horizons of the expected genre projections in the genealogy of poem-appellative and poetically conformed novelistic works, Pištalo's book *Poem of the Three Worlds* is apostrophized in the intriguing domains of cultural and poetic affinities, as well as in the differences in treatment of encounters and/or confrontations of paradigmatic questions of epic and lyrical transdisciplinary intonations which, in the form of differentiated variants, loom also through the intermediary set novels, such as Franz Werfel's *Das Lied von Bernadette*,[6] Oskar Davičo's *Pesma*,[7] Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*[8] and others.

When one considers how frequent musical symbols and chronotopes of musicalization are in Pištalo's works, which precisely enable simultaneity of the palette of worlds and synthetic nature of their transformations in the relativity of the interweaving entities of time and space, from the moment when—"The Unknown is groping the piano, and Korto is getting an impression of another world. He reminisces about the old Japanese Yugen-style poetry: nostalgia for the invisible

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[2] Vladimir Pištalo, *Čajevi Marsa, Noći: proza*, 2. izdanje, Agora, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad 2020, 7.

[3] Vladimir Pištalo, *Značenje džokera*, 4. izdanje, Agora, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad 2021, 5–7.

[4] Vladimir Pištalo, *Čajevi Marsa, Noći*, 7.

[5] Vladimir Pištalo, *Pesma o tri sveta*, 297

[6] Franz Werfel, *Das Lied von Bernadette. Roman*, Hamish Hamilton—Bermann Fischer, London—Stockholm 1941.

[7] Оскар Давичо, *Песма: роман*, Ново поколење, Београд 1952

[8] Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1977; cf.: Toni Morison, *Solomonova pesma*, trans. Dubravka Srećković Divković, Laguna, Beograd 2013.

and unattainable",[9] until the moment when Ozana Bolica, the protagonist and the narrator of numerous transpositions of everything a *poem* in Pištalo's new novel can mean, she also provides the strongholds of her origin through the intersections of musical traditions—"She asked me about Boka. I told her that we are the Venetians who sing along with *gusle*",[10] it will also be interesting to observe what kind of translations will be observed by the first of the headline phenomena of Pištalo's *Poem of the Three Worlds*. If in some of the linguistic systems a choice is made between *poem* or *song*, *poème* or *chanson*, *Gedicht* or *Lied*, etc., the choice for one of the meanings contained both in the title polyphony of the original, and in numerous textual explications within the breadth of inter-artistic appeals of the novel, it would shed more light only on some of the potential perspectives, which implicitly testifies to the rich, complex and diverse interdisciplinary references of this particular work by Pištalo.

The prepositional phrase of *poem about* something at the beginning of the title phrase in Pištalo's novel, being the rarest of choices among the titles within the entire Pištalo's opus to this date, inevitably evokes the closeness of the contextualization of the genre mixture of speech about characters, space and Sumatraistic visions, such as outlined also between *Priče o muškom*,[11] *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću*[12] and Miloš Crnjanski's *Roman o Londonu*.[13] (Un)intentionally observing even such customs of colloquialism, with his new work, Vladimir Pištalo continues with the intertextual echo of the dialogue with the author of *Seobe*,[14] which intensively lasts since the promptings of Pištalo's "Epilogue for *Night*": "Why don't you explain the *Night* the same way Crnjanski explained *Lirika Itake*",[15] and which, in turn, spans all the way to the lamenting notes about Belgrade at the turn of the century,[16] corresponding at the same time in its metamorphoses through an Odyssean incarnation of interlacing watercolor vectors, ranging in scope from pirate projections of Corte Maltese[17] to the interoceanic durations of Ozana Bolica in *Poem of the Three Worlds*.

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[9] Vladimir Pištalo, *Korto Malteze: novela*, 3. izdanje, Agora, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad 2017, 6.

[10] Vladimir Pištalo, *Pesma o tri sveta*, 36.

[11] Miloš Crnjanski, *Priče o muškom*, S. B. Cvijanović, Beograd 1920.

[12] Miloš Crnjanski, *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću: roman*, Sveslovenska knjižarnica M. J. Stefanovića i druga, Beograd 1921.

[13] ? Miloš Crnjanski, *Roman o Londonu*, knj. 1–2, Nolit, Beograd 1971.

[14] Miloš Crnjanski, *Seobe: roman*, Izdavačka knjižara Gece Kona, Beograd 1929.

[15] Vladimir Pištalo, *Čajevi Marsa, Noći*, 97.

[16] Vladimir Pištalo, *Milenijum u Beogradu*, Agora—Laguna, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad—Beograd 2023, 230–232.

[17] Vladimir Pištalo, *Korto Malteze*, 5.

The range of spheres of what *worlds* can represent, the entire gamut of debates on why it is necessary to discuss "what is the world and what it is not"[18] as well as why "the world [...] is always on display at an exhibition"[19] seeps through continuously and in multiple directions, encompassing both Pištalo's *Priče iz celog sveta*[20] and the whirlwinds of *Kraj veka*.[21] These traces, leading up to the *Poem of Three Worlds*, reactualize the implicit discussions on the re-semantization of everything that *the pillar of the world* represents in different times, both in *Milenijum u Beogradu*,[22] as well as in the form of numerous New World images,[23] precisely in the direction of searching for "this unique city in this world",[24] and discovering the feeling of what it is like to be "at the top of the world",[25] whereby it is always poetically extremely significant that this, in its unstoppable reflections, also becomes a possible embodiment of *the world of all worlds* literature, through which from Belgrade to New Orleans, travels the "Sundial" of continuous narrative conversations between Vladimir Pištalo and Ivo Andrić.[26] Pištalo's new novelistic *poem*—originating from such milieu of *worlds*—telling in three tones *about* Venice (Perast), Tunisia and Salem, and in many ways reviving the *world* of literature as a "noble and universal language", created "of a different light", through which "nothing is too far",[27] while *Poem of the Three Worlds* is a most particular reader-oriented embodiment in its unity for a myriad of interpretations.

Translated from the Serbian by
Ivan Filipović

[18] Vladimir Pištalo, *Aleksandrida: novela*, 3. izdanje, Agora, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad 2017, 5.
[19] Vladimir Pištalo, *Manifesti: iluminisani eseji*, Agora, Zrenjanin 2009, 8.
[20] Vladimir Pištalo, *Priče iz celog sveta*, Stubovi kulture, Beograd 1997.
[21] Vladimir Pištalo, *Kraj veka*, Prosveta, Beograd 1990.
[22] Vladimir Pištalo, *Milenijum u Beogradu*, 44–45.
[23] Cf. eg: Vladimir Pištalo, *Vitraž u sećanju: priče*, Agora, Zrenjanin 2010, 150–152; Vladimir Pištalo, *Značenje džokera*, 21–24.
[24] Vladimir Pištalo, *Venecija: bildungsroman*, 4. izdanje, Agora, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad 2019, 23.
[25] Vladimir Pištalo, *Tesla, portret među maskama*, Agora—Laguna, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad—Beograd 2023, 261.
[26] Vladimir Pištalo, *Sunce ovog dana: pismo Andriću*, 3. izdanje, Agora, Zrenjanin i Novi Sad 2018, 280–286.
[27] Vladimir Pištalo, *Pesma o tri sveta*, 67, 66, 68.

THE GREAT CIRCLE OF KALOKAGATHIA

Gorana Raičević, *The Great Circle: Literary Friendships of Miloš Crnjanski*, "Nikolaj Timčenko" Foundation, Leskovac 2022

Gorana Raičević, *Good Beauty: Andrić's World*, Akademska knjiga, Novi Sad 2022

The Great Circle: Literary Friendships of Miloš Crnjanski is a book that was printed thanks to the "Nikolaj Timčenko" Endowment and the award of the same name that Gorana Raičević received for the extensive monograph *Agon and Melancholy: The Life and Work of Miloš Crnjanski* (2021). These two books complement each other, and metaphorically speaking, one might say that "agon and melancholy" is the *Morning Star* of the "great circle" of Miloš Crnjanski's literary friendships. While the "circle" is not *infinite*, as it exists within the confines of this particular book, its breadth highlights the extensive possibilities for interpreting this writer's work in a comparative context. The book is divided into four interconnected sections: "Miloš Crnjanski and Serbian Romanticism," "Dialogue with the Past", "Contemporaries" and "Crnjanski in the Light of Theory"), "Dialogue with the Past," "Contemporaries," and "Crnjanski in the Light of Theory," accompanied by an introductory note titled "Listening to the Past" and a concluding segment named "The 'Nikolaj Timčenko' Award." This segment consists of the text "Jury Decisions," an explanation by Biljana Mičić titled "Unravelling the Secret of Miloš Crnjanski," and the author's speech titled "Two Human Destinies in Which Melancholy Often Alternated with Faith in Literature." The overarching theme creates an interpretive horizon that encompasses the relationships established by Crnjanski's work with several notable figures, including Branko Radičević, Laza Kostić, Đuro Jakšić, Njegoš, Laza Lazarević, Milutin Bojić, Dušan Vasiljev, Milan Kašanin, and Šandor Marai. It also highlights Nikolaj Timčenko: "In this award, two authors meet, connected by invisible ties: Nikolaj Timčenko and Miloš Crnjanski. Two human destinies intersect in which melancholy often alternates with the belief that literature can change the world. One wrote about Serbs who migrated from Southern Hungary to their motherland, Russia, in the eighteenth century. The other was the son of a Russian who was swept away by the winds of revolution to little Serbia." Lastly, the importance of comparative and critically oriented discussions is

emphasized, particularly those that question Bloom's concept of "fear of influence" through the example of Crnjanski's poetry and the theme of carnivalization in the works *Among the Hyperboreans* and *Embassies*.

The chapters were written as studies from 2007 to 2019, as noted in the introductory text. They represent a long process of maturing and crystallization of the author's idea to present "a broader context of different eras in which the issue of the dominance of either the individualistic or collectivist principle in literature was particularly emphasized. This perspective, which allows the exploration of the history of new Serbian literature, stems from a specific worldview" and serves "as the foundation for a future synthetic study titled 'Eros and Sacrifice: On the Individualistic and Collectivist Principle in Serbian Literature.'" Milorad Pavić, in his article "Why We Don't Have History of Contemporary Literature?" (published in 'Politika' on December 16th, 1976), reflected on the process of creating great syntheses through his own experiences. He noted, "Years of analytical studies are needed for an 'hour' of synthesis, and there is also an unequal relationship between the synthesizer and the colleague who works only in his narrow area of research. It is easier, if nothing else, to move on a small and limited field of research than to enter into risks (professional, ideological and other, risks of large generalizations and synthetic views of entire eras)". *Agon and Melancholy*, *Great Circle* and *Good Beauty* are the syntheses of Gorana Raičević, resulting from long analytical observations and re-examinations, in order not to become part of the wider picture of new Serbian literature.

Although Crnjanski and Andrić are the primary focus, the works of these two classics of 20th-century Serbian literature offer a masterful exploration that opens new literary, historical, and hermeneutical horizons. Furthermore, they contribute to a Lovejoyean understanding of the history of the ideas of eros and sacrifice in Serbian literature, beginning with Romanticism. The chapter on Crnjanski and Njegoš encapsulates this idea effectively. Its significance extends beyond the realm of literature and literary studies, holding universal and anthropological importance for the Serbian people and culture. The interpretations of Njegoš's poetry by figures such as Rastko Petrović, Isidora Sekulić, and Crnjanski reveal, in many ways, the essence of our avant-garde in its eudemonic quest for both individual and collective happiness, searched for a synthetic unification of paganism and Christianity, both individual and collective. The fact that Crnjanski, Rastko, and Isidora remained consistently convinced—unlike the surrealists—that only internal renewal, a revolution of the soul, can lead humanity to progress emphasizes the current awareness and need to redefine the collectivist epic and patriarchal patterns in modern Serbian society. This redefinition should be based on symbolic sacrifice, compassion, solidarity, self-sacrifice, a renunciation of materialism, and respect for spiritual values. The idea that Eros and sacrifice can serve as primary components in understanding the evolution of thought regarding the rhythms and shifts of poetic paradigms in new Serbian literature

is supported by the typology presented by Arthur Lovejoy in *The Great Chain of Being*. Lovejoy outlines five categories: 1) beliefs and unconscious mental customs within the mindset of individuals or generations; 2) dialectical motives; 3) sensitivity to various forms of metaphysical pathos (including pure obscurity, the esoteric, eternity, monistic and pantheistic feelings, and voluntaristic pathos); 4) philosophical semantics; and 5) the recurring issues surrounding the same idea, which may often be somewhat concealed. Moreover, when comparing the title of Lovejoy's book—translated by Gorana Raičević in 2014—with the title *The Great Circle*, an intriguing connection emerges between the notion of the "chain of being" and the concept of a "circle." The Great Circle can be seen as one of the cycles in the transgenerational and even trans-authorial interpretation of Crnjanski's works. If Lovejoy envisioned the universe as a chain of beings, then the book published by "Nikolaj Timčenko" Endowment can be imagined as a literary universe of this writer's oeuvre which is comparatistically chained together and testifies to Lovejoy's "wonderful connection of things (*connexio rerum*)".

The interpretations presented in the book *The Great Circle* are based on intriguing and remarkable coincidences that intertwine the fates and works of various writers. For instance, Branko Radičević died in a hospital not far from the Vienna apartment where Crnjanski lived. Additionally, there are comparisons made between Kostić's famous "crossings" and the "ideas about 'invisible connections'." The association between Crnjanski and Anđelija Lazarević, Laza Lazarević's daughter, along with the fate of early manuscripts by Milutin Bojić and Crnjanski, illustrates these connections. The text also includes precise and critical analyses of Harold Bloom's *Antithetical Criticism* and Mikhail Bakhtin's study *The Work of François Rabelais and the Folk Culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, highlighting their limitations and exploring their applicability to both Crnjanski's work and the broader corpus of Serbian literature. Although Bloom's and Bakhtin's studies are well-known and influential, they can be seductive and may lead to distorted conclusions. Bloom's focus is primarily on the "Western tradition," particularly its "Anglo-American stream," which necessitates caution when applying his theories to Slavic or, more specifically, Serbian literature. Conversely, Bakhtin emphasizes the "living tradition of folk Renaissance culture," prompting the pertinent question: "Can we discuss carnivalization concerning artistic literature (that is, literature that is neither folk nor children's) created after the Renaissance?"

The questions discussed bring additional clarity to the title and concept of Gorana Raičević's book, *The Great Circle*. In particular, an interesting analogy can be drawn with Georges Poulet's *Metamorphoses of the Circle*. This concept refers to the ongoing changes in meaning that a specific form undergoes within the human spirit. It coincides with the transformations in how individuals perceive their deepest selves, particularly regarding the connection between the external world and their internal experiences, as well as their awareness of

space and time. On the one hand, the author takes into account the flow of time and eras, as well as the importance of the influence of the environment on the writer's work, all of which, taken together, are in the dynamics of movement that also affect changes in meaning. On the other hand, Poulet's conceptual framework can be viewed as a distinctive work by a single author, in this case, Crnjanski. This work undergoes a meaningful transformation, becoming enriched through its relationship with a similar work that it is connected to or compared with, whether from Serbian literature or world literature.

If "circle" serves as the keyword for the monograph on Crnjanski, and *Good Beauty* has the subtitle *Andrić's World*, it can be said that the metaphor "world" plays a similarly significant role in the context of a book about the Serbian Nobel laureate. The term "circle" suggests a specific interpretative horizon, while "world" encompasses not only the ideas and context of the Serbian avant-garde but also various insights into the subsequent era that connect to the present day. The metaphor of "world" appears to be more three-dimensional compared to "circle," but this does not diminish the importance and scholarly contribution of the Great Circle. Perhaps this can be explained by Good Beauty's focus on the future. The book about Andrić is not just an arbitrary dedication *to My Students*; it clearly and concisely answers numerous challenging questions that students face in responding to today's political provocations and uncertainties. *Good Beauty* and the *Great Circle* form a complementary pair, laying the groundwork for a comprehensive study on the history of the concepts of Eros and sacrifice in modern Serbian literature. The similarities between Crnjanski and Andrić are evident in their shared disdain for Eros as merely a sexual drive and their mutual belief in the power of sacrifice. This sacrifice is understood both literally and figuratively, as a means of restraining insatiable lust and as self-sacrifice for the benefit of others and the community. Ultimately, the goal is life within culture. It is essential for young people, especially students, to recognize the importance of sacrifice and the commitment to survival that it represents for the Serbian people and their culture. In the context of Andrić's avant-garde poetics, it is important to note that ethical and aesthetic principles are intertwined in his work, united in what he calls "Good Beauty." Therefore, understanding this writer is crucial, as he feared being misinterpreted, carefully measured his words, and aimed for them to be accurately interpreted. This dedication to precise communication helps explain his commitment to realistic storytelling.

In the chapter discussing the destructiveness of Eros, the author sheds light on the integrative concept presented in the book *Good Beauty.* According to this idea, "a beautiful shape and form needs to be filled with some moral or thoughtful achievement." For Ivo Andrić, beauty in both life and art embodies *kalokagathia*—a combination of the beautiful, the good, and the true, serving the purpose of genuine humanization. The most beautiful characters in Andrić's works are those who have "outgrown" their base desires,

representing the weak, little man crushed by drives and passions. The book is divided into five sections: "Ideas and Context of the Serbian Avant-garde," "Engaged Andrić," "Reality, Slippages, Identities," "Demonology of Eros," and "Politics, Diplomacy." Together, these sections explore the varied relationship between Eros and sacrifice throughout Andrić's entire oeuvre. This relationship is illuminated not through elaborate theories but through Andrić's own insights. In essence, one work by Andrić enhances the understanding of another; an essay may shed light on a short story, a travel record may illuminate a novel, and so forth.

Andrić's World is one of the answers to the question "How to determine the true meaning of a literary work?", but, at the same time, a defence of literature itself. If the goal of literature is to "build bridges between people and change the world", then this is the consciousness that students should nurture as representatives of the future and the times to come. The writer felt that literature would be denied this power or abolished, therefore, according to the author, he did not finish the novel *Omer Pasha Latas*, because, it seems, he did not find a (po)ethical response to the evil that this hero represents at that moment. Literature and the science of literature are renewed through "a challenge, a call for interpretation, in every new time, in every generation of new readers", therefore the "circles" of reading and interpretation must never be interrupted.

Throughout the book *Good Beauty*, the influence of the Renaissance and Avant-garde is palpable, emphasizing the humanistic desire to renew the world. The aim is for humanity to once again be regarded as the "measure of all things" and to reclaim an "honourable place at the centre of the universe." The author draws on knowledge from various disciplines, employing methodological eclecticism that embodies necessary critical thinking and a sense of finesse in interpretation. This synthesis of analyses and insights can be referred to as "Good Beauty," which echoes the book's motto—a quote from Ivo Andrić: "Meaning. Permanence. Without the stigma of change, of fear. / Good beauty. News from afar. / A work you dreamed of. What one man / Can never tell another." Ivo Andrić, 1922." Just as Andrić contributed a world of "good beauty" to Serbian literature, Gorana Raičević enriches the Serbian field of literary science with new insights and knowledge. She highlights threads of continuity that connect to the history of ideas, carrying on her shoulders the legacy of two Serbian literary giants, Crnjanski and Andrić.

Jelena MARICEVIĆ BALAĆ

Translated from Serbian by
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DRAMA TEXTS ABOUT DOSITEJ OBRADOVIĆ

Drama Hero DOSITEJ, "Dositej Obradović" Endowment—RTS Publishing House, edited by Radomir Putnik, Belgrade 2022

The "Dositej Obradović" endowment, in collaboration with the Radio and Television of Serbia and with support from the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Serbia and the Secretariat for Culture of the City of Belgrade, has published a reading list of drama texts titled "Drama Hero DOSITEJ." The editor, Radomir Putnik, is a writer, playwright, theatre critic, and former drama director at the National Theatre in Belgrade. He also worked as the editor-in-chief of the RTS Artistic Programme for many years. The book features plays by Kosta Trifković, Jovan Radulović, Milan Đoković, and Elijana Gavrlović, along with radio plays by Zvonimir Kostić, Miodrag Maticki, and Olga Savić, as well as TV dramas by Milovan Vitezović, Slobodan Stojanović, and Dušan Belča. In the extensive preface titled "Our Contemporary Dositej," Putnik examines the included texts based on their artistic and genre characteristics—such as melodrama/flash drama, historical drama, biographical drama, museum drama, monodrama, excerpts from drama series, TV dramas, and TV drama screenplays. He also provides information about performances in theatre, as well as TV and radio programmes. The book is tastefully designed and illustrated with dynamic portraits of Dositej Obradović by Javor Rašajski. It serves as an exceptional contribution to understanding of Dositej's work and his influence on Serbian drama, theatre, TV, and radio drama from 1871 to the present day. Putnik's preface, which is approximately 50 pages long, reviews all the included texts, analyzing their dramatic potential, artistic value, and genre distinctions, while engaging in dialogue with earlier critiques of these works. The high density of categories in Putnik's preface reflects the dynamic nature of dramatic forms and their performances across various media.

The illustrations draw significant attention. The three portraits of Dositej by Javor Rašajski show a clear semantic progression. In the first portrait, Dositej appears distantly ironic, almost as though he is watching us, his contemporaries. As Radomir Putnik notes in the preface, "Dositej is our contemporary," as if asking us whether we have been sifted through someone else's sieve (whether we see ourselves through someone else's perspective). In the second portrait, he is cold-blooded and insightful, with tightly closed lips, conveying a sense of indifference. In the third, depicted in bright colours, he appears intimate, open, and warm already being transformed into a cultural hero. This dynamics reflects Dositej's character in his works and his role in Serbian culture. He is one of the earliest and most passionate critics of Serbian society, while also being a warm and engaging interlocutor for his readers.

He often ironizes his younger self, as well as the Serbian people, highlighting their outdated customs and underdeveloped culture.

According to all that, we do not have a more beautiful, intimate person in our culture than Dositej Obradović. Perhaps the closest to him is Zmaj (warmth, attitude towards children, instructiveness, lyricism, criticism) in poetry he is our greatest satirist, attacking both domestic circumstances and crowned heads, Prince Mihailo ("Jututunska Hymn") and King Milan (a call for abdication: "Wherever the gendarme's voice not being muffled/You are shouted at from everywhere:/Come down on your own accord, –/Or still waiting for worse miracles!"). Zmaj wrote (under the title, the first verse: "Let's sow, brothers, the seed of the mind", the song was composed by Miroljub Aranđelović Rasinski, and performed by the "Obilić" choir, conducted by Darinka Matić Marović, in 2011, on the 200th anniversary of Dositej's appointment as Minister of Education of Serbia):

> Dositias did not die
> That stature cannot die,
> Dositias's younger become,
> Therefore the youth it's called. (1869)

The chrestomathy showcases a range of texts, starting with Kosta Trifković's work from 1871 and extending to contemporary pieces created in entirely new media environments, such as radio and television. It illustrates how conceptions have evolved based on the authors and the conditions of public release. One particularly intriguing aspect is how biographical material from Dositej's writings and his correspondence has been creatively arranged and interwoven into a "web of facts and imagination," as noted by a critic from *Politika* regarding Slobodan Stojanović's TV drama, *Pillow of My Grave*. In these plays, it is evident that the gaps in Dositej's biographical works and correspondence are most often filled, particularly regarding what he did not explicitly discuss, leaving ample room for the interpretation. The authors were inspired by various cultural and life dynamics, exploring themes related to childhood, Hopovo, Dalmatia, and Trieste, as well as the stages of life including youth, maturity, and old age. They also examined Dositej's arrival in Serbia and his role in rebellious diplomacy. The motifs in Dositej's essays sparked provocative discussions, such as the man-machine relationship, which appear in works like (*The Pillow of My Grave* by Slobodan Stojanović and *The Night Journey to Karlovci* by Dušan Belča). Themes of superstition, patriotism, and the state of the Serbian language at the time were also addressed. Olga Savić's *Dositej's Last Night*, inspired by Milisav Savić's novel *The Prince and the Serbian Writer*, is the most imaginative among these works. The closest biographical dramas include the radio drama *The Companion* by M. Maticki and Elijana Gavrilović's museum drama *Dositej File*. All of these texts are multimedia in nature, incorporating image, sound, word,

and music, while freely merging space and time through a blend of fantasy and documentary elements.

Anyone familiar with Dositej's life and work is often surprised by how meticulously the authors of the drama texts studied documents and Dositej's writings, uncovering connections between his life and his fiction. Vitezović, Olga Savić, and especially Slobodan Stojanović made significant contributions in this regard. Stojanović even included footnotes to clarify the relationships between Dositej and the women he was associated with, along with his letters to Sofija Teodorović, née Mekša—a young woman who, at that time, already had four children and would go on to have ten more. These letters may represent the first preserved love correspondence in the Serbian cultural public.

Phantasms are intriguing, especially when authors blend dreams, delusions, and reality in an effort to connect and fill in the gaps of what is not documented. Love motifs take precedence in the works of Trifković and Radulović, as well as in those of Olga Savić and Slobodan Stojanović. (Dositej's writings contain an unfilled space where he states that he does not know of any monk who does not long for a woman!)

Jovan Radulović's play *The Teacher Dositej* is rich with images depicting the life of Dalmatian Serbs during Dositej's time spent teaching among them. It portrays an archaic, elementary, and primitive culture characterized by dramatic scenes, including the burning of the plague victims and instances of religious, national, and social intolerance. This context leads the main character to decide to flee Dalmatia. Radulović reduced his hero, who was still a monk, to the essence of Dositejian thought: a quest for goodness, culture, and tolerance. In his dialogues, ideas from Dalmatian writings—(such as young Dositej: Alphabet and Christoitia) intertwine with themes from *Life and Adventures, Fables*, and their moral lessons, as well as letters. (It is no longer "Dositej in Dalmatia," but rather Dositej in his fundamental activities and ideas.) This emphasis is also reflected in the writings of other authors included in this chrestomathy, such as Miodrag Maticki, Dušan Belča, and Slobodan Stojanović. Their works share common themes; for instance, Dositej's dreams of Hopovo resonate with Radulović, which can also be seen in Trifković's drama in a more fragmented form. Episodes from Dositej's *Life and Adventures*, as well as from other works by Dalmatian writers like *Pilipenda*, are reinterpreted in various historical and contextual situations. Radulović's intuition proves correct when he cites passages from the *Christoitia*, as these were undoubtedly created partly for the purpose of translation and partly to serve as reading material for Dositej's students. This suggests that Dositej read these passages to his students and that the manuscripts were extensively distributed. In his art, Radulović embraces both extreme modernism and excessive archaization. On one hand, elderly men (fathers) are taken under the mallet (*lapot*), while people are condemned to galleys based on reports from religious adversaries. Priests and monks become involved in

village fights and the distribution of alms, with individuals even changing their religion for a mere handful of corn. This context may explain the play's final line: **Oh God, where have I come to?*** On the other hand, a young woman named Jelena, the daughter of a priest and Dositej's host, speaks as if she has emerged from modern feminist discourse. Radulović **did** clean up Dositej of its Dalmatian idyllic qualities! Dositej's influence extended to the monks of Athos, Montenegro, Fruška Gora, and other regions, which Radulović connected to the Dalmatian culture, adding a hint of folklore (such as *lapot*). Only distant memories of these customs remain as remnants of a once vibrant tradition. However, the atavism and primitive practices of the Orthodox masses worldwide, along with their fierce efforts to maintain their religious identity, stand in stark contrast to another form of intolerance associated with the Catholic Church and its friars. In between these two contrasting realms, Dositej envisions a sphere of genuine enlightenment, defined by tolerance, education, the promotion of good customs, people's solidarity, and timeless ideals.

The talks of the deceased, a genre that was prominent in our nation in the 18th and 19th centuries and was inspired by Lucian of Samosata, has been revived by Miodrag Maticki. In this work, Dositej, who has fled to Hopovo with Niko Putin, talks with him from the Champs-Élysées (the afterlife). Even into the third millennium, the discourse skillfully combines events from Serbian history with different eras of Dositej's life. From the period of Dositej to the present, the Champs-Élysées are portrayed as being inhabited by learned Serbs. This work mostly functions as a monologue that explores topics of literary aspirations and patriotism while reflecting on Serbian culture in the two centuries since Dositej's passing. It includes straightforward, aphoristic phrases like "A book is a cure for forgetfulness," and "One travels through a book as well." A series of essayistic insights, interwoven with imagery from Dositej's writings, represent Maticki's thoughts on the trends in Serbian culture. I often ponder the vast potential of these "conversations of the dead," which traverse eras, ideas, and personalities—a concept Jakov Ignjatović touched upon in his *Letters from Elysium*, albeit in fragments!

In compiling the chrestomathy, Putnik did not select texts based solely on their quality, but rather by their relevance to the topic, specifically their connection to Dositej's character. As a result, the values represented in these texts vary; some are focused on biographical aspects (without dramatic quality), others provide a cultural-historical overview, and some explore the author's imaginative interpretations of specific biographical details. The evolving relationship between the dramatic and the literary within this chrestomathy reflects both the quality of the texts themselves and the historical reception of Dositej's character in our culture.

Dušan IVANIĆ

SUBLIMITY AS A (POETICAL) MEASURE OF THINGS

Bratislav R. Milanović, *Blue Jellyfish*, SKZ, Belgrade 2022

The literary work of Bratislava R. Milanović, being created since the 1970s, has already passed the strict literary-aesthetic test and valorization of both literary criticism and literary history, but also the strict and refined taste of an admirer of true, pure poetry. Interpretations and evaluations have generally emphasized the special poetic expression, the connection to the cultural and historical heritage, and the high degree of aestheticization this poet has cultivated from the beginning in his expression.

We are definitely dealing with a writer of high culture, in addition, by the choice of creators about whom Milanović wrote and the topics and problems to which he devoted his critical attention. Thus, in the selection and preface of *The Most Beautiful Poems* by Anica Savić Rebac, through the values that she recognizes in this special person of our culture, which largely relied on *Hellas and Unity—Symbols of Wisdom, Art, and Purity*[1]—it is possible to load those lofty poetic principles that I aspired to. The interviews that he gave in different periods of his life and on various occasions, like real small essays or auto poetic records, also speak of the principles that guide him in his creation, of the consistency of following his highly set aesthetic criteria, even when, or just when, the world values as we know them are collapsing spiritually and civilizationally when, as he says, 'fall is undoubted', 'in everything',[2] and the poet is called to oppose it in his own way.

As a result, he came to believe that poetry is fundamentally about *refusing to accept*[3] 'the world that we did not choose at birth, to linguistic systems that have been used up, to someone else's will that wants to impose itself, to divine and human injustice, to the love of the beloved for another, to bad characters, to living human caricatures, to stupid laws, to the normalization of consciousness, to physical violence, and, ultimately, to transience and death.'[4] Changes in the nature and understanding of poetry inevitably led to changes in the poet's own nature and understanding. According to Milanović, 'the poet used to be the prince of literature, a refined spirit, a sharp mind, a

[1] Bratislav R. Milanović, foreword to: *The Most Beautiful Poems of Anica Savić Rebac*, Ariadna, Belgrade 2010, 7.

[2] Bratislav R. Milanović, *'*Poet in Time*',* in: *Bratislav R. Milanović: A Poet*, Proceedings, edited by Dragan Hamović, National Library 'Stefan Prvovenčani', Kraljevo 2010, 18.

[3] 'Poetry is a refusal to conform to the ordinary. It exists outside established norms, being special, unique, and authentic. It challenges existing rules in language, syntax, semantics, and social behaviour that have become general and somewhat worn out. By utilizing a different language, poets also express distinct ways of thinking.' — Bratislav R. Milanović, 'I Will Not Keep Anything to Himself,' in 'Conversation with a Poet,' interviewed by Dragan Mraović, *Pesničke novine*, issue 8/74 (2011), 16.

[4] B. R. Milanović, 'A Poet in Time', 21.

nobleman in language,' and he views himself as *outdated*[5] in that regard. The fact that Milanović nurtured the principle of sublimity throughout his decades-long engagement with poetry and literature in general, never letting go of what Andrić called *his thirst for beauty and perfection*, while the entire national and civilizational cultural heritage—both historical and mythological—often served as the foundation for his poetic imagination and inspiration, suggests that Milanović is a *poet of high culture* and an aristocrat, or more specifically, a spiritual aristocrat. This is entirely consistent with Nikolai Berdyaev's theory that 'aristocracy is not a social class but a spiritual principle.'

The most recent book, *Blue Jellyfish*, published in the Jubilee Circle of The Serbian Literary Cooperative (SKC), also exemplifies this idea and supports each of the qualities mentioned in his poetry. First, Bratislav R. Milanović has consciously validated some of his key auto poetic beliefs with this collection of poems. He asserts that 'poetry if it is true, cannot bypass any topic,' that poetry is 'the coded speech of the time in which we live,' and that his poetry 'relies on some true values' to 'think through this time of violence, destruction, crime, general degradation, devastated humanity, and the unquenchable desire for a better world and love.'[6]

Milanović frequently asserted that poetry is a part of both the realm of knowledge and the realm of imagination, also known as oneirism or lucid dreaming.[7] He began the collection *Blue Jellyfish* with one such prologue poem, 'Dream.' In this way, it is possible to say that there is a high degree of agreement between his auto poetic statements, in which he attests to the established measure of the dream, and his poetry, whose oneiric content frequently represents a fund of multiple and diverse dimensions of meaning—that is, a kind of poetic, creative sincerity that is necessary for the creation of true, good poetry.

Because it expands upon themes and motifs 'from the ancient future,' the *Blue Jellyfish* is a representation of the poet's natural poetic flow, which he developed with earlier collections. As such, it can be interpreted in the same way as his earlier accomplishments, but it can also be seen as the pinnacle of the poet's reflection on history and culture thus far and the past, i.e., (feelings) of the present and (premonitions) of the future. The collection is structured so that its cycles appear to be complete in themselves, yet the interconnections the poet establishes at various levels—such as versification, melody, and rhyme—hold significant importance. Within this work, the motifs of history, mythology, love, transience, and death are harmoniously unified. It seems nearly possible to equate *life with death*, as the boundaries between them dissolve before the reader's eyes.

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[5] Ibid., 23.

[6] Ibid., 21.

[7] 'I decided from the very beginning that dreams should serve as the measure of the real world, rather than the other way around. I reversed the rules: for my lyrical hero, the only true measure became the measure of dreams. When you take this approach, a vast array of creative possibilities opens up to you.' (Ibid.,25)

When he exalts and celebrates—whether it's a love ascent or a national victory—the poetic subject laments. Conversely, when he mourns and expresses pain over the fleeting nature of profound love and the tragedies experienced by the Serbian people in the past, he simultaneously *celebrates* poetry, poems, and words. This is because only the *word*, or *a poem*, possesses a divine, creative quality; it can shape chaos and establish order in the world, allowing for the laws of contemporary life and universal memory to connect phenomena and things.[8] This faith in the power of the poetic word, that is, the *Orphic principle* that Milanović nurtures, aligns him with the poets of the neo-symbolist circle, particularly Branko Miljković, with whom he has often been linked. Additionally, Milanović's emphasis on a glorious past, a heroic age, and the glorification of values from bygone times reflects a spirit similar to that found in Vojislav Ilić's poetry.

And yet, despite this affinity with other poets, Bratislav Milanović, from his first collection to his latest, has established himself as an authentic poetic voice. He embodies the true essence of a poet, as he himself states: 'A true poet will not repeat someone else. He speaks from himself, and that is new in itself.'[9] Milanović often writes in a hymnal tone, expressing ideas without pathos, focusing on the essential rather than the marginal. His poetry conveys sublime feelings of sadness, longing, and a sense of transience. Therefore, the key aspect of Milanović's poetic expression is sublimity. Sublimity serves as the measure of a well-crafted expression that 'always strives for the discipline of the imagination.'[10]

Although the content of the *Blue Jellyfish* is thematically diverse and rich, it can be viewed as a collection primarily dominated by three thematic or ideological units. Each of these units is interconnected and represents a distinct poetic world or entity, highlighting the concentrated meaning present in each poem. These thematic units align closely with the overall poetics of Bratislav Milanović, as previously noted in the critique.[11]

The first group of poems focuses on themes of Orphean love, or rather, ancient love. These poems draw significantly from the Orphic myth and the broader mythical heritage, including ancient and Serbian narratives. They feature a poetic intertwining of cultural elements from various civilizations, all rooted in the same geographic area. The cycles 'Under the Golubac Tower,' 'Bathing of the Gods,' and 'Oil, Olives and Wine' belong to this category. The initial inspiration for these poems and lyrical epic works stems from an exotic encounter with Greece, further enriched by national myths and legends, particularly those associated with Đerdap, Golubac, and the Danube. This

[8] Ibid., 25.
[9] Ibid., 22.
[10] Bojana Stojanović Pantović, 'Lyrical Auras and Dark Spaces', in: *Bratislav R. Milanović: A Poet*, 150.
[11] Ibid., 148.

inspiration is also linked to the ancient Lepenski Vir civilization. Moreover, the poems are infused with a strong emotional charge, as emotion in Milanović's work remains consistently 'at high frequencies.' The emotional depth in his poetry, as the poet himself notes, takes on a dialogical form. It emphasizes the *transformation* of the reader rather than merely serving as the poet's personal *confession*.[12]

The lyrical-epic poem 'A Word about Love' is structured around a principle of gradual progression, expressing ideas like ('there was also a little love,' 'there was, certainly, love,' and 'how much love there was'). This poem encapsulates two cosmogonies: the personal and emotional perspective of the poet, alongside a broader, universal view that encompasses an entire mythological system (from the past) and a solar system (projected into the future). It highlights the poetic reminiscence of love, transitioning from a physical and emotional experience to a metaphysical and transcendental one:

There certainly was love
while we had been protected by carps and dragons
from the black star that circled in blood,
while the bruised groves
chirped, twittered, clicked and roared...

And we believed the Vlachs
that a appealing dream is smiling on us here
– on this edge where the Danube
for fairies and demons
set up homes, for some brighter times.[13]

The Orphic principle is presented as a necessity for singing in a world of alternative values, serving as a means to preserve *righteousness.* It serves to preserve true values, with love as the greatest among them. The lyrical dialogue between Odysseus and the poetic subject, along with the connections between Olympus and Golubac, the Aegean and the Danube, and God and man—where love transforms God into man and man into God—are all sublimated in the poem 'Oil, Olives and Wine.' This poem stands as an apotheosis of love, celebrating the themes of wine, love, and passion in the spirit of ancient poets. These elements, guided by the gods, endure in a collapsing world and amidst vanishing civilizations, as they are of divine origin themselves.

Dilthey asserted that the subject of poetry 'is not merely reality as perceived by an acknowledging spirit, but rather the relationship between myself and the world around me'.[14] In this regard, Milanović's verses encapsulate both

[12] B. R. Milanović, 'A Poet in Time', 32.
[13] Bratislav R. Milanović, *Blue Jellyfish*, SKZ, Belgrade 2022, 13.
[14] Wilhelm Dilthey, *Experience and Poetry* (Lessung–Goethe–Novalis–Hölderlin), translated by Sasha Radojčić, Orfeus, Novi Sad 2004, 141–142.

ancient patterns and personal experiences, creating a unique and inviolable poetic realm that is dignified and sovereign. Two specific poems serve as a poetic reinterpretation of the Serbian Promethean myth—'Baba Kaj' and 'Golubana's Splendour.' In these works, the motif from the folk legend of the girl chained above Golubac intertwines history, existence, mythology, and legend, while also evoking national and patriotic sentiment. ('Right was I, Golubana, to weigh you down with chains, / to tie you to a stone over the water... / You never say no to pasha, my dear. You could / be wrapped in silk, but you chose—/ dog people.')

In the spirit of Schelling's philosophy, even when a poet is unaware of the divine, he still expresses it through his nature. Without realizing it, he reveals the most profound secret to those who understand him: the unity of the divine and natural essence, in which there is no opposition. Milanović brings the gods into his mythopoetic realm of Golubac, grounding them in the modern age:

> The gods are here, among us,
> buying wine for a pittance...
> And today the drama is still on
> Between them and the light,
> – Pointing at the rays of gaffes
> already darting over the dark nights.[15]

The motivation behind this idea comes from recognising that the world we live in today vastly differs from the heroic eras of the civilizations from which we descend. Unlike in those times, people no longer sought gods in the heavens; instead, they looked for them in plaster figures sold at stalls. This irony is used as a distance from the ephemerality and superficiality of modern life in his poems. Poetry becomes a dignified refuge for the spirit, as he suggests that 'this improper time is—a real ambush' ('Aristotle's Square. Pigeons').

The second part of the collection marks a significant advancement from the previous one, as it delves deeper into thematic content. While it can still be categorized as poems inspired by cultural and historical themes, the historical aspect is particularly prominent in this section. Notable poems in this part include 'A Table at the Crossroads' and 'A Head Wandering Across the Fields.'

The lyrical-epic poem 'A Table at the Crossroads' is one of the significant works in Serbian literature that reflects the tragic fate of the Serbian people. It specifically addresses the suffering of more than 5,000 civilians in Kraljevo between October 12th and 21st, 1941, during the Nazi occupation. As the poet expresses, 'the whole of Serbia (...) was dressed in black.'[16]

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[15] B. R. Milanović, *Blue Jellyfish*, 22.
[16] Ibid., 37.

What distinguishes this lyrical-epic poem from all the others, and why it can be considered anthological, is its structure, which closely resembles that of an ancient drama. 'A Table at the Crossroads' could be classified as a drama rather than a lyrical-epic poem because it incorporates all the essential elements of a drama: unity of action, place, and time; a chorus that introduces the action; and tragic imagery of executions, the anticipation of death, and an overwhelming atmosphere of blackness and darkness that makes the setting feel unreal, almost mythical. The metaphor of 'a table at the crossroads' captures the summarization and compilation of Serbia's historical and poetic experience, as presented by Milanović, depicting it as a 'house in the middle of the road.' The chorus that introduces each poem sings to highlight this tragic Serbian (pre)disposition.

> Everyone has huddled under God's lap.
> Why did a Serb build a house in the middle of the road?[17]

The mythical space of the Kraljevo execution ground, as envisioned by the poet, takes on the qualities of a Serbian Hades. It features an underground river called Zlatarica, its own Olympus (Stolovi), and tragic heroes whose fates are hinted at in the titles of the works: 'Stanoje Stanojević, hidden on the roof of the wagon factory, watches the preparations for the execution,' 'Miodrag Batalić digs a common grave,' and 'Miladin Lazarević—escaped from the execution.' There are also themes of collective suffering captured in titles like 'Awaiting Death in the Furnace Room of the Wagon Factory in Kraljevo,' 'Gathering Refugees,' and 'German Soldiers Kill the Executed for the Second Time and Trample Their Graves with Tanks.' This unique Aeschylean drama reaches its climax in the eighth canto, 'Buying Mourning,' where the opening verses of the chorus highlight a tragedy of unprecedented proportions:

> They repainted scarves, shirts, fabrics
> – There never was a lack of mourning here.[18]

The third part of the collection is marked by a lyrical exploration of existential themes, particularly evident in the two cycles—'The Old Man's Home' and 'The Blue Jellyfish.' These poems delve into existential cognition and metaphysical reflections, encompassing not only the poet's past experiences but also the painful realities of the harsh modern era, where the demands of youth, like some mythical creature, consume everything from which life has diminished. In the poem 'The Old Man's Home,' the loneliness of an elderly man becomes the focal point of the narrative. He finds himself abandoned and trapped in a modern dungeon—a nursing home—rendering him a person

[17] Ibid., 39.
[18] Ibid., 52.

stripped of identity, stability, and meaning. The lines convey this despair: 'The devils—grandchildren, daughters—wink at him / for having brought him to a strange gamble: / he goes—to nothing, to everything—those beasts, / such are the new rules they introduced, / to them, everything acquired in a long drama / in which he is lonelier than himself.' Despite the poignant themes of loneliness and abandonment, the poem does not lack poetic expressiveness in which verbal conjunctions and versification skills are emphasized in a solid composition (most often sestinas), as well as in the sublime tone of tragedy (of the modern era).

In a nearly identical way, 'The Blue Jellyfish,' both as an independent poem and as part of the collection to which it belongs, serves as a powerful metaphor for death, existential dread, and the metaphysical foreboding of an impending end. The poem reflects the poet's Eliot-like passion for order and proportion, showcasing strict versification as an ornament that enhances his poetic expression. Despite the 'tragic sense of life' (M. Unamuno) that the poem embodies, principles of harmony, balance, and measure are still present. This poem represents the finale of the collection:

When, from the bottom of the sky,
The blue jellyfish stings me in my hour of need,
The words that I weave together, like a net,
With the help of the Muses,
So that my poems can be bound to my destiny,
Until that flickering light fades away.[19]

Hölderlin's insight that 'he who has thought through the deepest things loves what is most alive' can be applied to Milanović's work, particularly in the context of the concepts of Word, Poetry, and Poem, to which he assigns ontological significance. The meta-poetic elements in his poetry maintain a sense of irony without sacrificing the principle of sublimity. For the poet, sublimity is not merely an artificial construct, but the true measure of existence. Additionally, he embraces the concept of *licentia poetica* (poetic freedom), which allows him to realize his creative vision and endeavour to 'transcend the existing.'

Marija JEFTIMIJEVIĆ MIHAJLOVIĆ

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[19] Ibid., 97.

LYRICAL EXALTATION, A HINT OF CATHARSIS AND—AN EPILOGUE WITH JESUS

Dragan Jovanović Danilov: *Canyons Through Us*, Arhipelag, Belgrade, 2023

In the title of his new poetry book, *Canyons Through Us*, Danilov references a title by Božidar Šujica, who used the metaphor of a **canyon** nearly fifty years ago. However, Danilov's title does not simply imitate or modify this earlier metaphor. The image of a canyon is not commonly found in poetry; instead, it belongs to a unique set of images that derive their potential not from reinterpreting established meanings, but from their concrete application. This application emphasizes a heightened artistic expression of existential experiences. Danilov is a poet who skilfully employs various linguistic techniques, poetic images, metaphors, and symbols to express his creative inspiration. By blending these elements, he maximizes lyrical emotion, often elevating it to a state of exaltation, as exemplified in *Canyons Through Us*.

Danilov begins his latest collection with a separate, introductory poem titled *Canyons*. In the first verse and the very first word of that verse, he emphasizes the existential theme of old age, which refers to the ultimate phase of life. This theme is a common literary subject, and Danilov aims for a powerful lyrical expression in his interpretation. He presents this theme through the lyrical subject's confrontation with old age. His poetic response is short, clear, emotional, and assertive, and above all, it is paradoxical: "Old age comes when we begin to live with death / as with spring."

In the opening statement, the lyrical subject introduces the concepts of death and old age but quickly shifts from their ominous implications by employing the metaphor of **spring**, which symbolizes the reawakening of life. This unconventional metaphor suggests that the old age is not solely a sign of decline and disappearance; rather, it represents a paradoxical announcement of new beginnings, akin to how spring creates a sense of renewal amidst the inevitable approach of death. The paradox lies in the notion that the ultimate stage of life is not merely the time when death casts its heavy shadow, driving a person toward nothingness and obscuring their sense of purpose. Instead, this stage can be viewed as a new spring of existence. It does not bring to an end the flow of life's energy but rather inspires individuals with renewed strength to face new challenges, even while reality presents warnings of impending death and the transition into nothingness. Old age is often perceived as a warning sign of life's imminent farewell, but it actually marks a transition from a full and undisturbed life to a coexistence with death. This does not signify the end, nor does it introduce a sense of emptiness or disappearance within a person. Instead, old age represents a unique life situation where individuals can experience a renewed influx of life energy. Their existence takes on new meanings and qualities. Rather than merely confronting the reality of disap-

pearance, old age brings a special kind of dynamism that allows individuals to experience an enduring intensity of fulfilment and affirmation of life.

Danilov supports his poetic idea regarding the intensification of human existence in later years by illustrating how our perception of life changes with age. This perspective does not succumb to the absolutization of death and nothingness; rather, it remains firmly on the path of life, enriched by experience and new challenges. As a modern poet with keen lyrical sensitivity, Danilov offers a paradoxical view on the theme of old age. While he does not shy away from presenting the darker insights associated with the inevitability of death, he skilfully reiterates that no knowledge or alchemy exists that would allow a living being to cheat death. Consequently, no deception can serve as a solution to the limitations of existence, whether in confronting the inevitability of death or in the poetic exploration of that theme. The insights that accompany old age often reveal life's transience and the certainty of death. Yet, despite these realizations, individuals discover innate sources of vitality within themselves. This inner call to life encourages them to shift their focus away from thoughts of death and towards a renewed affirmation of existence. They begin to emphasize the meaning and value of life, striving for a higher quality of existence and a deeper appreciation of the life-giving and creative power within them. Old age should not be viewed as a time of decline; rather, it can be seen as a period of revitalized energy. It fosters a heightened awareness of life's value and enhances the quality of living. Even in old age, individuals resist succumbing to fears associated with death; instead, they respond to the life-affirming impulse that is the fundamental driving force of existence.

The inevitability of death does not reveal the ultimate truth or the complete essence of human existence, even in old age. This is especially true when death begins to loom over one's life. Despite the presence of death, existence continues to tap into its inexhaustible source of life, allowing individuals to feel the vibrant call of life within themselves. This awareness is not merely a passive response but a profound recognition of the uniqueness and preciousness of existence. In old age, regardless of the certainty of death and the looming transition to nothingness, human existence persists, remaining neither diminished nor meaningless. Instead, it embodies an undeniable resilience, tracing its own path through the later years of life—much like a river flows through the narrow gorges of a canyon.

Danilov does not simply position the lyrical subject against the picturesque backdrop of the canyon for a brief respite; rather, he uses a poetic image to enhance his artistic interpretation and argument regarding existential conclusions. He views the rocky gorge through which the river flows as possessing its own unique beauty. The image of the canyon serves as Danilov's artistic creation, illustrating the transformation of human existence in its later stages. This argument is compelling and nearly irresistible, largely due to its beauty.

The canyon is neither a chasm nor an abyss, but rather an unusual and beautiful deep ravine between the rocks through which the water finds its way. This unusual beauty is evident in the way the steep, rocky shores are reflected in the calm water beneath the subdued light that seems to come from the cosmic heights of the sky, turning the water's surface into a mirror. This reflection creates a double image of rocks and sky in the dark depths of the water. Danilov crafts an aesthetic poetic image from the canyon, which serves as a metaphor, symbolically marking existence as it navigates through narrow straits from one state to another.

Danilov does not explain his views on the paradox of life and the inevitability of death in any other way than through lyrical and metaphorical expression. He draws attention to a vivid scene from reality, specifically a river canyon, to support his perspective on old age—the final stage of existence. At this point, a person begins to realize that the essence of existence is not rooted in death, but in life and the continuation of life through creation. Creation, in this context, implies a new quality. This thought inspires the modern poet to find a metaphorical image that makes his ideas not only beautiful and compelling but also encourages a symbolic discourse rich with uplifting connotations. After depicting the canyon, he writes, "On this instead, the river abandons its /restraint of the narrator and becomes wild." The lyrical subject presents the image of a harsh and untamed river, symbolizing a renewed and unstoppable existence within himself. This imagery allows him to connect more deeply with the flow of existence and reinforces his intention to embrace the wildness in his expression.

While the cliffs of the canyon may seem harsh and wild, the river does not symbolize tameness; rather, it embodies undiminished power and an untameable spirit. The lyrical subject reflects this idea in his interpretation of the poem's final section, which departs from a tone of calmness or relaxation and introduces a new dynamism: "Canyons, gentlemen, are not residences." The lyrical subject embraces this declaration from Danilov, who responds by presenting an equally beautiful image of "blazing evenings." In this imagery, the canyon's tumultuous waters gaze into the evenings as if they are looking into their own depths. This culminates in the poem's message: "We are delivered to the canyons, those great readers / of sacred texts, so that their confusing waters / may carry us away in the flaming evenings." In this section, which reflects on old age, Danilov creates a poetic and metaphorical representation of the final stage of life. The **blazing evenings** symbolize the unique glow that existence takes on as it approaches its end.

The ultimate truth of existence is not found in the inevitability of death, but rather in the final fire that existence ignites before death marks its conclusion. Existence can be compared to fire, as the notable poet Branko Miljković, a predecessor of ontic inspiration, metaphorically suggested before Danilov.

The imagery of existence as fire, particularly symbolized by a **blazing evening,** implies that this fire is not eternal. Therefore, this metaphor serves as a warning of the impending end of existence, subtly shifting the initial reverence for life's renewal into a reminder of its inevitable conclusion. This reminder, while not overt, does not detract from the looming end; instead, it abstractly conveys a nuance of life's tragic nature. In this respect, Danilov enhances the lyrical enthusiasm and rapture in his expression of existential experience by incorporating this tragic connotation and catharsis, albeit in an abstract form.

The poetic image of **blazing evenings** not only presents visual elements but also embodies metaphorical and associative meanings that make it more complex. On one hand, it deepens the lyrical connection with existence, which only truly ignites in its eventual renewal. On the other hand, the figure of the evening suggests both the onset of night, symbolizing the end of existence and the transition to nothingness. As a result, this elevated lyrical experience carries a tragic undertone of regret and bitterness, which introduces a sense of catharsis into the emotional landscape of the poem. In a poem that explores the entirety of human existence, this tragic implication does not reach a climactic intensity; rather, it serves as a subtle indication of the horror associated with the tragic outcome of life. This theme represents an abstract climax within the drama of existence and leads to the epilogue of the poem.

Danilov concludes *Canyons* with an epilogue featuring seven final verses that are crucial to the lyrical subject. Following an abstract and distant catharsis, these verses complete the existential experience by exploring the concept of existence. This effectively encapsulates his poetic interpretation of a lifetime's journey.

If he can distinguish existence, its outcomes and measures, from the inevitability of death, and devotes himself fully to the vitality of existence, then the lyrical subject is not deceived. He does not fall into the trap of pathos or the extremes of discovering spring at the end of existence. Fuelled by his late-life discovery of a unique vitality, he eagerly embraces Danilov's aesthetic poetic image of the canyon as a symbol of escape and resilience. This image serves as a powerful poetic representation of his existential experience and a lyrical identification with existence itself. However, he eventually realizes that this achievement merely highlights existence without saving it from nothingness. With increasing bitterness, he understands that neither he nor the light he sought through his poetic expression of existence's vibrancy can be considered a source of salvation. Instead, it feels like a faint flicker of a firefly in the darkness, akin to "the little insignificant apostle who flew in his own shame and humiliation and who saw no evil anywhere."

The subsequent twist shifts the poem from a lyrical thrill to the dramatic catharsis of a tragic end to existence, which inevitably results from the relentless grip of fate. Following this twist, the poem evolves into a unique

epilogue where the lyrical subject addresses none other than Jesus, referring to him as his divine figure. The subject recognizes that all the light in his lyrical sensibility emanates from Jesus, the one who can most profoundly understand and empathize with his newly discovered truth about the tragedy of existence—both in this world and beyond. This bitter reality reveals that existence, much like that of Jesus ultimately leads to worldly defeat, punishment, and suffering.

Before the divine moment, the lyrical subject conveys his bitter existential experience not with anger or resentment, but rather in a poetically resilient and melancholic manner. Most importantly, he does this aesthetically: "You have given me wings here, so that in the tunnel between you and me, some fingers strum the bones of my body as if they were harp strings, Jesus."

The beginning of *The Canyon*, a poem by Danilov, is paradoxical, and so is its epilogue. In this poem, Danilov explores the entirety of human existence; including the experience of old age. In the opening verses, he elevates the intensity of life by paradoxically highlighting the renewal of vitality, even in old age. However, in the final verses, after depicting the full trajectory of existence toward its peak and the inevitable descent into nothingness, Danilov brings together two opposing emotional responses. On one hand, there is the overwhelming horror of the impending transition into nothingness. On the other hand, there is a melancholic reflection on existence, which, even as it fades away, continues to illuminate the endless silence with its fleeting beauty. This quiet flicker resembles the delicate sounds of a harp that enrich the silence. In the final verse, the lyrical subject invokes this beauty, concluding the poem with a unique kind of beauty: the beauty of quiet melancholy.

Danilov conveys deep poetic meaning by layering images and metaphorical associations, combining intense emotions and unconventional ideas. This approach results in a paradoxical yet aesthetically rich expression of the human experience. In Danilov's poetry, human existence is portrayed as continuously burning bright, even if only briefly, evoking a sense of melancholy—irresistibly reminiscent of the delicate sound of harp strings.

Stojan ĐORĐIĆ

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WITHIN THE BORDER SYMBOL

Dragan Hamović, *The Displaced Person*, Prometej, Novi Sad, 2023

The Romantics recognized that poetry is more than just a "spontaneous outpouring of strong feelings," as William Wordsworth described over two hundred years ago. Despite common misconceptions about them, this can be confirmed in several ways, even without referencing Edgar Allan Poe's "Philosophy of Composition," which dispels any romantic illusions about the irrational nature of the creative process. Writing poetry, especially when it is meaningful and authentic, is a serious and, above all, disciplined endeavour. It entails paying close attention to and onto words, requiring rigor and clarity, largely directed at oneself as the author. As a result, poets should be serious and disciplined persons who approach their work with caution, leaving little to chance. The moments of divine inspiration are not the primary emphasis of this process.

The collection of selected and new poems by Dragan Hamović, titled *The Displaced Person*, effectively highlights the essential role of thoughtfulness in creating poetry. The structure of the book demonstrates diligence and a commitment to continuous improvement. At the end of the collection, the reader's attention is drawn to a note that informs them that

The Displaced Person is a collection that compiles previously published poems, along with revised and new ones, showcasing the main themes and styles of the authors represented. Writing is a continuous flow; words are crafted into verses, and poems form interconnected circles. These circles seek to be complete. Ultimately, we strive for wholeness in everything we do.

Even if we were to disregard this concise autopoetic excerpt, a glance at the book would still affirm our conclusion. It is written entirely in bound verse and consists of fourteen units, six of which are titled after previously published collections. The book includes twenty-two new poems, while among the older ones, fourteen have been significantly revised, and, as we learn, "there were" minor changes in many other poems. Hamović's poetry is a rarity in today's literary landscape, particularly regarding its formal and technical aspects, which alone might warrant an entire study. Additionally, due to its exceptionally broad thematic range, *The Displaced Person* contains a variety of lyrical creations characterized by a high degree of contemplation and a desire to blend purely emotional experiences with intellectual content.

A possible perspective that could bring together the largest number of poems within a single poetic framework is subtly suggested by the title of the book itself. The opening lines of the poem sharing the same name can serve as its motto and are symbolically representative: "Man is under the attack; he tends to displace himself." This implies that "everywhere he moves—he always finds new limes." The Limes Figure," the title of the poem that opens

the unit, perhaps best captures the central metaphor of the book, which explores the universal liminal state of the lyrical "I." It is important to note that this boundary position of the subject implies not only spatial aspects but also temporal and psychological dimensions. Works such as "The Limes Figure," "Bežanijska kosa," and "The Soft Core," which are striking pieces from already well-known collections, were created on the same ideological foundation as cycles like "Mixture" and "Displaced Individuals." In these works, space gains significance based on the memories and events that have occurred within it. As Ivan V. Lalić beautifully expresses, it is "just time seen differently." Leaving certain places or returning to them can be emotionally and cognitively unsettling, as we lose or cannot reclaim what is stored there and what we deeply value—whether it relates to the essence of Otherness or our own sense of "self".

The Displaced Person unifies several distinct circles of poems. The first circle focuses on autobiographical works; the second explores themes inspired by history. The third circle has a strong documentary quality, primarily depicting contemporary circumstances and reflections related to specific places where the poet has been. The fourth circle consists of poems dedicated to significant cultural and historical figures. Finally, the fifth circle includes poems that can be categorized as lyrical in the strictest sense. In each of these circles, the phenomenon of liminality is present in various forms. As the German philosopher Bernhard Waldenfels, known for his phenomenological approach, pointed out, this phenomenon is always connected to the concept of foreignness. He considers humanity's encounter with the foreign as a borderline experience that constantly challenges individuals to test the "limits of their capacity and to question what is truly their own."

The significance of liminality often emerges as a pivotal aspect of the experience of foreignness, particularly evident in both historical poems and purely lyrical works. In the former, where a diachronic perspective prevails, the lyrical subject—an intriguing "character from the Limes," who speaks on behalf of the "veteran from upper Moesia"—is intentionally universalized. This character is crafted to bridge different temporal planes. While space typically serves as a starting point for initiating a more intricate process, it is clear that the Limes refers to the fortified border of the Roman Empire, particularly in the context of the Balkan region. However, this geographical aspect is not the primary focus of the author. Hamović, guided by his cultural interests as a literature scholar and a genuine admirer of tradition, seeks a *worldview* that appears to have been lost or at least marginalized among our people. Today, few inhabitants of old Illyricum remain "[in]sensitive to moral questions" ("Illyricum").

Visiting spiritually and historically sensitive border areas, while seeking to establish signs of recognition in interactions with foreign cultures, the poetic "I," framed within a Wallendenfelsian perspective, often finds itself in a state of

defeat. For instance, in a poem addressing Methodius, one of the fathers of Slavic literacy, the speaker bitterly notes that today "our answers are neither rational nor canonical [...] From whoredom and crookedness, from squeezed malice, / We do not change a bit—Avars, chaotic" (in "Over the Excavations in Sirmium, Where Perhaps the Grave of Methodius of Thessaloniki Is"). Similarly, the devastating aftermath of the bombing of the National Library reflects the "self-forgetfulness" of the communist generation, as seen in "Kosančić's Wreath, the Remains of the Library." The situation in Dorćol highlights that the flow of people and goods does not disrupt "neither the pogrom of the spirit nor Baruch" (in "Dorćol").

We should highlight the poems in which Hamović skilfully "occupies" the persona of a historical figure. By speaking through that person, he enables the expression of various ideas, often critical of the present. A prime example is "The Secret of Nikola Dobrović," where universal human characteristics such as fear and envy are emphasized. Despite often traversing very distant temporal points, the boundaries discussed in *The Displaced* become permeable or entirely removed when necessary. The special value of this poetry lies in the author's strong sensitivity to national history, which never leads him to lose touch with contemporary issues. The oscillating poetic pendulum consistently connects both ends. This is also evident in poems like "Gardoš," where the "spokesperson" is an inanimate object—a fortress symbolizing a historical landmark, Zemun Tower, that overlooks the Danube, an important border river, and bears witness to the passage of different eras while being consumed by "[th] oughts of some millennials." A similar process of personification, albeit with different semantic implications, occurs in the poem "Jugo 55 lux."

The book contains a collection of poems that explore a subject's "sentimental upbringing." The family home in Kraljevo serves as a nurturing environment where a unique lyrical sensitivity develops. This home is distinctly separated from the outside world, reminiscent of Ćopić's style. The atmosphere within the home offers refuge and security, while the city of Kraljevo represents a familiar space that frames warm and lyrically beautiful visions of an intimate world, where the central figures are the close family members: mother, father, and, ultimately, the son. The poems are written with exceptional attention to euphony and feature carefully selected "pure" vocabulary. Works such as "My Mother" and "Vitanija" clearly evoke warmth and emotion. They are so vivid and artistically crafted that, even when they aren't autobiographical, we can still perceive the essence of a subject who, in Lalić's words, views life through the eyes of a "former boy." He brought something precious from his native land, which the current era, as it is, nullifies and/or does not recognize.

The value system on which contemporary technical civilization rests is not suitable for him at all. The deep conflict with an era characterized by

simulacra and manipulation—where so much emphasis is placed on what is material and fleeting—induces spiritual and existential anxiety. The latest cycle, titled "Particles," consists of four new poems that reflect on how science has succeeded in atomizing even a single second into countless fragments, highlighting the issue that our perception of time is becoming increasingly limited. While we dominate nearly every aspect of the vast universe, we often neglect our inner selves. As a result, the true lyrical self finds itself in a continuous struggle "on its own, fortified Limes," as expressed in *The Displaced Person*.

The phrase "[h]omes we make for ourselves, the last ramparts" ("Illyricum") suggests that within each of us lies a refuge that cannot be abandoned. When the narrator exchanges his native Kraljevo for the quiet surroundings of Bežanijska Kosa—an area symbolically linked to migrations—it represents an archetypal point on the spiritual and historical map of the Serbian nation. As he seeks a connection to his origins in the motherland, particularly in Republika srpska, he realizes, "everything here renounces me / And no one to receive me" ("The Road to Kozluk"). Hamović's portrayal of *The Displaced Person* reflects this understanding: human beings are not tied to rigid borders; instead, as Waldenfels suggests, they respond to their borders in various ways. The line, "boy, you key ancestor" ("Samotok"), poetically implies that the emotional and intellectual baggage we carry with us early in life contains the answers to the burdens we face later. Lalić's "former boy" remains "in the memo-sphere" ("The Seventies"), struggling desperately to rescue his memories from oblivion.

While childhood remains an inexhaustible source of poetic inspiration, and although the intimate poetry within *The Displaced Person* has particular value, it is important to keep the broader perspective in mind. Dragan Hamović, who effectively honours numerous memorial sites—both marked and unmarked—reminds us that we must not forget our glorious past. He has established himself as one of the most prominent contemporary representatives of patriotic poetry in our country. Having matured as a poet, Hamović's work is filled with impactful and memorable universal insights. For instance, he states, "[w]ounds are the key human regulations, / The content under everyone's veil" ("Military Persons") and "[m]an is a novelty without great newness" ("The Cleaner in the Museum or The Artist is Absent"). Above all, Hamović exemplifies modern lyricism in the Eliotian sense, showing gratitude to his literary predecessors. A deep dive into the intertextual connections with the classics of Serbian literature reveals thematic variations, including Lalić's motif of summer and, following the example of Momčilo Nastasijević, the urban hellish grotto that seemingly consumes everything. This can be seen in the specific verses and overall poetic form of Dis's "Dungeon" and Raičković's "Stone Lullaby."

Considering the significant changes made to the unusually high number of poems, as well as the thoughtful organization of the book—its structure, thematic harmony, and incorporation of entirely new pieces—it is accurate to say that *The Displaced Person* serves not only as an anthology, or a collection of selected and new poems, but also as an independent, cohesive, and innovative poetic work.

Stevan JOVIĆEVIĆ

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

WORLDS OF VLADIMIR PIŠTALO

Vladimir Pištalo—Poem of the Three Worlds, a collection, ed. Selimir Radulović and Dragana D. Jovanović, Matica srpska Library, Novi Sad 2023

The proceedings on the opus of Vladimir Pištalo were created by gathering various work from the Round table which is a part of the Matica srpska Library "Golden Book" Award, the winner of who for 2023 is Vladimir Pištalo. The award was presented during the celebration of Matica srpska Library Day, April 28th 2023. On this occasion, the opening speech was given by the director of the Matica srpska Library, Selimir Radulović, whose talk at the same time represents the first text in the publication. Firmly believing that the truth must not sleep and fade, Radulović calls for vigilance of the spirit and clarity of memory, turning to the word of God and seeking advice and guidance in it on how to remain honest in the world in which the label *honest man* is an anthropological or linguistic anachronism. Following these introductory remarks, the example is given from the Minutes of the Jury for the Golden Book Award of the Matica srpska Library.

The proceedings include fifteen original works, whose authors have shed light on the most important elements of Vladimir Pištalo's prose, from multiple perspectives and with different skills of literary text interpretation, often offering fascinating insights resulting from a careful reading, from an interesting approach and from a hermeneutical study of his work. Editor-in-Chief Selimir Radulović and editor Dragana D. Jovanović have meaningfully edited texts coming from the scholars of a widest possible generational range.

The collection is framed by the texts dedicated to the Mediterranean, Venice and its carnival in the work of the eminent writer; the first is authored by Milisav Savić, and the last by Svetlana Šeatović. The text "Karnevalsk obrt"

by Milisav Savić brings a carnival view of Venice, and concisely and clearly points out the elements of carnivalization, reflected both as a view of the world of our heroes and as a narrative process. In addition to that, the author notes that the writer of *Serenissima* confirms the thesis that "literature is nothing more than a commentary on what has been written", since in this work Pištalo conducts a dialogue with numerous artists who have—in one way or another—marked and recorded the history of this queen of the sea, as Ivan V. Lalić often called her. The text about Venice and *Venice* is followed by the work of Nataša Anđelković "The Place of the Mediterranean and of the Masks in the Opus of Vladimir Pištalo". The author sees the aforementioned novel as "an essential work in which the Mediterranean themes in Pištalo's opus are grouped and from which they branch out". She also claims that *Venice* represents the starting point of "a specific, fragmentary "bildungs" narrative", and that the mosaic of different narrative perspectives thus assembled builds a culture that has "the outlines of globality". The work is meaningfully placed among the first as a starting point for subsequent writings, since the problem of fragmentariness will be discussed and analyzed in the later text by Ana Stišović Milovanović, and the phenomenon of globality will be described in detail in the texts by Vladislava Gordić Petković, Mina Đurić, and Nenad Šaponja. Noticing both the semantic potential of carnival and the symbolic charge of the mask, Nataša Anđelković connects this commonplace event of today, although full of historical and symbolic heritage, with the archetypal initiation of the hero, whose identity is formed in the chronotope of the carnival, described by Bakhtin. The problem of identity will also find its place in the works that follow (Žaklina Duvnjak Radić, Svetlana Šeatović), as well as the motif of the mask (Jelena Marićević Balać and Nina Stokić). Writing about the mask, Nataša Anđelković traces its meanings, roles and symbolic potential in the novels *Tesla, a Portrait Among the Masks* and *Poem of Three Worlds*. In the first novel, carnival masks, the author writes, underline additional meanings of the characterization of the heroes and provide value judgment of their cultural roles of the time, and as an example she cites the character of Edison, who represents a grotesque figure of a deaf old man who never bathes. The heroine of the third novel, Ozana Bolica, is also perceived within her Quixotic dimension, during the carnival, adorned with a mask, while the author thus points out the constant motifs of Pištalo's prose the reader can count on, something which should never be disregarded if one strives for a hermeneutic experience. The story of the Mediterranean continues with Svetlana Šeatović, whose "Mediterranean Horizons in the Prose of Vladimir Pištalo" introductory part provides a literary-historical overview of the motifs of the carnival, and especially the place of the carnival in Venice as a cultural phenomenon in the Serbian literature. The author pays particular attention to the novels *Venice* and *Poem of the Three Worlds*, pointing out the uniqueness of the character of Ozana Bolica, a heroine with a picaresque role of a "manly girl", whose counterpart in the Serbian

literature is found only in the more recent novel *Privrženost* by Drago Kekanović. The author also emphasizes that "following the novel *Venice* (2011), Pištalo's focus develops in *Poem of the Three Worlds* (2023) into the simultaneity of origin and the first systematic conceptualization of spatially determined heroes."

Zdenka Valent Belić, with her playful, seductive style, adorned with garlands of carefully selected metaphors, originating in the writings of Vladimir Pištalo, provides a brief but effective and important piece about stylistic figures in the writer's opus. By following the footsteps of José Ortega y Gasset, the author anticipates the idea that poets are the wonder of the world and cites his words that they are the people for whom gray cats are not gray, and Vladimir Pištalo is among these "brilliant masters of subtlety". This is the only text in the proceedings which deals with the language of the writer's own language, and Jelena Marićević Balać and Nina Stokić devoted a part of their work to the analysis of his style and language. It can be noted, therefore, what Zdenka Valent Belić began by observing the lyrical in the epic of Vladimir Pištalo's prose, paves the way for future interpretations.

Vladislava Gordić Petković's work "Transnational and Cosmopolitan in the Prose of Vladimir Pištalo", initially offers an overview of the meaning of the terms *transnational* and *cosmopolitan,* and from there on comes the concept of *foreignness*, concluding that the theme of foreignness has not yet found its adequate response in the Serbian prose. Referring to the novels *Tesla*, *a Portrait Among the Masks* and *Venice*, the author writes in a recognizable style characterized by precision, meticulous analysis and imaginative comparisons: "[...] Vladimir Pištalo writes a picture-book for adults, with sleepwalking-dreamy prose that evokes the stylistic embrace of Crnjanski and Murakami, but in which there is not a trace of epigonism." The author also made a comparative analysis of these two Pištalo's novels with *Herzog* by Saul Bellow and *Garden in Venice* by Mileta Prodanović, thereby offering a wide range of potential, and perhaps still unread, layers of Vladimir Pištalo's prose, as well as of other writers. This text is somehow joined, deepening the given issue, by the text by Mina Đurić, who views the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds* as an example of a global novel of the Serbian literature. The author builds a challenging and exciting text on an adequate and exhaustive literary and scientific basis. Multiculturalism, the choice of ports as leading chronotopes, oceanism and Mediterraneanism, anemology, are just some of the features of a global novel that are also found within *Poem of the Three Worlds*, as well as the "deep literary-hermeneutical trust" that Ozana attributes to the text in which she finds personal identification. On the trail of the global novel and globalization, Nenad Šaponja also wrote a text with an indicative title—"Imaginations of the Colonial and Neocolonial in the Novels *Poem of the Three Worlds* and *Today's Sun*—the Myth of the World's Interconnectedness". The author claims that with his latest novel, Pištalo "enters the global

world competition more than equally". However, the less fortunate topics that this author deals with are certainly colonialism and neocolonialism, which are always somehow linked to globalization. Šaponja sees globalization, which is understood in the colonial order of things in the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds*, as a sign of today's neocolonialism, which he equates with the slavery of the modern society, to whom we belong. As one can understand from the text, the author believes that Pištalo views globalization in a more poetic and humane way than the aforementioned. Above all, Ozana's wandering, impermanence, adaptation, attitude towards the Other and towards foreignness, the ability to appropriate the wavering, entangled identities, and the possibility of poetically calling anything a poem, is seen by Šaponja as characteristics of the myth of the interconnectedness of the world. In this regard, he clearly evokes Crnjanski, and at the end he says that this is "perhaps our first Sumatraist novel".

The problem of identity that the character of Ozana Bolica carries within her has been addressed by many authors represented in these proceedings, most precisely by Žaklina Duvnjak Radić. The author has the knowledge derived from serious scientific apparatus, from which she reads the problem of creating, transforming and losing identity and is consistently showing it in the character of Ozana Bolica. The author claims that Ozana is "a true hero in the spiritual skill of understanding the other", despite the dramatic transformation and the compulsion to maintain herself as someone or something (and even a poem) in the vortex of precisely the foreignness mentioned by Vladislava Gordić Petković. Ozana, the author writes, survives with the help of "creating a narrative about herself". Žaklina Duvnjak Radić does not stop only at the analysis of the character, but in the footsteps of Foucault and Deleuze, points to the macro-level of the novel, and thus Ozana Bolica's identity crisis announces the "disintegration of the solid image of the world and of the man" and the postmodernist problems of the solid definition of the human Self without taking into account the co-relationship with the "other", no matter how much that other may be prone to impermanence and the impossibility of definition, no matter how much it may be.

Slađana Ilić, Vanja Kovačević and Jovana Milovančević write about the novel *Millennium in Belgrade*. While Vanja Kovačević and Jovana Milovančević deal with the image of the city, Slađana Ilić writes about the meaning of sleep, and together with the other two authors, relates sleep to the constitution of the heroes' identity signifiers, but also of the city in which these heroes move, while the meaning of the city, imaginary or real, is interpreted in particular by Jovana Milovančević. Vanja Kovačević, through a careful reading of this work, comes to the conclusion that the heroes are actually small cities within, and ends her work on the trail of Nastasijević's poetics, writing that "the city does not eat them, nor do they eat the city—they dine together". Since Belgrade is both real and imaginary space, which opens

towards the transcendent but never reaches it, the heroes are shaped by precisely this kind of dreamed, although unfulfilled, mythical, although also terrible (the collapse of Yugoslavia) space. Slađana Ilić writes on this subject: "Just like Yugoslavia was not based on the real *Axis mundi*, and therefore collapsed, for the same reasons the pillars of the intimate world of the heroes of this novel also collapsed." By listing the signifier elements of both the real and imaginary city, Jovana Milovančević responds in a manner to the problem of the city that the other two authors have touched upon in their works.

The concept of fragmentation, which Mina Đurić wrote about as one of the characteristics of the global novel, was additionally presented by Ana Stišović Milovanović in her work. The phenomenon of fragmentation is successfully implemented and semantically supported in the epistolary novel *Today's Sun*. The sender enriches their own narrative in many ways with fragments, the author writes, thus having the opportunity to reflect on various ideas and thoughts of Ivo Andrić, touching upon the question of essence, the question of the omnipresence of evil in the world. Reading the aforementioned novel, but also the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds*, the author comes to the conclusion that the writer "insists on the essential feature of his own poetics—literature does not offer answers, but opens up the possibility of co-creation in the knowledge of the world and of one's own self". The author also writes about the concept of intertextuality, which is very much present in the work of Vladimir Pištalo.

A very special approach to the study of Vladimir Pištalo's prose is found in the text by Jelena Marićević Balać and Nina Stokić. What the authors wrote in the introduction, that the poetics of the Baroque is undoubtedly important for understanding Vladimir Pištalo's work, they proved by the end. It is important to add that other authors have also touched upon the Baroque in Pištalo's opus and this work represents the response to what others have suspected. Referring to eminent Baroque scholars, the authors take us through a short course in Baroque poetics, and with Pištalo himself they notice the Baroque semanticization of water, the ball, the circle, they write about the motif of the mask, about doubles and the theatricalization of space, and point to the Baroque philosophy and the Baroque view of the world in which the macroworld is reflected in the microworld and vice versa. Also, there is the importance of ancient myth and tragedy, which are in agreement with Baroque poetics. Pištalo's sentence is also Baroque in terms of the Concetistic style, claim the authors. The authors also explain what the fate of Tesla's new polis is and how and why this ancient ideal is collapsing.

Zoran Đerić gives an overview of all dramatizations and screen adaptations of Vladimir Pištalo's novel. In addition to closely following all efforts to dramatize certain works in the text, the author introduces us to the criticisms and interviews that accompanied the performances of the plays. Before dedicating himself to Pištalo, Zoran Đerić offers a review of the dramatizations

of world classics and thus places our writer in their company. The author saves the play *Tesla, the Inventor*, premiered on January 22nd 2022, from oblivion by writing down between the lines the entire cast, as well as all the people who participated in the preparation of the play, from the director to the stage technicians. He does the same for the play *Millennium in Belgrade*, premiered on July 6th 2023. Having also seen the novel *Poem of the Three Worlds* on the great stage, Zoran Đerić concludes that Pištalo "accepted the dramatic form as a constructive factor in his works".

The last two texts in the proceedings are Đorđe Pisarev's text "Is There More Than One Vladimir Pištalo?" and the poetic note of the writer himself with the indicative title "The Great Blue Circle". Pisarev writes his story with the aim of placing Pištalo side by side with Pavić and Pekić. Pištalo (the former) believes that "reality is an ore from which, through thorough washing, a dream is obtained", and Pekić and Pavić, sitting in their leather armchairs, skim through his novel with a cigar, commenting on how they would not have written it differently themselves.

Vladimir Pištalo's short Sumatrian statement, "The Great Blue Circle", gives an indication of what Nenad Šaponja also wrote, an indication of the great Sumatrian novel of the Serbian literature that has (perhaps) been written, and perhaps is yet to come.

The collection is an extremely valuable read and a tribute to the work of Vladimir Pištalo. Worker bees diligently gather around Matica srpska, creating honey-bearing words that represent a cure in the age of blasphemy and the age of drifting into neo-colonial slavery, while Serbian literature, due to the gratitude with which these proceedings are introduced by Selimir Radulović, a densely-packed honeycomb promises century-long sustenance to posterity.

Jelena ZELENOVIĆ

Translated from the Serbian by
Ivan Filipović

DAVID ALBAHARI (Peć, March 15, 1948 – Belgrade, July 30, 2023). He was a Serbian writer, translator, and academician. He mainly wrote novels and short stories, often autobiographical. He translated from English and was a member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Published books – Collections of stories: *Porodično vreme* [Family Time], 1973; *Obične priče* [Ordinary Stories], 1978; *Opis smrti* [Description of Death], 1982; *Fras u šupi* [Seizure in the Shed], 1984; *Jednostavnost* [Simplicity], 1988; *Pelerina* [Cloak], 1993; *Izabrane priče* [Selected Stories], 1994; *Neobične priče* [Unusual Stories], 1999; *Drugi jezik* [Another Language], 2003; *Senke* [Shadows], 2006; *Svake noći u drugom* gradu [Every Night in Another City], 2008; *21 priča o sreći* [21 Stories of Happiness], 2017; *Dijaspora i druge stvari* [Diaspora and Other Things], 2019; *Hoćemo još malih priča, još, još i još* [We want more short stories, more, more, and more], 2020; *Knjiga o fotografiji* [A Book on Photography], 2021; Novels: *Sudija Dimitrijević* [Judge Dimitrijević], 1978; *Cink* [Zinc], 1988; *Kratka knjiga* [A Short Book], 1993; *Snežni čovek* (*Snow Man*), 1995; *Mamac* (*Bait*), 1996; *Mrak* [Darkness] 1997, 2008; *Gec i Majer* (*Götz and Meyer*), 1998; *Svetski putnik* [*Globetrotter*], 2001; *Pijavice* (*Leeches*), 2006; *Ludvig* [Ludwig], 2007; *Brat* [Brother], 2008; *Ćerka* [Daughter], 2010; *Kontrolni punkt* (*Checkpoint*), 2011; *Životinjsko carstvo* [Animal Kingdom], 2015; *Danas je sreda* [Today is Wednesday], 2022; Essays: *Prepisivanje sveta* [Copying the World], 1997; *Teret* [Burden], 2004; *Dijaspora i druge stvari* [Diaspora and Other Things], 2008.

STOJAN ĐORĐIĆ (b. Modriča, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1950). He writes literary criticism, essays, studies, and textbooks. Published books: *Nadahnuća i značenja* [Inspirations and Meanings], 1979; *O pesničkim knjigama* [On Poetic Books], 2001; *Prevođenje i čitanje Andrića* [Translating and Reading Andrić], 2003; *Tri kritike* [Three Criticisms], 2004; *Pesničko pripovedanje – književnokritički portret Radovana Belog Markovića, 1–2* [Poetic Narration – A Literary Critical Portrait of Radovan Beli Marković, 1–2], 2006, 2012; *Kreativno pisanje, čitanje i interpretacija – opšta teorija kreativnog pisanja sa primerima* [Creative Writing, Reading, and Interpretation – A General Theory of Creative Writing with Examples], 2009; *Sličnosti i razlike*

– *ogledi iz uporedne kritike* [Similarities and Differences – Comparative Criticism Essays], 2011; *Umetnička egzistencija – pisac Pavle* Ugrinov [Artistic Existence – Writer Pavle Ugrinov], 2015; *Irealističko doba – srpska književnost od 1990. do 2010: kritička prolegomena* [The Non-Realistic Age – Serbian Literature from 1990 to 2010: Critical Prolegomena], 2015; *Kaligrafija metafore – književnokritički portret Dragana Jovanovića Danilova* [Calligraphy of Metaphor – A Literary-Critical Portrait of Dragan Jovanović Danilov], 2017, 2023 (revised and supplemented edition); *Ivo Andrić – Homer modernog doba: književnokritička studija o romanu „Na Drini ćuprija"* [Ivo Andrić – Homer of the Modern Age: A Literary-Critical Study of the Novel "The Bridge on the Drina"], 2018; *Nikole Miloševića ukrštaj filozofije i književnosti – prilog poetici srpskog neomodernizma* [Nikola Milošević's Intersection of Philosophy and Literature – A Contribution to the Poetics of Serbian Neomodernism], 2021; *Imanentna teorija književnosti – prolegomena sa priloženim analitičkim i kritičkim interpretacijama* [Immanent Theory of Literature – Prolegomena with Attached Analytical and Critical Interpretations], 2022; *Let iznad poente: ultrakritike* [Flight Above the Point: Ultracritics], 2023. He has compiled several books.

MINA ĐURIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1987). She works as an assistant professor at the Department of Serbian Literature with South Slavic Literatures of the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade. She defended her doctoral dissertation titled „Modernizacija srpske proze 20. veka u odnosu na stvaralačku recepciju književnog dela Džejmsa Džojsa" [Modernization of the 20th-Century Serbian Prose in Relation to the Creative Reception of the Literary Work of James Joyce] at the Faculty of Philology in 2017. She has published dozens of scientific papers in national and international publications. She is the author of the monograph *Transmuzikalizacija teksta: muzika srpske modernističke književnosti* [Transmusicalization of the Text: The Music of Serbian Modernist Literature], 2022 and one of the authors of the book *Slovenska susretanja: jug i zapad* [Slavic Encounters: South and West], 2021. She has edited the publications *Na trepavici neznani: izbor iz poezije Vaska Pope* [The Unknown on the Eyelash: Selection from the Poetry of Vasko Popa], 2020 and *Venac prkosa: izbor iz dela Dragoslava Mihailovića* [Wreath of Defiance: A Selection from the Works of Dragoslav Mihailović], 2021. She has edited and translated Robert Hodel's book *Worte Vom Marmor – Leben und Werk des Schriftstellers Dragoslav Mihailović / Reči od mramora: Dragoslav Mihailović – život i delo* [Marble Words: Dragoslav Mihailović – Life and Work], 2020. Đurić co-authored several readers for high schools. She is an executive editor in the Vukova zadužbina [The Endowment of Vuk Karadžić] for editions in German, Russian, French, and English language and one of the authors of the trilingual digital exhibition *Vuk i Nemci* [Vuk and the Germans] (in Serbian, English and German) and other works.

DRAGAN HAMOVIĆ (b. Kraljevo, 1970) writes poetry, essays, and literary reviews. Poetry books: *Mrakovi, ruge* [Dark Moments, Mockery], 1992; *Nameštenik* [An Employee], 1994; *Matična knjiga* [Civil Register], 2007; *Album ranih stihova* [An Album of Early Verse], 2007; *Žeženo i nežno* [With Fervour and Tenderness], 2012; *Zmaj u jajetu – naivne pesme* [A Dragon in the Egg: Naïve Poems], 2013; *Tiska – pesme i poneki zapis* [The Rush: Poems and a Note Here and There], 2015; *Meko jezgro – pesme s pratećom pričom* [Soft Kernel: Poems with Accompanying Tales], 2016; *Popravljam uspomene* [*I Mend Recollections*, 2017]; *Bežanijska Kosa – pesme i venac malih priča* [Bežanijska Kosa.[1] Poems and a Garland of Minor Tales], 2018; *Izvod iz matične knjige* [A Certificate from the Civil Register], 2019; *Rođen kao zmaj: pesme dečje i nimalo naivne* [Born like a dragon: poems childish and not at all naïve], 2019; *Izmeštenik* [Displaced], 2023; *Lekcije iz pamćenja: oktobar u Kragujevcu* [Lessons from Memory: October in Kragujevac], 2024. Collections of essays and reviews: *Stvari ovdašnje* [Local Affairs], 1998; *Pesničke stvari* [Matters of Poetry], 1999; *Poslednje i prvo* [The Ultimate and the Foremost], 2003; *S obe strane* [From Both Sides], 2006; *Leto i citati – poezija i poetika Jovana Hristića* [Summertime and Citations: The Poetry and Poetics of Jovan Hristić], 2008; *Pesma od početka* [Poem from the Beginning], 2009; *Raičković – pesnički razvoj i poetičko okruženje* [Raičković: The Poet's Evolution and His Poetic Milieu], 2011; *Matični prostor* [Home Territory], 2012; *Put ka uspravnoj zemlji – moderna srpska poezija i njena kulturna samosvest* [The Way to an Upright Country: Modern Serbian Poetry and Its Cultural Self-Consciousness], 2016; *Momo traži Kapora – problem identiteta u Kaporovoj prozi* [Momo in Search of Kapor: The Identity Issue in Kapor's Prose], 2016; *Preko veka – iz srpske poezije XX i XXI stoleća* [A Century and Beyond – From the Serbian Poetry of the 20th and 21st Centuries], 2017; *Lica jednine* [Persons Singular], 2018. *Znaci raspoznavanja – prilozi za samorazumevanje srpske književnosti* [Signs of Recognition – Contributions to the Self-Understanding of Serbian Literature], 2020; *Lični prilozi – o srpskoj književnosti i nekim kulturnim pitanjima* [Personal Contributions – On Serbian Literature and Some Cultural Issues], 2023. Dr. Hamović has also compiled a number of books.

DUŠAN IVANIĆ (b. Grubačevo Polje near Gračac, Croatia, 1946). Literary historian and essayist dealing with Serbian realism and romanticism. Published books: *Srpska pripovijetka između romantike i realizma* [Serbian Short Story Between Romanticism and Realism], 1976; *Zabavno-poučna periodika „Javor" i „Stražilovo"* [Entertainment and Educational Periodicals "Javor" and "Stražilovo"], 1987; *Modeli književnog govora* [Models of Literary

[1] *Bežanijska kosa* is a residential quarter in the Municipality of New Belgrade, the City of Belgrade, on the left bank of the Sava River. – *Translator's note.*

Speech], 1990; *Srpski realizam* [Serbian Realism], 1996; *Književnost Srpske Krajine* [Literature of Serbian Krajina], 1998; *Osnovi tekstologije* [Fundamentals of Textology], 2001; *Svijet i priča* [The World and the Story], 2002; *„Starmali" Jovana Jovanovića Zmaja* (studija i izbor tekstova) ["Starmali" by Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (a study and selection of texts)], 2005; *Ka poetici srpskog realizma* [Towards the Poetics of Serbian Realism], 2007; *Ogledi o Steriji* [Essays on Steria], 2007; *Književna periodika srpskog realizma* [Literary Periodicals of Serbian Realism], 2008; *Vrela u vrleti – o književnoj baštini Srba u Hrvatskoj* [Springs in the Crag – On the Literary Heritage of Serbs in Croatia], 2009; *Ka genezi srpske poezije – pregledi i studije* [Towards the Genesis of Serbian Poetry – Reviews and Studies], 2011; *U matici priče – o djelu Jovana Radulovića* [In the Heart of the Story – On the Work of Jovan Radulović], 2013; *Zašto čitati Dositeja? – Dositej Obradović i srpska kultura* [Why Read Dositej? – Dositej Obradović and Serbian Culture], 2015; *Događaj i priča – srpska memoarsko-autobiografska proza* [Event and Story – Serbian Memoir-Autobiographical Prose], 2015; *Njegoš i Ljubiša – istorijskopoetičke studije* [Njegoš and Ljubiša – Historical and Poetic Studies], 2023. He has compiled a number of books by Serbian writers (Sima Milutinović Sarajlija, Đura Jakšić, Đorđe Marković Koder, Miloš Crnjanski, Branko Radičević, Laza Kostić, Simo Matavulj, Milovan Vidaković, Dositej Obradović, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić, and others), as well as several anthologies.

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STEVAN JOVIĆEVIĆ (b. Kraljevo, 1996). He graduated from the Department of Serbian Literature with South Slavic Literatures at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, where he is currently pursuing his master's degree. His research interests encompass literary theory and 20th-century literature. He publishes literary criticism and essays in periodicals.

JELENA MARIĆEVIĆ BALAĆ (b. Kladovo, 1988) is a philologist (Serbian studies) practising research in the fields of the Serbian literature of the 17th and 18th centuries, as well as avant-garde and neo-avant-garde. She

writes poetry, fiction, studies, essays, and reviews. Poetry books: *Bez dlake na srcu* [Pulling no Punches], 2020; *Arsenal* [Arsenal], 2023. Books published: *Legitimacija za signalizam – pulsiranje signalizma* [Entitled to Practise Signalism – Signalism Pulsating], 2016; *Tragom bisernih minđuša srpske književnosti (renesansnost i baroknost srpske književnosti)* [In the Wake of the Pearl Earrings of the Serbian Literature (The Renaissance and Baroque Character of the Serbian Literature)], 2018; *Ka osmehu Evrope. Savremeno srpsko, poljsko i češko pesništvo u komparativnom ključu* [Towards the Smile of Europe. Contemporary Serbian, Polish, and Czech poetry in a Comparative Key], 2023. Maričević Balać has compiled a number of books.

DRAGOSLAV MIHAILOVIĆ (Ćuprija, November 17, 1930 – Belgrade, March 12, 2023) was a Serbian writer and academician. He was a novelist, screenwriter, playwright, and a full member of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). He received many literary awards and recognitions. His literary work includes short stories, novels, and plays. His works have been translated into several foreign languages. Published books – Collections of short stories: *Frede, laku noć* [Goodnight, Fred], 1967; *Lilika* [Lilika], 1983; *Uhvati zvezdu padalicu* [Catch a Falling Star], 1983; *Odlomci o zlotvorima* [Fragments About Villains], 1996; *Vrednost ljubavi* [The Value of Love], 1996; *Najlepše priče Dragoslava Mihailovića* [The Most Beautiful Stories by Dragoslav Mihailović], 2003; *Boginje* [Chickenpox], 2009; *Preživljavanje* [Survival], 2010; Novels: *Kad su cvetale tikve* (*When Pumpkins Blossomed*), 1968; *Petrijin venac* [Petrija's Wreath], 1975; *Čizmaši* [The Foot Soldiers], 1983; *Goli otok* [Goli Otok], 1990; *Lov na stenice* [The Bedbug Hunt], 1993; *Gori Morava* [The Morava River Burns], 1994; *Goli otok*, knjige 2 i 3 [Goli Otok, books 2 and 3], 1995; *Barabe, konji i gegule* [Rogues, Horses, and Bumpkins], 1997; *Zlotvori* [Evildoers], 1997; *Kratka istorija satiranja* [A Short History of Devastation], 1999; *Jalova jesen* [Barren Autumn], 2000; *Crveno i plavo* [Red and Blue], 2001; *Treće proleće* [The Third Spring] , 2002; *Kratka istorija satiranja* [A Short History of Devastation], 2005; *Majstorsko pismo* [Master's Letter], 2007; *Goli otok 4* [Goli Otok 4], 2011; *Goli otok* 5 [Goli Otok 5], 2012; Plays: *Uvođenje u posao* [Introduction to Work], 1983; *Skupljač* [The Collector], 2011; Essays: *Vreme za povratak* [Time to Return], 2006.

BRATISLAV R. MILANOVIĆ (b. Aleksinac, 1950). He writes prose, poetry, and literary criticism. Novel: *Potok* [Stream], 2001. Collection of stories: *Tajne svetlih i senovitih svetova* [Secrets of Bright and Shadowy Worlds], 2015. Collections of poems: *Jelen u prozoru* [Deer in the Window], 1975; *Klatno* [Pendulum], 1980; *Neman* [Monster], 1987; *Balkanski pevač* [Balkan Singer], 1995; *Vrata u polju* [A Door in the Field], 1999; *Cîntãretul balcanic / Balkanski pevač* (bilingual), 2001; *Silazak* [Descent], 2004; *Male lampe u tamnini* [Small Lamps in the Darkness], 2006; *Nepotreban letopis* / *The Unnecessary Chronicle*

(bilingual), 2007; *Pisma iz prastare budućnosti* [Letters from an Ancient Future], 2009; *Door's in a Medow*, 2010; *Lettere da un futuro remoto*, 2012; *Cricket in December* (selected and new), 2013; *Small Lamps in the Darkness* / *Mali lampi vo temninata* (bilingual, selection), 2015; *Odron svetlosti* [Lightfall], 2017; *Lettere da un futuro remoto* / *Pisma iz prastare budućnosti* [Letters from an Ancient Future] (bilingual), 2017; *Pesme I* [Poems I], 2019; *Plava meduza* [Blue Jellyfish], 2022; *Atelje snova: izbarane pesme* [Dream Atelier: Selected Poems], 2024. He has compiled several books.

IVAN NEGRIŠORAC (b. Trstenik, 1956). He writes poetry, prose, plays, studies, and literary criticism. Editor-in-Chief of journal *Letopis Matice srpske* (Matica Srpska Chronicle) from 2005 to 2012. President of the Matica srpska since April 2012. A foreign member of the Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republika Srpska since late 2021. Poetry books: *Trula jabuka* [Rotting Apple], 1981; *Rakljar. Želudac* [Dowser. Stomach], 1983; *Zemljopis* [Geography], 1986; *Toplo, hladno* [Hot, Cold], 1990; *Abrakadabra* [Abracadabra], 1990; *Hop* [Hop-Skipping], 1993; *Veznici* [Conjunctions], 1995; *Prilozi* [Contributions], 2002; *Potajnik* [Secret Keeper], 2007; *Svetilnik* [The Torchbearer], 2010; *Kamena čtenija* [Petrographic Readings], 2013; *Čtenija* (izbor) [Readings (selection)], 2015; *Matični mleč* [Royal Jelly], 2016; *Izložba oblaka* (izbor i nove) [Cloud Exhibition (selected and new)], 2017; *Ogledala oka nedremana* [Mirrors of the Sleepless Eye], 2019. Novel: *Andjeli umiru* [Angels Are Dying], 1998. Plays: *Fredi umire* [Freddy is Dying], 1987; Kuc-kuc [Knock-Knock], 1989; *Istraga je u toku, zar ne?* [Investigation is Under Way, Isn't It?], 2000; *Vidiš li svice na nebu* [Do You See the Fireflies in the Sky?], 2006. Studies: *Legitimacija za beskućnike. Srpska neoavangardna poezija – poetički identitet i razlike* [ID for the Homeless. Serbian Neo-Avant-Garde Poetry: Poetic Identity and Differences], 1996; *Lirska aura Jovana Dučića* [The Lyrical Aura of Jovan Dučić], 2009; *Istraga predaka – iskušenja kolektivnog i individualnog opstanka* [Ancestral Investigation: Temptations of Collective and Individual Survival], 2018; *Njegoševski pokret otpora* [Njegoš-Like Resistance Movement], 2020; *Poezija Jovana Dučića – od empirijskog negativiteta do lirske metafizike* [The Poetry of Jovan Dučić: From Empirical Negativity to Lyrical Metaphysics], 2022; *Buntovnik s razlogom: umetnost pripovedanja u „Autobiografiji – o drugima" Borislava Mihajlovića Mihiza* [Rebel with a Cause: The Art of Storytelling in Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz's "Autobiography – About Others"], 2024. In 2023, his *Izabrana dela I–VII* [Selected Works, I–VII] were published. Negrišorac chairs the Editorial Board of *Srpska Enciklopedija* (A Serbian Encyclopedia), Book 1, Vols. 1–2 (2010–11), Book 2 (2013), and Book 3, Vols. 1–2 (2018, 2022).

ALEKSANDAR PETROVIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1956). He graduated in 1974 and received his magister's degree in 1981 from the Faculty of Philology in

Belgrade. He earned his doctorate in 2003 from the University of Belgrade's Institute for Multidisciplinary Research. An anthropologist, culturologist, and philosopher, he is the vice-president of the Man and the Biosphere Committee of the National Commission for Cooperation with UNESCO. He is also the president of the Serbian Society for the History of Science, a member of the Education Committee of the European Society for the History of Science in Paris, the secretary of the Board for Dynamics of the Climate System and the Work of Milutin Milanković at the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), and an associate of the Board for the Study of Life and Work of Serbian Scientists at SASA. Published books: *Osunčavanje i klima – Milutin Milanković i matematička teorija promene klime* [Insolation and Climate: Milutin Milanković and the Mathematical Theory of Climate Change], 2002; *Analogija i entropija – filozofija prirode i harmonije Laze Kostića i Koste Stojanovića* [Analogy and Entropy: The Philosophy of Nature and Harmony of Laza Kostić and Kosta Stojanović], 2005; *Ciklusi i zapisi – opus solis Milutina Milankovića* [Cycles and Records – O*pus Solis* of Milutin Milanković], 2009; *Od Nalande do Hilandara / Opis prve biblioteke indijske kulture u Srbiji* (koautorke Gordana Đoković i Dragana Grujić) [From Nalanda to Hilandar: Description of the First Library of Indian Culture in Serbia (co-authored with Gordana Đoković and Dragana Grujić)], 2017; *Kosovo na kraju istorije – sažeta analiza privida* (koautor Danko Kamčevski) [Kosovo at the End of History: A Concise Analysis of Illusion (co-authored with Danko Kamčevski)], 2019. In 1997, he edited *Izabrana dela Milutina Milankovića* [Selected Works of Milutin Milanković].

VLADIMIR PIŠTALO (b. Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1960) is a fiction writer. Books published: *Slikovnica* [Picture Book], 1981; *Manifesti* [Manifestoes], 1986; *Noći* [Nights], 1986; *Korto Malteze* [Corto Maltese], 1987; *Kraj veka* [The End of the Century], 1990; *Vitraž u sećanju* [Stained Glass Memories], 1994; *Priče iz celog sveta* [Stories from around the World], 1997; *Aleksandrida* [The Story of Alexander the Great], 1999; *Milenijum u Beogradu* [Millennium in Belgrade], 2000; *O čudu* [About a Miracle], 2002; *Tesla, mladost* [Tesla, Youth], 2006; *Tesla, portret među maskama* [Tesla, Portrait with Masks], 2008; *Čajevi Marsa* / *Noći* [The Mars Teas / Nights], 2010; *Venecija* [Venice], 2011; *Sunce ovog dana – pismo Andriću* [The Sun of This Day: A Letter to Andrić], 2017; *Značenje džokera,* eseji [The Meaning of the Joker, essays], 2019; *Pesma o tri sveta* [A Song of Three Worlds], 2023.

NEMANJA RADULOVIĆ (b. Belgrade, 1978). Folklorist, literary historian, and comparative literary scholar. Published books: *Slika sveta u srpskim narodnim bajkama* [The Worldview in Serbian Folk Tales], 2009; *Podzemni tok. Ezoterično i okultno u srpskoj književnosti* [Underground Stream. Esoteric and Occult in Serbian Literature], 2009; *Slike, formule, jednostavni oblici*

[Images, Formulas, Simple Forms], 2015; *Podzemni tok 2. Srpska književnost i ezoterizam 1957–2000* [Underground Stream 2. Serbian Literature and Esotericism 1957–2000], 2020; *Gde ruža i lotos cveta. Slika Indije u srpskoj književnost i kulturi 19. i 20.v* [Where the Rose and the Lotus Bloom. The Image of India in Serbian Literature and Culture of the 19th and 20th Centuries], 2023. He has edited several collections of papers: *Esotericism, Literature and Culture in Central and Eastern Europe*, 2018; *Studies of Western Esotericism in Central and Eastern Europe* (together with K. M. Hess), 2019; *Disenchantment, Re-enchantment and Folklore Genres* (together with S. Đorđević Belić), 2021; *Indija i srpska književnost* [India and Serbian Literature], 2021; *Dimitrije Mitrinović. New Perspectives*, 2022; *Snovi, proročanstva i izmenjena stanja svesti u folklornim žanrovima* [Dreams, Prophecies, and Altered States of Consciousness in Folklore Genres] (together with S. Đorđević Belić), 2024.

GORANA RAIČEVIĆ (b. Novi Sad, 1964). She deals with literary theory and Serbian literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. She writes literary studies, essays, and reviews and translates from English and French. Published books: *Čitanje kao kreacija* [Reading as Creation], 1998; *Bibliografija srpskih nekrologa* (koautori M. Bujas i M. Kleut) [Bibliography of Serbian Obituaries (co-authors M. Bujas and M. Kleut)], 1998; ; *Laza Lazarević – junak naših dana* [Laza Lazarević – A Hero of Our Time], 2002; *Eseji Miloša Crnjanskog* [Essays of Miloš Crnjanski], 2005; *Komentari „Dnevnika o Čarnojeviću" Miloša Crnjanskog* [Comments on "The Journal of Čarnojević" by Miloš Crnjanski], 2010; *Krotitelji sudbine – o Crnjanskom i Andriću* [Fate Tamers – On Crnjanski and Andrić], 2010; *Drugi svet – eseji o književnosti: istorija, teorija, kritika* [The Other World – Essays on Literature: History, Theory, Criticism], 2010; *Agon i melanholija – život i delo Miloša Crnjanskog* [Agon and Melancholia – The Life and Work of Miloš Crnjanski], 2021; *Dobra lepota – Andrićev svet* [Good Beauty – The World of Andrić], 2022; ; *Veliki krug – književna prijateljstva Miloša Crnjanskog* [A Great Circle – Literary Friendships of Miloš Crnjanski], 2022. Raičević has compiled a number of books.

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(koautori P. Lazarević, J. Lešić) [National Theatre of the Bosnian Krajina 1930–1980 (co-authors P. Lazarević, J. Lešić)], 1980; *Okviri i ogledala* [Frames and Mirrors], 1990; *Ljubičasti oreol Danila Kiša* [Purple Halo of Danilo Kiš], 1999; *Odmrzavanje jezika – poetika stranosti u djelu Miodraga Bulatovića* [Unfreezing the Language – The Poetics of Strangeness in the Work of Miodrag Bulatović], 2002; *Pukotina stvarnog – odmrzavanje jezika, nulto* [The Crack of the Real – Unfreezing the Language, Zero], 2003; *Đavolji dukat – o Ivi Andriću* [Devil's *Ducat* – About Ivo Andrić], 2006; *Oblici i iskazi, ogledi* [Forms and Statements, Essays], 2007; *Portreti – iz srpske književnosti u BiH* [Portraits – from Serbian Literature in Bosnia and Herzegovina], 2015; *Krhotine i druge priče* [Debris and Other Stories], 2016; *Kulturni identitet Kočićevih junaka* [Cultural Identity of Kočić's Heroes], 2018; *Velike iluzije (igrivost, teatralnost, stranost)* [Great Illusions (Playfulness, Theatricality, Strangeness)], 2020; *Kritički otkloni* [Critical Deflections], 2020; *Obrazovni paradoksi: fragmenti, aforizmi, citati, sholije* [Educational Paradoxes: Fragments, Aphorisms, Quotations, Scholia], 2021.

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