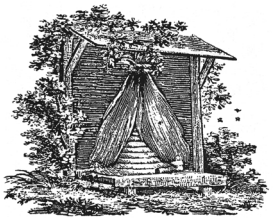

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LITERARY LINKS OF MATICA SRPSKA
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LAZA KOSTIĆ

SANTA MARIA DELLA SALUTE

Forgive me, Holy Mother, exculpate
From regretting our native mountain pine,
From which, as an antidote to all hate
A great palace was built for you divine.
Blessèd source of mercy, exonerate
From iniquity the creature indign.
Repentant, I kiss Your precious array,
Santa Maria della Salute.

Isn't it nobler by splendour regailing
To become a pillar bearing your arc
Than to warm obscure people in their ailing
And turn into ashes the pith and bark,
Or sink of a ship, rot away in paling,
Send fir and oaktree to the fiend and dark?
Isn't it nobler to stay in you for aye,
Santa Maria della Salute?

Forgive me, Mother. With mishaps I've coped,
Too many a sin I had to repent.
All for which my dreamy young heart had groped
Under the brunt of verity was spent.
All that for which I had yearned and had hoped
Long time ago to dust and ashes went
For the green-eyed monster to win the day,
Santa Maria della Salute.

The poison was putrid and surreptitious.
Nevertheless, nobody will I curse.
For all things that affected me as vicious
Reproof of nobody people should nurse.
Because what was to the soul's wing pernicious
And was to the vigorous flight adverse,
All that sprung from my silly head, my way,
Santa Maria della Salute!

My nymph loomed before me thereupon,
A fairer one had never been in sight.
Beautiful, from deep darkness she shone
Like a song of glee in the dawn's first light.
Every wound of mine that minute was gone,
But a more bitter wound began to bite.
How can I 'twixt the sweet and torment sway,
Santa Maria della Salute?

She gave me a glance. A soul aware
Such a kind of look had never felt.
With that which issued from her eye's flare
The ice of all worlds could have been melt.
She offered all I could ever care,
Woe, then sweets; honey that with gall dwelt,
Her whole soul, all for which she would pray.
– Oh, bliss, extending to times away!
Santa Maria della Salute.

How comes for me miserable all this mirth?
How comes to me pitiable all this treasure?
How's for me, whose life is close to the earth,
This golden fruit bringing belated pleasure?
Oh, sweet fruit, a tantalizer by birth.
Why hadn't you given me timely measure?
Blame of my sinful blundering allay,
Santa Maria della Salute.

Two energies in me began to war,
My mind and the heart, my reason and zest.
For a long time they waged a battle sore
Like a fierce storm and an old oak in wrest.
Happily at last they struggled no more.
The winding brain was the one to conquest,

Sense and the poor brain's strain did overweigh,
Santa Maria della Salute.

By my mind restrained I was hardened-hearted,
Mad, I fled bliss for sanity to bloom.
I fled from her – but from life she departed.
The Sun was eclipsed – came eternal gloom,
Stars darkened, the lachrymose heavens smarted,
The judgment day arrived, the final doom –
Woe, the end of the world, woe, the doomsday.
Santa Maria della Salute!

My thoughts confused, with my griefs that gnaw,
Memory of her is my holy shrine.
Then, beyond this world her shape I saw,
As if God himself gave me a sign.
The ice of my soul's ache began to thaw.
She opened my eyes, her knowledge is mine
Why muddled sages their judgment delay,
Santa Maria della Salute.

She visits my dreams. But not when sought
By my surging desires as envoy –
She comes when driven by her own thought,
Secret forces are her maidens coy.
With novel events she is always frought,
In the godly plan of earthly joy.
Leading to her you pave for me the way,
Santa Maria della Salute.

We behave just like a husband and wife,
Only, there is no worry or work –
Merely pleasance with fires not rife;
To shade of paradise out they shirk.
More years now have gathered in her life,
There I am younger than she – a quirk
Where all differences in age decay.
Santa Maria della Salute.

My poems like children to us belong –
Of these meetings an eternal trace;
They are not in writing or in song,
Only through the soul penetrate rays.

In understanding this we get along
And paradise, too, accepts it with grace,
This only in transe can prophets betray,
Santa Maria della Salute.

And when time comes for my head to burst
Against this life's rough precipice
True will come what was a fond dream at first,
Her "Here I am for you!" – not my finis.
From nullity into glory immersed,
From missing her into bliss, into bliss,
Into ethereal bliss, to her kiss!
All desires this place will outlay,
All strings of soul there will begin to play.
We'll make legions wondrous words of us say,
Mighty gods, not only the mundane;
We'll make stars leave their paths and go astray,
Upon cosmic chill shower suns' ray,
So that all dawns may rosy colour gain,
So that ghosts from this pleasance go insane,
Santa Maria della Salute.

Translated from Serbian by
Boris F. Hlebec

RASTKO PETROVIĆ

THE IMPOSSIBLE PLOUGHMAN

Dawn spilled down fresh and flew off into the pine woods when the healer said: depart from God's servant, from his head, from his pate, from his forehead, from his eyes, from his nose, from his ears, from his neck, from his shoulders, from his back, from his fingers, from his nails, from his breasts, from his heart, from his lungs, from his liver, from his intestines, from his ribs, from his flesh, from his thighs, from his knees, from his shins, from his bones, from his veins, from his blood and from all his internal compositions. And the evil spirits went, in red gowns, with their jaws gaping and threatening. People met them and asked them: Where are you going, evil spirits? And one evil spirit said: into the world, to tear the youth from his mother's heart, the man from his stallion, to turn the farmer from his oxen, damage the field, dry the vineyard, steal the wine, and destroy the hunter's harvest.

And the man who asked took off his hat, and took off his shoes, and unfastened his belt, and twirled his mustache, and said: I am Jesus of Nazareth. Then he stepped into the river and began to catch small fish. With his fingers spread, he ran his hands through the water, and between his fingers the sterlet swam; he muttered confidently: from his nose, from his ears, from his neck, from his shoulders, from his nails. Then he climbed three hills, and on the third hill he spread his arms, touched the rock at the one end of the world with one hand, and touched the mountain on the other end of the world with his other hand. From where he touched, the springs opened and the water flowed in a kind and gentle and clear-flowing way, carrying yellow-fleeced lambs with human-like eyes and flags that unfurled underwater. The lambs were scattered around the world, in the green fields, in the blue oak groves. Our souls rang like sheep bells.

But only he, our good and beautiful and beloved young man, legless and armless, sat in the middle of the church and his face was infinitely sad. He was in the middle of the church, below the central dome, in front of the golden iconostasis. Only he was not satisfied and did not want to sing. Seven white-skinned young men were set on fire, and their white skin dripped down their bodies like honey wax down candles. Then came out of the altar the eighth beautiful and kind and heroic young man dragging with ropes a large boat on the stern of which Simon Peter was sitting, with many nets on his lap; and the water drained from the net, and the net was full of severed arms and legs, and hands with wedding rings on, and muzzled ears. And the young man was wet: he dragged the boat to our legless and armless young man, gave him a penetrating look, and asked boldly: "Who do you believe in?" But the armless man was saddened *above* all. He replied: "I do not believe in Christ!" The other asked him again: "Do you believe in Christ?" – "I do not believe in Christ!" And once again: "Do you believe in Christ?" – "I do not believe in Christ!" – "But why are you in church then?" The armless and legless man shook his head: "I can give up food, but I cannot give up hunger. I am in the midst of the church, I am in the midst of famine; get away from me, leave me in my hunger!"

Then I left the church into the night; I went through the door, next to the sexton's house, where the sexton slept with his wife, then across the meadow; then, I crossed the road and lay down again on the meadow. Before long I heard new, wax-coated boots squeaking with grease on a snowy or grassy valley; and that squeaking echoed with my longing in the night. I was eavesdropping on who was passing: a brother in boots he bought at the fair, where they kiss on the wet mouth and hands rush to heaving bosom. There they kiss each other, grab each other. The imprints of his soles would remain there in the snow or grass of the wide valley, and the kisses bitten into the white skin of his lover. Do you believe, or do you not believe? I sank my two feet into my boots, like a body into the warm bed next to my lover. I heard them squeak.

The stars moved and hummed, working diligently in the dark, while the sky swayed on the trees always green so that the nests of birds were among the stars; the birds laid golden eggs that fell on the snow. It was a Macedonian peasant passing by that I was hearing; I started trembling with joy, my hands trembled in the night. Listen everyone, I said: listen, world, to the passer-by wearing greased shoes, firm and arrogant, as I listen to them. It was a Macedonian passing; a bunch of blue grapes was wrapped in a scarf hung along his finger, as my boy's heart was wrapped in the image of a beloved. There would

come a day when the bunch would disappear; a peasant's daughter passing by would eat my heart one morning. Only the plaid scarf and the picture of Giorgione's concert would remain. The concert would go to my sister's children; to go to the concert, they should not wait for half-price tickets.

The squeaking was spinning the stars, and what else, what else? The snow was the passer-by's embroidery. Our embroidery was across the Albanian mountains and their snows, when we crossed them after the enemy had beaten us. A comedian said that an angel had followed our trail of empty cans and garbage, which in fact had been our skulls mixed with hearts, or that an angel had swallowed them all not to embarrass us (oh, the beauty of the dying!). Maybe we had just wanted to take a walk, and die a little in the white fields, maybe, to hear the squeaking of our shoes. I would never understand that song sung by our boots; so strange, so beautiful. You asked me where Ryan was, but you were going in the right direction, my brother. How much are the boots, you asked. One hundred dinars! Not expensive at all; their squeaking was so powerful, listening from afar one could say it was a carriage, a fat merchant driving home to his fat wife; so powerful was their squeaking, so well I could hear the booted legs of the passer-by; I could hear a carriage passing by.

And I saluted them screaming, screaming, almost dying of youth. My friends and I gathered around the fire, and I listened to the story interrupted by silence; then all of a sudden it was as if I heard the footsteps of the Unknown taking away my heart in a scarf, imprinting little graves for my words with its soles, then I shouted, then I shouted: oh soles, I want to die at the break of dawn of immense exhilaration for life; it is for life that boots leave into the night.

In a similar vein, I got up and returned to the church, still lit by seven young men who had now burned to the waist; their dripping and then hardened skin made them look like white petrified cave cascades. And the little armless man, without legs, was still sitting alone in the middle, shaking his head while his mouth was crookedly and angrily smiling, his face crying with endless sadness. Unbearable as it was to look at him like that, I took shelter behind the choir, where there were stacks of ancient gospels, psalm and prayer books, where mice scurried and spiders spun dusty nets; I remembered the poet's sad words: "Maybe you think: he must be fine if he can't hear the spider quietly weaving his net with a thin wire." I began to rummage greedily through the papers, having been taught to do so since childhood; I didn't care what was on them, I just wanted to look at each one. And so—alas, ruthless destiny!—I found the verses. And I read then the following lines:

I'm dying today,
My fingers clutch,
I've put on earthly clothes,
And I ride a wooden horse,
They've built me a windowless home.

"Go, sit in it," they said.
Rejoice in the birth,
Cry for the departure,
Weep, thee that birthed me—rejoice thee that accepted me!
My mother birthed me,
And the earth is devouring me.

I was full of sadness at the transience of everything. The earth will eat the sky I have accumulated by travelling so many roads, I thought, and I was already completely saddened. I had passed all of Old Serbia, all of Macedonia, I roamed from village to village drinking a drop of water with a lamb at every spring, and I kissed countless girls and broke many a watermelon while bathing in the rivers: Ibar, Lim, Vardar, Drina, Devoll, and never had I been hungrier or thirstier of that than now. I wished a giant could put me in a sling and shoot me at a falcon! O mad desires, o mad sorrows, o my fleeting youth! But one very beautiful girl with rosy cheeks came with her maids, treading softly. Looking at the ground, with maiden bashfulness, she spoke to the armless and legless young man, with a shy, fluttering voice of a quail. She said: Although I see you are lonely and pale, I have desired you very much, and the thought of you has been planted in my heart. Tell me, would you agree to be my master, my husband in my bed. He answered: I can only be your husband; but the breadwinner, as you can see, I am not fit to be. And the girl gave him this riddle: You will be the parent of my child and the breadwinner will be the grandfather of your son. At those words, the slaves raised him easily in their long and white arms and took him away.

I followed them. I was walking. We walked through the streets strangely lit by darkened lanterns. A guard seemed to look suspiciously at a strange procession, then at me, sneaking up at a distance. But fortunately, we arrived after about half an hour. The girl slammed the door-knocker, and then, a little later, an old man appeared at the gate, holding a candlestick with a trembling flame. As he secured the flame with his hand so that it would not go out, I did not see his shaded face well, and I could not tell if he was the master of the house or just a servant. The women with their burden entered without a word, and the gates closed immediately behind them. I was about to return when I saw one

window open, which gave me a strange thought, which I acted upon right away. I jumped easily into the room and threw myself without thinking under the bed that was there. And just then the room door opened and the maids put the armless man on the bed and walked away, leaving the unknown girl alone. It was the most extraordinary wedding night that ever happened. The groom was lying there like a stump; his eyes seemed to be trembling, his throat was trembling with passion. He couldn't take the veil from the bride's face or kiss her on her neck, then sit on the colorful chest, stretch his right leg and say: take off my boot! which would mean: from now on I am free from all the paths traveled and desired. He had no boots nor legs, no gloves, no arms, no collars or wedding rings. It was a corpse living and loving. The bride took off her clothes quickly and remained naked like a waterfall over a field, like the liver of a torn sheep, like the skull of an enemy on the battlefield. She stayed naked like that. Her young bosoms trembled and I had a wonderful desire to eat them, I, an angry poet under the bed. She came to undress her husband; under whose shoulders and under whose groins four red scars of amputation appeared; she said: four rose gardens, and she laughed in too much joy, hugging his tight and heavy breasts, and kissing his firm neck; and the face of the groom was sad, so sad. What could I do but sigh over the human trouble and the unattainability of their desires. They suffered like that for a long time; he cursed himself, he cursed his heroism, and his wounds, blessed by his parent who lived beyond the Rudnik mountain in a village called Popovci; he wished he had at least one hand to take his own life. But his lover kissed his scars and his youth, saying that she was at the church gate when he passed by with his two brothers. They soon fell silent, as if they had fallen asleep, loving each other through hardship and in vain.

It must have been two o'clock in the morning—a rooster was crowing somewhere—when suddenly the room lit up and the ceiling disappeared; but only the bright sky was visible, and in a flash, with the flapping and rustle of wings, someone descended. I almost fell unconscious. "Beloved ones, it's time to get ready for the journey; for if some violent wind blows on us or a plague strikes, if there is a rebellion from the emperor or the army, or any abyss in which we end up by God's will, all we have will be blown away by the wind and gone into the hands of the devil, but our souls will not." But our poor brother, whose arms and legs were buried together with all the hugging and travelling and other fateful events, rejoiced so; I could almost hear his muffled voice: Is it you, my Major Kosta, who perished at Mačkov kamen![1] And look what happened to me at Kaymakchalan;[2] they aimed very well,

[1] The battle of Mačkov kamen, fought in WW1.
[2] The battle of Kaymakchalan, fought in WW1.

very well. Your wings are big; do the gray uniform and these spurs still serve you? Your mustache is long and loose, and you seem to have gained weight. And what about your fiancée Zora? Someone's deep warm baritone answered: All is well, all is well; but look to the other side; who do you see?

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen so be it, the cripple exclaimed, isn't it my little ox Cvetko; and look, he has wings too. And you came to visit me, on my wedding night, as if you were wedding gift-bearers, the Three Wise Kings, King Solomon, and the holy king Stevan the Despot, the three hundred martyrs. Well, thank you and welcome, my friends, bend down so that we can kiss and ask about each other's health, because I can't get up.

Then the two strange, heavenly messengers of God took him in their arms, and lifted him up, and the ceiling reappeared, the room was as before; when my feeling of wonder finally ceased, I fell asleep and saw in a dream what happened next.

They brought him before the Lord, and the Lord sat on a bench under a towering golden walnut, and on his chest and in his lap the nations rested blessed. At his knees was Our Lady; little Jesus clung to her green dress; the little Baptist already wore a leather girding across his chest; and behind it all was the cathedral with golden pillars and gilded domes; and there the angels kissed and the ships full of saints sailed through the air with sails like wide wings, and their shadow was black and deep.

After the little white ox and the major brought the cripple to the Lord, the Lord stroked him gently; and Our Lady, taking out her maiden's bosom, breastfed him. And he smiled kindly and full of gentleness bowed his head in all directions and saluted, and spoke: Thank you, brothers, the apple of my eye, thank you, brothers! This was how it happened.

In the morning, he was brought down abruptly from heaven to the bed. At that moment he grew legs and arms, as he once had; so, feeling them on himself, he embraced his bride in great happiness, pulled his right hand under her head, hugged her with his left, and hugged her with his legs; and she, awakened by the manly caress, saw the beautiful and strong limbs of her husband, closed her youthful eyes and intertwined her naked legs with his, hiding her face in his chest. She said: You are my husband, let your strength flow into my womb. And he answered: Our sons will sail the seas and let them be famous astronomers. So they caressed each other on the mattresses until the evening, and not a single maid knocked on the door to say: The dawn has broken, and neither did the father.

When evening and night fell again over the fields and the moon shone and his lover slumbered peacefully, the young man got up, got

dressed and girded himself, and left that house; he went out of the city, went to his village, and grabbed a harnessed plow and went down into the valleys.

And the moon shone, the great good moon that shone flooded the hills with silver, and the silver flowed in streams. He spread his chest filling it with the night air, threw his head lovingly, took three steps forward, took six steps back, took a step forward. The plow gripped the ground and he began to plow; he leaned over the plow, holding the handle tightly, leaving behind a black and deep furrow.

So what was our handsome young man plowing, our lover? Blown-up ears of war heroes, their cut noses, blown mouths, blinded eyes, chopped fingers, ripped out intestines, unraveled hair, swollen necks, open chests, crushed male limbs, spat out young teeth, coughed out lungs, plague, leprosy, freckles, malaria, typhus, cholera, syphilis, lice, adultery, anger, revenge, betrayal, arson and poverty, all these plowed the plow; to rejuvenate the earth, to prepare our breadwinner. For what? For work, for a rich greeting.

Before dawn, he was already close to Belgrade. From Torlak, he saw the city on the rivers, how white it was, as if it were beautiful, and he greeted it and got ready to plow it. And he took three steps forward, and he took three steps back; he took off his hat and bowed to it touching the ground with his forehead admiringly, and decided to plow it again (and all the land from south to north).

In one room on the second floor of the Balkan Hotel, a company of several officers and citizens gathered. Their voices were resolute and excited. Movements full of confidence. With them there was a very excited young man, who listened to them, trembling, in his religiosity. They told him about the need for revenge, renewal and sacrifice. In the end, they brought him to the window, pulled the curtain, and showed him the square in front of the Balkan and Moscow Hotels. There was heat and dust rose almost in a cloud; passers-by were rare and two tired skinny gray oxen dragged carts loaded with crates, driven by a dirty, thirsty, and disgusted peasant.

Pointing at them, the officer said to the young man: There, that is what you should die for, for the *opanak*[3] and for the ox, these are your gods and kings, they will create a great civilization and show Europe who we are. The Serbian ox, the torn Serbian *opanak*, that is the God of Serbia, remember that they are our light and leaders!

The young man was looking at them, his eyes narrowing more and more until they became gray, then he smiled and raised his head freely; he took off his student's hat and coat and his shoes as if in one

[3] Traditional peasant shoes from Serbia.

go; and suddenly those who were present were introduced to an ordinary peasant, the same as the one who drove the carts, with yellowish-green hair like wet hay, an empty stomach, and crooked legs. The young man sniggered peasant-like, with condescension and ridicule, and then left the room without a word, leaving behind his shoes and coat; he went down the steps and headed down Balkanska Street next to *Vreme*, towards the station from which all the chicken sellers had left for the nearby villages. And all the time he frowned, jumping, and his face was infinitely, infinitely sad.

The plowman, on the other hand, left the plow at the city's entrance and headed through it. When he came to a large building on the main street, he went to the office of the highest official; and without checking in or knocking, he just walked in and closed the door behind him. The high official had a trimmed gray beard, a top hat on his head; he wrote very long documents. The former cripple sat down on a leather armchair and pointed to his stretched and bruised leg: You see, sir, I came barefoot. Would you come and take some thorns out my foot? They have been piercing my soles. The gentleman sighed deeply, took off his hat, put on a gold pince-nez and, having approached his guest, took his leg on his knee and began to clean it. The plowman watched carefully how he was doing it; he was peering down at his own hands too, which were already swollen with blisters.

The young man was red from the pain and tickling of his leg, while the old man was taking out the thorns and blinking his eyes excitedly, still crouching forward, and now wiping the glasses on the pince-nez with the front of his coat. Nothing like this had happened to him in his life. When he finished talking to his extraordinary guest, whose orders he could not resist, he got up, shrugged his shoulders ready to cry like a child. A butler appeared in the room, announcing the arrival of a gentleman. The old man looked humbly at the peasant who stood up, scratching his left bare foot against the calf of his right leg: I am leaving now and you may let him in, and know: when I stretched out my leg to you, I did not want to humiliate you or seek help from you. Having said the words, he went out, followed by the surprised look of the butler. Another gentleman, who was hiccupping while walking impatiently down the hall, passed by him.

He went down to the street and left. What he saw then was very sad. The faces of passers-by, some of which were satisfied and full and others sad, showed theft, bribery and sycophancy; they showed the narrowness of enslaved souls; the women were nicely dressed but still miserable, and yet they kept one symbol of chastity that polluted them even more; few were clean and fresh. But he was by no means aware of the misery in which he found himself; with his heart full of mercy,

although not good, he saw them all as his kind. Many of them were dying; as fathers they were excellent, as husbands, very often and as friends, rarely.

He left the town to find his plow. In the middle of the field, he began to speak loudly about the beauty and courage of the future life. His words rose from his chest to the clouds like tall green apple trees, his voice pounding like a mill windlass in a river. His restored arms and legs were stronger than the old ones. He left the plowing of the city for another day, put the plow in his bosom and returned to his home, the town where he had recently started a family. He struggled a lot until he found his home, so when he found it, he knocked at the gate. His wife herself ran to open the door for him; she offered her head for him to kiss her and threw out her arms, which had been dipped up to her elbows in the flour and dough the bread was made from, behind her.

She said to him: It seems to me that we have conceived a family; go and see what's in our house. He followed her, but before he crossed the threshold of the room, he asked for water to wash his neck, ears, forehead, and hands; his wife washed his feet, though he protested. And when he entered the room, where on the table there was a multitude of loaves of bread, he saw countless small and ruddy children with mouths like roses, holes on their elbows, on their knees, on their forearms. They were everywhere; in the corners, on the bed, under it, on the closets, on the rugs. There were hundreds, thousands and more. He patted his knees, calling them kindly, and the children smiled, showing their toothless palates. Then the former armless and legless man sat on the floor, gathered them around him, placed a few of them on his lap and on his shoulders; and while the woman was still kneading new loaves of bread for all the miserable and wretched that waited in crowds in the courtyard, he told the children this story:

"There was a man who was young, and diligent, and courageous; but living on a desolate mountain where there were no other people, he was unmarried and had no children: he felt bad about it, it bothered him. He prayed often to God; but God did not seem to hear him; there was not a single girl to walk on the mountain that he could marry. Not knowing what to do, he picked a ripe poppy fruit, took out the seeds, dug up the entire mountain slope facing south, sowed it and waited for the crop. And behold, the mountain soon turned green and blossomed, and a child's head protruded from each flower. He picked up the children, fed them with doe's milk, and raised them; from that time on, the mountain turned into a happy land."

The children clapped their hands upon hearing the story, and the more forward ones started endearing themselves to him: Father, father,

what did you bring us as a gift? He was very saddened by this and felt uncomfortable, remembering that he could not have foreseen something like that; as he began to search his body for a bag of money to at least offer them that, he came across the plow on his chest; he smiled and brought it out to them with the harnessed oxen. The children immediately surrounded the plow, giggled at the animals, grabbed the handles.

The woman looked around in horror: They will ruin my room! It is alright, my darling, the bridegroom was calming her down, let them plow it, we will sow it later, so that our sowing will sprout in the middle of the hearth.

And his voice was so calm and sure that the bride just smiled and continued to knead "until the ceiling started to sweat."

He lay down to sleep, preparing for the big plowing that awaited him the next day.

Translated from the Serbian by
Jovanka Kalaba

MIROSLAV MAKSIMOVIĆ

SEVEN POETRY

LOOKING AT THE BRIDGE

From the office window
I see a part of the bridge.
But not the other shore.
We do not know what the bridge connects us to.
The cars that scurry across it
quickly disappear by the edge of the window.
This is how the beloved actress from my childhood
stepped down
beyond the edge of the TV screen
onto the bookshelf,
then onto the table
whence she slipped
into the armchair,
filling the room with Hollywood tenderness,
with female movements, with the odour of ladies' cigarettes.
But where to step to from the half of the bridge?
Beyond the window edge
There is no picture.
I need a real shore,
a spacious harbour with serene sounds
and merry flickering,
stout grown-up posts
with boats tied to them.
There is no bridge beyond the edge of the window.

The edge of the window is the other shore,
a line of dark bricks.
Our lives are turned towards it,
looking for the tall door,
that we cannot see with our inner eyes.

WINDBLOWING

If you live on the Danube
near the midst of Europe
that does not know that its midst is there,
if you are a Serb
close to the heart of Europe
if you are curious
like every European
so that you wish to peer into that heart –
it will move away,
and not that it will just move away
but it will truly become distant
as if it has crossed an ocean.

If you live on the Danube,
you know the winds.

When *košava* blows from the east
it drives away everyday leaves and opens the views
it shakes up merchants' stands
and blows smugglers' tarpaulins with trifles
    into the air
        so that they become like wings of mythical birds
it returns the fish from new but always the same poachers to the Danube
                                                and Bible
it brings back the frost from its mission of imposing peace to the streets
to its old tasks of drawing ornaments on windowpanes,
it cools the rooms and heats the furnaces
and gathers families around them
it expels mould and mildew from all the spoiled nooks,
it clears up the air –
all of a sudden the man and the hook and the tree begin to breath
and the thought of freedom returns to them.

The north wind comes according to the rules,
as if it were blowing from some smart machines,
it knows how and how much,
it blows from Monday to Friday
organizing life and industry with transparent ice
and then, on Saturday, it allows people
to drink and get drunk
to forget about Monday.
It is monotonous,
easily read,
that is why it does not write
with dry leaves only
it creates pictures on the asphalt
lasting no more than a second
so that no one remembers them
so that everyone turns to the future with clear minds.

No wind comes from the west
but only rain
and very often thunder,
now from a cloud, then from a plane,
that is why people do not turn their faces to that side:
they do not know whether they will be hit by drops of reviving rain
or by a thunderbolt.

And from the south
a heavy odour
has laid upon the foundations
there is no warm breeze
that once used to flutter from history,
on the wings of the state,
since there is no south even, let alone history
the south seems to have disappeared in the west.

If we live on the Danube
we have nothing but winds
that tell us to be silent,
not to talk to the wind.

WALKING ON THE QUAY

The poets yearn
to touch life.
For they don't know how to live.
Sometimes, in a poem, it seems to them
that they have touched it,
and at that very instant life steps from them,
slipping into a glance of an unknown dark-haired woman
or flies away in a sparrow.

That is why they walk
along the Golubac Quay
they follow life with steps
since they cannot follow it with verses.

First they see the Danube,
immensely broad, wavy,
a substitute for the vanished sea
with a dim coast in the distance –
they say it is Europe we yearn for
although everyone on the quay knows that it is the same as this
in some respects better in some respects worse
and that we in fact yearn for ourselves
like we have never been and like we will never be.
Then they pass three men in conversation
"easy for him to talk
while I have nothing to eat":
the first one points his finger at Belgrade
but the second one comments by turning his finger
towards the tavern, whereby sits a carefree man,
only the third one, silent, dreams about rebellion.

And on the lawn behind the quay
dogs runs by in a pack, playful, no-one's,
they don't even know that the transition is under way
and that they are its victims,
so joyfully, like in the old days, they jump into waste bins
for their feast.

On the quay, just like in life
there are no beautiful women
they are elsewhere,

on their way from school, twittering, little girls pass
they will become beautiful women
and go elsewhere.

There are pensioners, like everywhere
like always
for at the end there is always
the phrase “it was not like that at my time”
being poured into the cup like weak coffee
which is called black although it is multi-coloured
in the tavern by the quay
whereby, walking, the poets pass.

FISH-HUNTING

According to Boban Živanović

The old man and the Danube,
the tale of a fish that many have seen,
but no one has ever caught it.
Improbable attempts are celebrated through centuries,
like that of the American guy
who aimed at a fish from the above, with his tomahawk.

The time has come
to end the fairy tales of primitive fishermen
and their chiefs boasting in front of women
the time has come
to solve the question
of the fish that many have seen
but no one has ever caught it.

For us, it’s not a big deal,
like fish hunting in a café:
it is the approach that matters (we know how to talk)
and financial support (we shall chip from CIPA funds).
We’ve had enough of carps, tenches, pikes, zanders, catfishes, eels,
sterlets, sturgeons, grass carps, starry sturgeons, burbots,
we’ve had enough of bad life
with barbels, breams, roaches, perches, chubs,
gudgeons, gibel carps, daces, sunbleaks.

We have flatboats, hoys, classic boats,
scows, and those plastic boats from donations,
we have tomoses, seagulls, yamahas, tohatsus, hondas, johnsons,
we have fishnets, driftnets, gillnets and landing nets,
we have seines, trammels, dragnets, trawlnets,
we have power,
we shall regulate fishing by law
as well as netting if needed,
we shall employ non-government experts with fishing rods
especially those with rods for fishing in depths,
as well as that American guy, if needed.

The time has come for catching fish
that many have seen
but no one has ever caught it.
In the developed world, it is a custom.
So that we will have enough for the red letters,
and the black ones among them,
something will remain for the dogs,
and for the cats too,
our wives will go shopping in Paris.
No need for the history of fishing
which is full of myths
we have to face the reality of fish
that many have seen:
it glimmers in the deep
or sparkles on the horizon of the Pannonian Sea,
and it has just
– said an old man, holding a glass of brandy
and playing cards in a tavern on the shore –
it has just passed here.

THE DANUBE

Under Golubac

I heaved widely in the planes,
flooding mild shores with wheat,
experienced waters from the distances
I mingled with life in the mud
with earthworms and frogs and beetles
that swarm like people in city squares.

I was under Vienna.
And from there I receded to Pannonian silence:
Houses watched me
impatiently waiting for the waters to pass
so they could shut the windows through which
the winds of the twentieth century blew.
Therefore I heave in the vast planes
the waters from the Alps and from the Carpathians mingle
the streams of Germans, Slavs and Hungarians whisper
in my trunk the nations find their peace
under my waves no one can hear languages from boat loudspeakers
from the East and the West.
In my serene eyes, only their proud flags flutter and pass.

I was a Roman border,
discerning world sense from nonsense:
imperceptibly I glide through perplexed countries
that know I am older than them.
The water knows to flow along its course
although no one teaches it.

But I have my storms too,
furies of air and water
when long-standing buildings are ruined down
and wise enterprises fail,
I also have unrests that strike aimlessly
and then become history.

Now I am silent in the lee of Golubac walls,
while tiny waves chit-chat.
I gather thoughts, I collect tissues
for invisible streams.

Deaf threats from Djerdap are behind the hill,
the waters will hurry in fear,
muffled thuds will be coming from the rocks
(as if each of them were holding a bat behind its back):
breathless,
I will be losing myself in foam.
Darkness will simmer everywhere,
the only light coming from the belly of a turned-down fish
floating towards the Black Sea.

Am I a river that connects times and peoples,
or just a poor track of water?
Is there any other sea except black?
In the black depths my cold hand will dissolve
transparent seeds of heavenly oceans.

KALEMEGDAN, 21ST CENTURY

That big yellow
dropping into the Srem plain
is that the glow
we've been expecting for ages?

BELGRADE INHABITANTS, THE NEW ONES

They make selfies
so that they can know where
and who they are.

Translated from the Serbian by
Zoran Paunović

VOJA ČOLANOVIĆ

MOIRA

Hm. Like a running faucet.

He had acquired a glorious habit (hopping to and fro) of waiting for the bus for Dedinje, not at the sign with the bus timetables at the beginning of JNA Boulevard, but rather a dozen meters down the road, a bit to the side, behind a kiosk forming a 90-degree angle with a fence covered with posters; at least there, relatively hidden (from the northerly wind, but also prying eyes), he can avoid the embarrassment of being seen blowing his constantly runny nose... using his thumb and forefinger, of course, because he didn't have the means to buy Kleenex, like the ones shamelessly flaunted in the display window. The reason is simple: an all-time low (on his pensioner checking account) he'll never forget.

A barely audible blow.

No wonder; weather fit for (not people, but) penguins.

A moment ago, scanning the headlines of the newspapers lined up on the edge of the kiosk with seeming indifference, he grasped what must be the meat-and-potatoes of the latest planetary changes. In Brussels, the deadline given to Yugoslavia expired, and in Ferrol (where would that be?) a monument erected to the human liver was unveiled. Last night, however, something fundamental happened on the advertising board as well. Someone wrote "... AND FUCKING" on an ad for a MODELING COURSE, and the passersby will most likely not be able to enquire about the course because the last couple of digits of the phone *sine qua non* are gone forever along with a torn off strip of paper. The more things change, the more they stay the same—is something those who think that everything is in the best (dis)order would mutter through gritted teeth. Ah, yes. Almost the entire poster (for Belgrade: gigantic) of the MOIRA ORFEI International Circus is also torn to shreds. Only the word MOIRA remained intact. Hm.

The old man leans out; a tram that just emerged from the Slavija Square is growing bigger by the second. With a destructive amount of noise, as usual. The rumble in my head might be a decibel higher. (Hope it doesn't bother you.) I could, let's say, take the tram to the Autokomanda, unless a conductor shows up in the meantime, and then walk to the nearest bus stop and wait for the 42 bus. For lack of a better definition, let's call it a forced winding shortcut. Due to a sudden premonition or perhaps because his nose was running again, either way, he changes his mind about taking the tram; instead, he hops over to (what he has used as an excuse a zillion times) the advertising board.

Tai Chi Chuan. 25 Obilićev Venac Street; Mondays and Thursdays at 10 p.m. What to say? A poster of the indigent type. And yet, the black outlines of the homunculus, magically practicing this ancient skill standing on one leg, cannot but trigger the now painfully nostalgic memories of thousands of solitary practitioners of all ages whom, on that last day in Beijing, (as pillows sailed across the breaking dawn) he watched for a long time, and in disbelief, through murky bus windows on his way to the airport. 25 Obilićev Venac, he mumbles under his breath once and then again, trying to duly engrave in his memory this (somehow, terribly important) address.

What have I got to lose?

Ten at night, when one usually calls it a day, twice a week, sounds really tempting. Maybe Alex would join him; after all, he was an all-round athlete some forty-odd years ago: a basketball player, a swordsman, a boxer... not to mention skiing. Still. It's also true that now sports interested him about as much as last year's snow. No, he really can't say with certainty. He knew for sure that his close high-school friend embarked on that exhausting journey (which we, lucky dogs, paid off in four installments), mainly with the desire to be rid of a decades-long obsession. To finally climb the Great Wall. And have a look around the Forbidden City. The silk pajamas, men's underwear, export teas—are all things that go without saying, I suppose.

If I'm not mistaken, there's something else on that poster. He takes out his glasses with fingers numb with cold. Instructor, of course. I'd say that the last name is Slovenian. So, he's one hundred percent reliable; and I'm guessing the man is also loyal. Look, look. I swear I didn't even notice this. And, once again, interference from the outside.

In the upper left corner of the poster, there's a pair of (not very well drawn) squares, and below them an imprint: *Balls to Picasso*.

A rare grimace (which we might expect perhaps only from a bulldog ready to growl) reveals a teardrop-shaped edge of his braces; although marked by flawless craftsmanship—if judged on their own merits, of course—they, those braces once thoroughly distorted his physiognomy.

Because his own teeth, before they fell out (like watermelon seeds), seemed... well, let's say, very independent: the upper ones resembled crowded kernels on a cob; and the lower—a pan flute. And you're expected to live with that. Because they've decided to take on a shape of their own! And what about the last emperor of China? What about: "Pee on the sides of the pail, instead of the middle... so you don't wake the others in the cell!"?

He feels compelled to shrug his shoulders.

Graffiti for graffiti's sake.

Although (let's go back to the moving meditation), ever since the start of summer, he's already sleepy by around ten. Sugar, escaping into sleep, one could only speculate. In any case, the concern is whether he'll have enough energy at that time... And then, for *Tai Chi Chuan* one would have to loosen their purse strings... Other people your age practically never sleep, Katarina interrupts (telepathically) his flow of thought. They're already back from the market, bags full, while you're still in bed. You're only old once, my Companion!

Bus 24?

Yes.

Well, thank God. The one we couldn't capitalize until recently. Unlike UDB.[1] Although, ever since Vukovar, the Eastern Orthodox are increasingly complaining that the Almighty is no longer answering. That he's hung up. Thank God this is a metropolis, he murmurs, climbing onto the bus with increased caution. (It would be a real scandal if his foot, *click-clack*, turned like a key in a lock for the third time since 1968.) If Belgrade were a small town, it would not go unnoticed that the former music teacher goes somewhere in a hurry, all alone, every single morning (including Saturdays and Sundays, and all state and religious holidays, regardless of whether it's scorching hot, pouring rain, snowing or just freezing cold) and returns from somewhere, again alone, in an even greater hurry. Perhaps he's going to wind a sundial; or pull by the tail a demon of irrelevant goals? My twisted soul... The bus is more or less packed: this time, it's mostly young people, largely the fairer sex, and the old man doesn't have to make his way through the crowd at all, because instantly the human substance in front of him inexplicably parts like the Red (or, was it the Dead) Sea, making him feel obliged to head down that unfortunate isle (feeling a twinge of inner resistance, of course) to the only, suddenly available seat. He sits down without taking his hat off—after all, such are the times—and stares out a (murky) bus window, not because he is particularly interested in

[1] Translator's note: State Security Administration (the secret police organization of Yugoslavia).

anything outside, but perhaps out of sheer superstition, which requires him to make an effort (motionless, detached and numb) worthy of Alice in Wonderland and become visually imperceptible any way he knew how. I'm afraid that in the end they'll lay me down on my back anyway. Because there's no way to sneak out, especially now. From that standpoint, it would've been wiser if I'd stayed on my feet, mixed with the other passengers.

Either way, he is in desperate need of some sort of guide for the confused.

The very next moment, it appears that the former music teacher actually has four hands at his disposal: one of them, more precisely the index finger knuckle, is, as if accidently, touching his wet nostrils; another is in his outer pocket, feeling around to see if by some stroke of bad luck the plastic cap had disappeared (because there were plenty of bottles, but not caps, which were, for some mysterious reason, becoming increasingly scarce, and if you don't return them, well... you won't get your methadone); while, at the same time, he is spreading the two remaining (spiritual) hands in astonishment over what prompted them (everyone in the bus) to such an act of kindness—to part, and let him through to the seat. Out of respect because I'm an elder? The body odour supposedly emitted by the elderly, no matter how many times a week they bathe? Or did I just fall into a trap?

Forced into the kill zone, if you prefer. But aren't we, being the way we are, reconciling ourselves to even worse things than blushing in our old age, and paying a fine for fare dodging?

Make up your mind.

I got them from Dejan, and I can keep them till Friday, says a male changing voice (above). And it's already Tuesday, cautions a husky voice in the back. I'd give my brother's Zippo in a heartbeat if knew for sure that Tuesday would dawn again tomorrow, says the changing voice. Dejan's old man swiped them fair-and-square in Italy, from a military scrap yard. And it's no wonder, they were in Cambodia: when we get off, I'll show you the shrapnel and bullet holes. Our war hubris, concludes the fare-hopper to himself. Arrogance that will take us who knows where. To Absurdistan? He now slightly straightens his head so that a moment later, glancing sideways, right by his elbow, he spots someone's legs, with half-ripped camouflage pants full of holes. If they had been a little patient, they could have gotten them here as well.

Cheap at twice the price.

The bus is slowing down because in a few seconds (thank God) there's going to be another stop, Autokomanda. Here's my prediction, the old man begins to think feverishly. As soon as the pneumatic door-opening device triggers all the doors, my heart will jump into my

mouth. Unless there's no one at the transit shelter. But, there's still something to console me. The disfavour that threatens prophets because their predictions, when they come true, often wind up being boring obvious things, in my case, could even turn out to be a blessing. But now, at this moment, the obvious thing, which is not boring at all (and which can be seen through the unwashed windows), is that three people—two middle-aged women and one younger man—are waiting at the stop with their heads tucked into their shoulders. The former music teacher holds his breath; he's in danger of turning blue. The doors open automatically, and the usual commotion in the vehicle follows, resulting in seven to eight fewer passengers; of those at the stop, however, no one gets on the bus, so the vehicle, without pausing, continues towards the Red Star Stadium. I'm an olllldd dog haha, you can't fool me. They're known for showing up out of nowhere. Like wine flies. He holds his breath again, cocking an ear in fear that at any moment he'll hear the frightening "Your tickets please!", but instead, his eardrums begin to tremble almost painfully due to a briefly unidentified sound source. Only briefly, of course, because the former music teacher is now sorting through his sound memory with computer speed and, by eliminating unmatched data (a fire devouring a house—*nah*; a storming typhoon—*nah*; trees cut down by lumberjacks—out of the question!), in a blink of an eye, he comes to the conclusion that this clattering chuff-chuff noise can only come from a helicopter (in all likelihood) bound for the Military Medical Academy.

No doubt about it.

Passengers in side-facing seats, with a harshly narrow field of view of the barely transparent glass, are twisting and turning their heads (frustrated) to see the (ominous) aircraft. Which results in corresponding silence in the bus, without ripples, the kind of silence in which, allegedly, Satan is born: and in which the professor's joints will surely be heard.

Although. What would we do without that arrogance in our imponderable everyday life? Under an undeserved 'cat-o'-nine-tails', the old man wonders, touching his (even wetter) nostrils with a bent index finger. Without a cocky streak? Seeing that we're not ag(grrr)esive enough. Because, what's happening to us, no matter what it is, least of all resembles a crusade over whether an egg should be cracked on the pointed or rounded side. Still, I admit that a guide for the confused would come in handy: just to unburden me of the horrible problems I have with myself; and get me to face the truth I've shied away from like a drunk from Coca-Cola. They'll wipe us all out, mark my words, grunts someone nearby; they're readying a "Balkan Storm" for us, with twenty-first century technology and equipment. Those doing the threatening are forgetting the most important thing, remarks a gravelly voice

talking to the one nearby; that a bare ass is stronger than the Buda Fortress. Welcome to hard times, says Led Zeppelin unexpectedly from the belly of a transistor radio. The ominous engine above the Autokomanda has died down considerably, but the old man, for some unknown reason, stubbornly resumes the sound recognition process (zipper—nah; pinball—nah; cockroach crunching under his feet—nah), and he stops with the redundant action only after certainty overpowers his anxiety about whether or not the old urge to run away from making that horrifying choice has returned: where?... when hell is outside his home, and at home—same thing, only on a smaller scale?! For God's sake, where? Ask yourself what sort of person you would have to be to stay sane while spending your days between a warrant and an obituary.

In a procession of hurried, winged silhouettes on the other side of the glass, he now thinks he has noticed a shadow of a coachman whipping a shadow of a horse mercilessly with a shadow of a whip.

Which, of course, is impossible.

Regardless, in his mind a groan escapes that probably only a lifeless universe can produce. That additional curse, this is what I don't know how to digest, the old man cries out for meaning. Haven't we already had enough of the ancient curse of human ambivalence? The kind that started with our mother's bosom, when we (in the lobby of consciousness) were able to distinguish between a good and a bad breast? (So, even the brainwashing couldn't help but start in the cradle.) But, there's no point in discussing it when... Idiot, I'm milking an old goat, and I'm so late. They don't say that it's better to close your eyes ten years earlier than ten minutes later for nothing.

The exotic scent of musk, which the former music teacher is not even able to identify, is now tickling his red nose, and he (lured by the scent or... some other agent?) gently, and only to a certain point, turns his head towards the passengers standing in the isle of the bus. Still, out of the corner of his eye, he notices that someone is standing to his right, holding on to a bar, in an oversized canary yellow down jacket. (Not exactly canary, to be precise, but something between that bird and a Mozambique yellow tourmaline.) Most likely a jacket belonging to a girl, towards which ("girl", not jacket!) "the way of a man I know not" (*Proverbs of Solomon* 30:18). So, he gives in to temptation; but he doesn't look up to see the face of the owner of that piece of clothing, but instead, attracted by an irresistible force, bends his head all the way to the side only to see a square label made of the same fabric on the thigh of a standing passenger (most likely a lady passenger) with a few lines of printed text. FACTORY OF BEIJING. Factory of Beijing (thanks to the large font) can be read quite nicely on the label.

The old man is growing mythically excited.

Without taking his eyes off that piece of cloth and with the greatest of effort, he resists the urge to take out his glasses and lustfully read the three or four other lines in small print. FACTORY OF BEIJING is quite enough. The old man gives thanks to the Lord that the person is holding on to the bar with their left hand and not the right... because the left, of course, would cover the label, which he now examines with voluptuous (exploratory) concentration, as if it were not just an ordinary piece of cloth, but a crack on a cosmic egg; and how else, when there is no better or more beautiful peephole to a distant sanctuary above all sanctuaries, to a (lukewarm) timeless refuge for the confused, worth spending the rest of your life flying over all the mineral kingdoms (to hell with biorhythm!) in order to reach it, even if on this journey the sky is always starless, as black as the Bible.

Ah: from bad to worse.

He searches his pocket again for the plastic bottle cap, carefully as if separating valuables from tailings, while at the same time pushing away the sticky thought that in just a few minutes he will be standing (subserviently) before a window at the Center for Addiction Treatment. To his spiritual eye, that image is no less hideous than a hypothetical image of a hunchbacked pensioner riding a skateboard across Dedinje. The old man all of a sudden realizes that the isle between the seats has undetectably emptied, so, in a ghostly panic, he gets up and staggers towards a vertical pole by the exit door. On the right, a café in the shape of a giant sandwich flies by (read: two more stops!). I guess now I can breathe a sigh of relief, he mumbles into his sleeve, allowing for the possibility that anarchy also has its charms. Once he's there, he'll come across, as he always does, young men with precarious lives (and some girls), an earring in one ear, glossy eyes, and an esoteric theater in their head. Although that environment insidiously endangered Filip, instead of whom now he, his great uncle, has been coming here for months to pick up the medicine, he didn't really have anything bad to say about them. It's true that anything could be expected of them, and that many of them get along great with everyone... except people and animals; it's true that they mostly loiter around catching flies. Still. To say something disdainful at their expense, and not see that the Armageddon is fast approaching, and that the greatest utopia on the green-blue planet (where bewildering magma of filth had begun flowing from somewhere) is the one that dreams about the continuation of the human species—not seeing that, is the same as pressing a finger over a vibrating string: killing the flicker.

I mean, like, three hundred milligrams is no fix if you ask me, he now hears behind him. And a single human tear, be it of joy or sadness, weighs only 15 milligrams, he remembers reading this somewhere just

recently. I know for a fact that I'm the uncleanliness in their environment, he says to his "self". But what kind? A grain of salt or mustard? Then he realizes (and blood rushes to his head) that by standing up for them, he is also rendering meaningless the last shred of hope for a sanctuary above all sanctuaries, and that ultimately, *nec plus ultra* might prove to be a children's tale, and that, sooner or later, he'll be forced to say yes! either to the argument of a mace or peace in order to bring about universal peace. With this discovery comes a sense of ghostly loneliness, and he is now searching in vain for deliverance in someone's eyes, regardless of who they are. Has he become (at the wrong time) visually imperceptible? His gaze suddenly rests on a girl sitting not far from the exit door: she is wearing a down jacket in a shade of yellow that reconciles the color of a canary and that of a Mozambique yellow tourmaline. So, she's still here?! And undeserved blessing. Although. What the retired music teacher cannot get into his head is how to make sense of the fact that he is now addressing a young person (in a barely audible voice) as if he had no choice. Did you buy it yourself in China? Did you buy it in China? The bus slows down, and the girl, unsuspectingly involved in that one-way relationship, gets up from her seat (correct! a tall girl indeed!), but she's not in a rush, so it's quite obvious that she's not getting off at this stop.

Without letting go of the bar, the old man turns on his heels so that he could once again look at the label with the inscription FACTORY OF BEIJING on the left side of her jacket. The label, however, is not on the left or the righthand side. He's not bothered by this at all; he was much more excited when he noticed it earlier, while sitting in his seat, at eye level. By the wannabe *peepshow*... or whatever you might call it.

At the stop across the street from the "Dr. Dragiša Mišović" Hospital, there is only one (bareheaded) passenger; with a raised coat collar, and hands buried in his pockets. Vehicle number 42 stops and that man (from a misty winter scene) enters through the not altogether open pneumatic door in the center of the bus. A distinguished Chinese man. His facial skin texture is reminiscent of an orange peel.

If he hadn't suddenly become sick, and if, with the first shudder of a death rattle, he hadn't seen ships with postage stamps instead of sails, the former music teacher would have, in all likelihood, experienced his arrival as his own delirious jerk towards the light.

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

SELIMIR RADULOVIĆ

SEVEN TINY TREMORS

And Abraham was a hundred years old,
when his son Isaac was born unto him.
Genesis 21:5

1

Did you leave your dwelling,
Before the first crow of roosters, as
Sarah watched you go!? Did you know
Your faith and the voice of the Father!?
Where is your horse, with wings!?
Did you take by the hand your child,
Your only son,
Sweet Isaac, the child of your old age!?
Did you go to the land of Moriah!?
Did you tie his hands and feet!?
Did you place the wood, take out the knife!?
Did he ask,
While your mind was set on the law of
The Lord:
Why do you do this, my father!?
Did you utter, from deep waters,
From dense forests,
From a cramped skete, for there is no
Path, for the path is everywhere:
My son, my son,
If you are ready to serve,
Becalm your heart!

2

You took Isaac, without a word,
Looking down to the ground,
Until the fourth day.
Silent, you placed the wood,
Tied the child, took out the knife.
And you asked not, as from a world transient,
Incomprehensible,
Your soul weakened not:
Is this why you gave me a
Child!? To take him
From me!?
Better that you had never
Given him to me! Did anyone ever
See such a thing!? Hear of such a thing!?
And you said not:
This is my fruit, my Father,
Am I to cut the roots!?
And you thought not that
All is in the girdle, robe
And the voice of His messenger!
Nor did you weep
For, as a fierce flame
Devours dry twigs, so does a soul,
Pure, with a pure heart,
Lead to the Land of the Living!

3

I saddled my mule,
Hugged Sarah,
Said my goodbyes to Eliezer,
My eternal servant. Took with me
Two men and Isaac, my only son,
Beloved. In darkness, storm and unbearable cold,
I went to the mountain, tied his hands
and feet, set the wood, brought forth my knife
And I was prepared to strike.
And my hand did not freeze!
And my muscles did not weaken!
And my mind was not foggy! I asked not:
Why do you do this, my Father!?

And I did not burn in a flame of sorrow,
Now threefold. I said not that
These are wicked days, deceptive times,
When from my hut
I departed towards the other world!
For, I kept myself from whispers,
False words and words of the crafty.
As did the old man, stentorian,
Who stood in the marketplace of Jerusalem,
Surrounded by a crowd, and found no man,
So he directed his words towards the earth,
Towards the heavens.

4

I am on the mountain.
Without wrath or envy!
I throw no stones,
Shoot no arrows into the sky!
And I am not on the narrow path,
To be tempted, persecuted,
As a crazy man.
Isaac, my son, my only child, is here as well,
With tied hands and feet. The wood is also here.
And the knife! And, on the earth,
Shadows of man still multiply,
And thick darkness bring.
(Although far from all hope,
You see my heart, know my prayer
Even before I pray)
Yet, there is peace in my heart, for this
Depends not on them. I am ready!
To strike, my Father! I utter,
As, from the thick, rippling grass,
Emerge wild flowers
That reach for the stars.
A wreath! I am already weaving a wreath,
My Father!

5

Whose grave is this, my Father!?
What day is it? Have I
Spent it in sin, my Father!?

For, earthly dwellings are desolate
And earthly gates are closed.
I took two men and Isaac,
My beloved son,
Gathered wood for the fire,
Sharpened my knife, prepared the altar,
And I went to where You told me,
My Father.
I did not hesitate, raise my head
Or utter a word.
Grey clouds crawled across the sky,
In groups, like flocks of birds.
I took my fire and my knife.
And then Isaac, my only son,
My unsetting sun, uttered:
Here is the fire and the wood, my father!
And the lamb, for the offering,
Where is the lamb for the burnt offering, my father!?
I gathered the power of these words!
Through a dense forest
I made my way to a secluded skete
And awakened from a mortal dream!

6

He has provided for all, my Father,
He sees all. Knows torment, tears
And forgets nothing, I said,
As I bound my only son, whom I love.
I placed him on the altar, the wood.
And I raised my hand,
To, silently, strike with a knife. And again,
A flame was cast from the heavens
And the ground beneath me opened.
So, with heavy chains, I
Entered into a battle, invisible,
For three days and a better part of the fourth.
And then I heard, from the mountain,
Where the Lord provides:
Lay not your hand on your child!
As well as:
Do this not, my father!
Are you to kill!?

And the seed of the earth multiplied,
Like the stars in the sky, like the sand
On a seashore. And from it
Were born many.
Have I not said,
My brother, most beloved:
I heard, what I sang!
He who fears, finds peace!
And he who draws a knife from his weeping heart,
Receives Isaac!

7

I remember this story,
Word for word, of Abraham,
And the son of his old age, Isaac.
And the earthly wound, perishing,
When sorrow overwhelms you, and you are indifferent –
To both the abyss of darkness and flames. To the gorge,
Fierce waves, terrible storms, hell,
And even death seems no longer frightening!
This is not a memory of a spirit,
A head with grey hair, wreathed in sleep,
Or a simple measure that brings fruit.
But the word of the Father that summons comfort
And chases away sorrow.
I have placed it in my heart, to keep us from sin,
Show us the path and
Help us all our treasures to Heaven take.
In a shadow, hidden:
Do I speak, because I could tell all!?
About the offering, the test, the voice coming from
The heart. Like the tailor, fabled,
Who, in life, went to Heaven
And observed the world from above.
Thus knowing not the laws,
That in the earth, hidden, like seeds,
Spent their bread!

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

NIKOLA VUJČIĆ

SEVEN POETRY

THE LONELY SOUND

there is so much of me that the words cannot carry me. dispersed in the mirror. stopped at the rims. in the clip-clop of restless flock. that circle of movement turns into a cog so that it could catch any meaning. stones are rolling – the echo cuts the abyss. the sound is translation. things are buried in the sound. the sound is a bed. the sound is a child of touch. the sound breeds the thing. the sound is mother.
I spun a coin on the table. now I listen to its buzz and watch it taking off numberless layers of air so that it could become a coin again. oh god, why am I not that fast? fast to the point of disappearance.

DWINDLING

Every day a part of me disappears
I lose a strand of hair
Or a word that springs and loses itself
In the everyday din
My hands remain in a touch
My steps get bogged down in a place
My look sometimes leaves me at a window
That hides its curiosity like a mirror
In the morning when I wash my face the water washes out
The invisible mask under which I became familiar
With those from my dreams so that if they saw me
They would not recognize me

Every day I disappear bit by bit without noticing it
People say to me – You have changed somehow
I hardly recognized you
Your voice has become hoarse like a sound from the throat of a straw
I would like to know what a blade of grass in the field whispers to another blade
Without moving from my place but how could I hear it
I wanted life in bits at least in tiny bits
In the whirl of divided and composed
Reality that I was striving to keep
I was dwindling even when I believed in firmness
Of all the deeds and when I was alone and surrounded by distance
That thought makes me so lonely that it seems to me that the world is spinning
Somewhere far away and that there is an emptiness in me and that
Everything around me dwindles.

THE MEASURE

The past keeps on coming. It flows
from the future. It rushes in! Here,
look – the day began to glow, and then
it broke down. It tightened the morning into dusk.
What I am looking at has become closer.
And what does it measure?
That millimetre,
In this infinity!

FOREBODING

The distance is not always distant, most often it is very near.
It pertains to this table too.
Under the knife, in the hollow of the spoon, in the slices of bread, in its crusts.
In the faces crisscrossed by wrinkles.
In the words, and laughter, that shakes them.

QUESTION

In a drop, pressed by the light,
the sky lowered down, the blue colour dispersed.
Can any sky be so small? The one that is up, unattainable,
and the one that is down, that I can blur with my finger, is it
the same sky? Is it the same word?
Who can answer me?

THE YARD

One does not remember the days, but moments.
Cesare Pavese

I remember a small space full of dust, under a pear tree
with its dappled shade, when from it fell, and scared me,
a wormy, still unripe pear, green and oval, boom!
And then it rolled.
I remember the tiny stones I was fingering out of the earth,
not knowing that they were stones and what they could be used for,
so hard and inedible.
I remember the knees, blistered and bloody
from my crawling in striving to get somewhere – to a beetle that passed by,
to a butterfly that was quickly cutting the air with his wings like with scissors...
I remember that everything was distant and high.
I remember that the sun, big, round, was sitting on a branch
heaving it, and that the grass was green everywhere, behind the fence,
and further, infinitely.
These two words flowed into one another for long,
when they say grass, I say green,
when they say green, I say grass.
I remember that the sounds collided in words.
I remember that the words were breaking into neighing sounds.
I remember those words that were sufficient
for the first conversation.
I remember, how could I not, that quarrel,
when I cried fiercely.
I remember, and it is written in the scars, better than
in the words that want to describe it.

I remember that I used to approach everything
that had a name, so that I could memorize it.
I remember spelling the words aloud and
realizing even then that they
should not be believed completely
I remember the fear in steps and wobbling of knees
when I was leaving the embracing arms, I remember,
oh, how far a memory can reach.
I remember that fall which was an introduction to
all other falls.
I remember the first darkness, when I got lost,
they could not find me, so they were calling me, and I kept silent
because I was still not sure that it was my name
so that I could say – here I am!
I remember, I was dusty as a turf of earth, and I
will be like that again, they say.
I remember, though who can believe it now when
there are no more witnesses, but I will say nevertheless,
standing up, I was as tall
as any tree in the yard, and even taller!
I remember, my eyes were larger than the windows,
when I peered, one look used to encompass everything.
As in the mirror, numerous images wavered!
I remember that exit from the room into the yard,
from which I got out so long ago, but, you see, I cannot get out
from that memory.

THE LETTER OF DIFFERENCE

I prefer the ageing of things and crackling of time in the memories
to the feel of their silence in which they lurk.
I prefer that silence, deep as a grave
to the word with frail sound that rips its throat.

I prefer the hard interior of a stone
to a soft dream, sticky and transparent, like honey.
I prefer that soft dream spilled through drowsing
to the mouth that slides in speech, cutting like a knife.

I prefer the noise of paper and its distant smell of wood
to its poisonous, sharp whiteness.
I prefer that poisonous, sharp whiteness that measures
to the hollow point through which everything falls down.

I prefer a voice in the field, coming from long, dry straws
to the bloodied head of a flower in the wheat.
I prefer that swinging, bloodied head of a flower in the wheat
to the monotonous green colour that devastated everything.

I prefer moving
to growing into a place.
I prefer growing into a place
to here and now, where I arrived.

Translated from the Serbian by
Zoran Paunović

ZORAN KONSTANTINOVIĆ

WHAT DID THE SERBS READ WHEN THEY READ GOETHE...

AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF LAZA LAZAREVIĆ'S "WERTHER"

The theme "What did the Serbs read when they read Goethe..." implies a diachronic analysis of our discourse with this great German poet, a discussion about when, which and how Goethe's works were received in our country over time, and how the meaning of some of the poet's statements even tended to change. However, we will only give a short outline of this diachrony only to focus exclusively on one text, Lazarević's *Werther*, and based on the synchronic elements in this text, analyze its intertextual connection to Goethe's work.

Diachronically speaking, we need to begin with the three places where Stefan Živković Telemak quotes Goethe in his *Blagodetelna muza* (The Benevolent Muse), written in 1815, which is also the first mention of the great German poet in our literature. The first is the motto from the chapter entitled *Oblagoroždnei serdca* (The Ennobling Hearts), that is, the first four lines of Goethe's poem *Das Göttliche*, which cautions man to be noble and good because, only in this respect, does he differ from other beings. But, this request, reflecting the new, higher ideal of humanism, the ideal of Weimar Classicism, is still considered to be the view of Enlightenment in Živković's work—"for the common good". The second refers to friendship, which is, as we have also already seen in Dositej's texts, one of the great principles of Enlightenment and thus, the predominant topic in the intertextual dialogue; while the third is quite a long quote from *Werther*, a description of

nature beginning with the words: "When the mists in my beloved valley steam all around me; when the sun rests on the surface of the impenetrable depths of my forest..."[1]—which Živković emphasizes by adding that it expresses the truth and deep thoughtfulness of the "ever so wise Goethe". Still, he utilizes this quote exclusively to support his moral theory according to which nature leads to the spirit of goodness, and goodness to nature. Thereby, this *locus amoenis*—the beloved valley (das liebliche Tal)—based on how Živković describes this beloved place, is used primarily as a moral.

Nevertheless, this quote introduces Werther to our literature, and two years later, in 1817, in the 46th issue of *Novina serbskih iz carstvujuščeg grada Viene*, in response to Vidaković's question concerning Vuk's review from 1815, as to which novels he would recommend, Vuk will touch on "Goethe's *Wilhelm* and *Werther*", but only after "Wieland's *Agathon*, *Amadis*, *Oberon* and *Aristippus*", and after drawing attention to *The Golden Mirror*, *Abderiten* (The Story of the Abderites), followed by "Fénelon's *Telemachus*, Barthélemy's *Anacharsis*, Lesage's *Gil Blas* and *The Devil on Two Sticks*, Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Richardson's *Clarissa*, Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Stern's *Shandy*, and such suitable novels..." By all accounts, Vuk's message of the need for intertextual connection between Serbian and European literature came upon the advice of Kopitar, as the father of Serbian folk-literature scholarship was not very familiar with these works of literature, or not at all, which should not be held against him, because his focus was on something else, first of all, on bringing our Slavonic-Serbian literature closer to common folk speech. But, Mihailo Vitković was familiar with Goethe's *Werther*, and a year earlier, in 1816, he had already told the story about a girl in love, who died of grief after her beloved vanishes, in his novel, written as a series of letters, entitled *Spomen Milice* (Milica's Testament), based on a 1794 Hungarian revision of Goethe's *Werther* by József Kármán in his novel *Fanni hagyományai* (Fanny's Testament). Vitković's book was preceded by a Hungarian version, but it was not until much later that it was translated into Serbian and published in Pančevo under the title *Pesnikov roman* (A Poet's Novel). This version is much closer to Goethe's original than *Milica's Testament*—beginning with the choice of names (Vidanj and Lida). In the meantime, Goethe continues to be quoted, and by a variety of people, as it was a common practice at the time to quote from everywhere. In 1827, in Buda, Jovan Pačić published his poems *Sočinenija pesnoslovska* (A Collection of Poems), a poetry collection whose subtitle *Družba po Geteu* points to this poem

[1] *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, New American Library (1962), translated by Catherine Hutter, p. 24 (T/N).

as his ideal, but it is actually a loose translation, in meaning and rhythm. There were other attempts at revision, and in 1837, in his poem *Amulet*, Jovan Subotić proudly and confidently invited Goethe to also visit Serbian literature:

> Dođ' Hafisu sa drugovi,
> I Geteja ti pozovi...
>
> (Come Hafez with your friends,
> And invite Goethe...)

Though Goethe had been dead for five years at the time, our persistent dialogue with the great German poet begins specifically with Subotić. In the case of Subotić, Goethe will be his life-long mentor and model—in lyric poems, prose, and drama and even in the writing of his autobiography. He would utilize Goethe's ideas in his texts, apply the rhythm and form of Goethe's poetry and, in the style of Goethe, in his *Rimske elegije* (Roman Elegies), he also allowed himself to cross the boundaries of conventional morality of his society—still a patriarchy, beginning to develop into a civil society. Regardless of the fact that Subotić's literary work is a continuous dialogue with Goethe, he will never be able to achieve the level of his great interlocutor.

In 1844, a year after Subotić makes another futile attempt with his poetry collection entitled *Bosilje* (Basil), the first Serbian translation of *Werther* is published in Novi Sad by Jovan Rajić junior under the title *Stradanje mladog Vertera* (The Sorrows of Young Werther). We have already noted that every translation or revision is also the result of an ongoing dialogue. In 1910, six decades after Rajić's endeavor, in his review on another attempt to translate this literary work made by Branko Mušicki, Miloš Trivunac will remark that in spite of this translation, we still cannot say that we have *Werther* in Serbian, which actually means that the dialogue with this literary work is not over, and thus Trivunac feels that the most significant German novel has yet to be translated (*Stradanje mladog Vertera*. *S nemačkog preveo Branko Mušicki*, Srpski književni glasnik 6, 1905, p. 473.). Even Skerlić focuses primarily on the cultural significance of Rajić's translation, and underlines that *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in Jovan Rajić's translation reveals "that this work introduces the German meter and the German spirit to Serbian literature; that it marks the beginning of what Turgenev describes as: diving into the German sea, German sentimentality spilling into Serbian poetry..." (*Omladina i njena književnost*, Beograd 1966, pp. 65-66). Thus, Skerlić viewed this translation as more of a dialogue with a significant cultural system. And our dialogue in

this text will reflect various parallels, especially in the *Werther* of Laza Lazarević.

The story was published in 1881 and many have written about this Serbian Werther. The opinion of Miloš Trivunac, given in another text, (*O Verteru Laze Lazarevića*, Srpski književni glasnik, 24, 1910, pp. 743-755) is once again interesting from the standpoint of intertextuality. He states that the first part of the story begins with a motif of rekindled love between two people who reunite after many years, which would mean that this is a dialogue between our writer and a specific motif, in this case, the rekindled love between Janko and Marija, except that, according to Trivunac, Lazarević's treatment of the motif is similar to the novella *Immensee*, written by German novelist Theodor Storm; while the second part of Lazarević's story should be observed as a reckoning with Goethe's *Werther*, in the form of a parody similar to that of Friedrich Nicolai. It should be noted that parodying in itself is a form of dialogue with a paradigm, but that the parodied text can also be seen as a subtext, a palimpsest, which we have already discussed more closely in the introduction to this book. But, the problem with Trivunac's theory is that, by all accounts, Laza Lazarević was not familiar with either Friedrich Nicolai or Theodor Storm and, therefore, could not have been engaged in such a dialogue. All that he had at his disposal was Goethe's *Werther* and thus, he was engaged in a dialogue exclusively with this work. Although, in the case of Janko's character, both the susceptibility, reflected in the enticing effect of literature, and the distinct manner in which, in the end, this idealist and dreamer is nevertheless prepared to convert into a realist, were in all probability modelled after Goncharov, that is, his central character Oblomov. Reinhard Lauer also thought along these lines in his study *Realistisches Wiedererzählen und gelebte Literatur. Zur intertextuellen Struktur von Lazo Lazarevićs Verter* (Gelebte Literatur in der Literatur. Studien, Erscheinungsformen und Geschichte eines literarischen Motivs. Hrsg. von Theodor Wolpers, Göttingen 1986, pp. 231-254). In the structure of Lazarević's text, we also see two elements that are, in a broader sense, especially important in detecting intertextuality: retelling a well-known story, a finished text, in its entirety, and including literature as experienced by one of the characters, thereby adding a new dimension to the dialogue.

The practice of retelling an already existing text in its entirety has not yet been dealt with as a separate issue by literary science and thus, does not exist as a special term in our *Rečnik književnih termina* (Dictionary of Literary Terms), Beograd 1992, or in dictionaries of other languages. With this writing method, in addition to the structure and characters, their mutual relationships are also transferred, and often,

the events that take place in the story are transferred to the time period and circumstances of the one retelling it. An example of this transfer is Gottfried Keller's novella *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, which has been retold many times and in very diverse settings, proving each time the eternal contemporaneity of the subject of star-crossed lovers with feuding families. Still, another reason why a writer might update a theme could be his intention to criticize certain norms of behaviour within his society, and this is precisely the case with our Werther. However, in the process of transferring Goethe's text to his period and setting, Laza Lazarević consistently adheres to his model, the text of his predecessor, Goethe's *Werther.* In addition, he also engages in a direct dialogue with the prior text on four occasions by retelling it, but on various levels of meaning. The characters of Janko, Marija and Mladen coincide with the constellation that exists between Werther, Charlotte and Albert, only—once again—in a different space and time, but there is a significant difference. Goethe's solution to the conflict, suicide, is replaced by a sensible, edifying twist that will keep the hero from taking his own life. Semiotically speaking, the original sign—suicide due to ill-fated love and social neglect—is replaced with a new sign, a *semeion*—the will to live. Therefore, at first glance, this story should actually be classified under anti-Wertheriads, which many do. However, if we examine Lazarević's hero more closely and imagine an epilogue to this story in the spirit of Turgenev for example, Janko could only be depicted as an incorrigible idealist.

Let us now focus only on the discourse analysis. Lazarević introduced the first retelling of Goethe's *Werther* into his text through the character of Nedić, when he, completely by chance, gives this novel to Janko to read. However, Dr. Nedić's words actually reveal, even if in the most concise form, one of the possible interpretations of this work at the end of their dialogue: "Indeed! The number of young people that killed themselves over this! Ha-ha! Like flies! They read *Werther*, and then put a gun to their head!" This prompts Janko to reminisce, because at that moment, as if through a fog, he recalls Werther's fate. He had already read the novel a long time ago and now, he would be able to read it again. However, the process of reminiscence ends here, but the narrator steps in and continues to recap the plot of Goethe's novel in the following manner:

> The book is about how some dreamer, called Werther, comes to a place where everything is quiet and peaceful, idyllic, and there he meets a girl named Charlotte, who is engaged to another man, Albert. Werther immediately falls in love with her, loses his mind completely. Albert, who was away on a trip when Werther met Charlotte, returns and they

> marry. In order to forget his sorrows, Werther takes a new position and leaves; only, he comes back too soon and his love for Charlotte grows even stronger. Once, when her husband was not at home, he begins kissing her fervently, but immediately after, there is nothing left for him to do but to kill himself. He solemnly writes, as most do in such a situation, many letters, burns them, loads his gun, pulls the trigger and kills himself.

This recap is all the more interesting because, through this intertextual discourse, the plot of Goethe's story is given in a form that, to some extent, turns our attention away from the real plot, alienating us from it, while—in view of the context—this formulation seems to imply unfamiliarity with Goethe's novel. Still, we know that it had been available in translation for some time and we should also add that, given the cultural context at the time, the Serbian reading audience was, to a large extent, familiar with Werther in the original German version.

While the hero's disconnection in relation to the prior text was still obvious during Janko's phase of reminiscing, that is recalling this novel, because to him it feels far away, almost forgotten, his attitude quickly changes as he retells how he experienced the novel after reading it again. So, this would be the second retelling of the plot of this novel in Lazarević's text, the second direct dialogue, and this time in such a way that Janko's mental state first contrasts with the mental state of Goethe's Werther, only to, step by step, completely identify with it:

> Only after a few pages, Janko recognizes himself in Werther, and in each scene of the book, he searches for any type of resemblance to his life, no matter how small. Werther's lamenting over Charlotte is like a knife in his heart, and in his mind, he squeezes his hand, which is long gone, together with Charlotte. He liked everything, and saw himself in everything. He agrees with Werther that he doesn't need books because his heart is in enough turmoil without them; all he needs is a quiet, peaceful song, a lullaby sung to children at bedtime. And like Werther, his favourite writer is the one in whose writing he finds his world and where everything resembles the life of the reader. And in *Werther*, everything is so similar to Janko: running from the world, but looking for Marija; and the sensation that rushes through his body when, as Werther says, by chance his hand touches hers, or their feet touch under the table.

In the text of Laza Lazarević, Janko grows very close to Werther and in the end thinks of him as his blood brother, which introduces a specific semantic category from our context, our culture—blood brotherhood—and in the preface, we have Goethe addressing the reader with

the hope that this book will become their friend (Freund) if through fate or their own fault, they cannot find anyone better. In this case, Goethe is not familiar with blood brothers.

The intertextual shift in meaning takes us from friendship to blood brotherhood. In Janko's relationship with Marija there is still something missing and he wishes to make it more comparable to that of Werther, which leads to the third retelling, the third dialogue with parts of Goethe's text:

"So kind is Charlotte, who allows Werther to occasionally weep on her hand! He shall try with Marija; it is truly a divine and innocent pleasure."

Immediately followed by:

"Werther is reading Charlotte his translation of Ossian, and Janko? He shall give Marija—*Werther*—to read. Let her see his sorrow."

This emphatic identification with Werther as Janko's model, achieved through dialogue, without any gaps, also holds a very important place in the structure of the meaning of Lazarević's text. In the first part of the story, Janko is portrayed as a character with truly positive traits, just like Goethe's Werther, which was what contributed to the positive reception of Goethe's novel in our country. In both cases, the hero was someone who could count on the sympathy of the readers. Still, our readers identified more with Mladen, and the fourth retelling occurs when Mladen, in the name of these readers, reckons with Werther and Wertherism, and thus with German Romanticism in general, including Goethe—as viewed outside Germany (keep in mind the French author, Madame de Staël, and her description of Germany). So, in the fourth telling Mladen, indeed under the influence of alcohol and confusing names, is portrayed as a true, healthy Serb—perhaps this is the reason for his name—which is why his reasoning and behaviour meets with a positive response from many of the readers:

> Mladen doesn't wait for a reason to continue, 'And the thing that bothers me most is the monkeys that are our people. Everything others do—good or bad—they like. They carry on: Goethe, Goethe! Meanwhile, analyze him any which way you like, but he is the strongest in that sick fantasy. Just think of Faust! Faust is... Mladen can't think of what to say. He regrets jumping from Werther to Faust, since Faust doesn't even concern him. He swallows, and then continues: 'Faust is the same as Werther. I'm talking about merit, of course, not content. And you think Werther has some sort of value! What does he want? To do nothing, wander back and forth—idyllically—build houses of cards for children and twiddle his thumbs! A young, healthy, grown man—and an invalid. And then to make himself miserable for no good reason.'

This dialogue leaves us with two messages: first, in a modern, civilized society marriage is holy, and second, suicide because of unrequited love is a completely outdated reaction. Wertherism, ending in suicide, is an anachronism that should be discarded. The remedy for this illness is reason, regardless of the fact that the character of Katanić uses cunning and intrigue. This anti-Wertherian tendency, however, coincides with views on society in general and the concept of man in the Realism era, so that anti-Wertherism was also a sign of new perceptions among the Serbs at the time. For example, Ljubomir Nedić will talk about reading Werther as a young man and carefully hiding it from his friends at school because, as he says, "at the time, no one would dare mention the book after a discussion of the Serbian Youth about how Goethe did more harm with this novel than good with all his other books."

However, Lazarević's personal view does not coincide either with Janko's uncritical identification, or Mladen's incompetent negation, which would also include the three possible receptions or reminiscences of Goethe's text in general. Through his distancing and subtle irony, our writer places himself midway between identification and negation. This view is perhaps best expressed in the first retelling of Goethe's text. And it was the realistic method that enabled Lazarević to present, through differences in the dialogues, a multilayered, differentiated view of the novel he was retelling. This also applies to his hero, Janko, which is actually how he becomes the Serbian Werther. Because he is denied Werther's anachronistic death, but also because he is not deprived of enthusiasm and sensibility, he has to be comical in this environment or, better said, all the characters that came to this spa for treatment are equally comical. The story in general, from beginning to end, is ironic and satirical in tone; all we need to do is bring to mind the description of the social life. In this description, we only see the characters during their comfortable stay, a civil society at a spa, which in itself indicates something we had yet to adapt to in our circumstances of development and thus, wished to portray in the form of at least mild social satire.

Literary experience, which is one of the significant characteristics of Goethe's *Werther*, enabling emotional identification with the hero, plays a key role in these dialogues. For example, when mention is made of Werther's growing grief, which was evident in the letters written between the end of October and beginning of December, when Ossian was replacing Homer in his heart, therefore, just before Werther's death, we also read about Janko: "He couldn't find peace anywhere! He lies around in bed, places his hand over his eyes, and dreams..."

But, with Janko there is no mention of Ossian or Homer. In Lazarević's story, Janko does not completely identify with the experience that for him results from reading Goethe's *Werther*, but is portrayed more as

a type of man who can be characterized as someone easily influenced by literature, and even someone who has already been influenced by the works he has read. Also, Janko's coming down with Wertherian fever in the second half of the narrative is already well-prepared and triggered in the preface to the story by referring to the literature that the protagonist has read. Furthermore, based on the individual phases of plot development, the manner in which the narrative begins first with a humorous description of social life in the still unnamed Serbian spa, the chit-chat that introduces some of the typical guests and townspeople to the reader, Janko's description in this context reminds us of Oblomov from Goncharov's story, which we have already named as another most likely model, and so like Goncharov, our author also treats his protagonist with utter irony:

> In a word: this was a man with a broad chest and tight shoes. Janko comes from a wealthy family, they raised him to be spoiled, but he was also lucky in life.

The portrayal of his growth and character is then, for the most part, followed by a description of how he experiences literature, the books he has read. But, it is also said:

"... he never read *Hamlet*, or had onions and bread for dinner."

Hamlet is a hero, as we know, who thinks but is unable to act, and this also describes Janko, even if he has never read this play by Shakespeare. In this case, the disparity between reading fine literature and the fact that he was not forced to fast for dinner is not that significant, but rather the fact that Janko did not read *Hamlet*. Thus, considering the extent to which he experienced what he read, in this case, he was denied the chance to identify with Hamlet and become a Serbian Hamlet instead of becoming a Serbian Werther. But, nevertheless, he will depict Marija as an idyllic love in accordance with the rules of Romantic aesthetics, whereby love remains an unfulfilled wish. In this regard, here is a quote that points to the other works of literature he has read:

> But still, he felt emptiness in his heart, and like all young people, who find themselves in everything they read, he once considered putting on armour shoes and wandering the world in search of his ideal, just like someone he had read about in a book.

When referring to the armour shoes and the search for an ideal woman, Lazarević was no doubt thinking of Don Quixote and his Dulcinea. Besides, the motif of Don Quixote is continued throughout the rest of the story. The first dramatic confrontation, which almost led to a duel, was triggered in a tavern because Second Lieutenant Vasiljević was being ridiculed:

"Ah, good evening, *krdžalija*[2]! And where is your ... that ... dulcinea of yours?"

Vasiljević thinks this is a French word, but Janko knows what it means, and so does the reader. And it was already said earlier in the story that Janko had found his Dulcinea, but cannot admit it to himself. At the same time, he reacts like the Spanish knight when in response to this insulting statement he demands satisfaction, and a duel is avoided thanks to the intervention of brigadier Veljko. Mladen, on the other hand, when he later opposes the Wertherian views with the help of healthy literature, *The Mountain Wreath* and *La Marseillaise*, also mentions *Don Quixote*, but this definitely should not be understood as an expression of sympathy for this knight of miserable appearance, but more in terms of Cervantes's break with the idealistic past of the social class of knights, whose members were referred to in the story as Janko's spiritual ancestors.

Experiencing literature is, therefore, a significant character trait of our Serbian Werther as well: it is manifested as a distinct method of referencing and quite naturally exceeds the scope of referencing in Goethe's *Werther* because Lazarević is in a position to refer to writers and poets who came after Goethe. In this regard, we also encounter references that are made without the mention of the author. For example, when he meets Marija again, his young love, at the spa, Janko had just read a novel by a Russian author, but he does not mention the name of the author or the novel, in which this author "with his anatomic pen laughs at the common misconception of idealists who believe that a young man and woman, who are neither kith nor kin, can love each other as brother and sister", and "horrified" by this statement also throws away Goethe's book. This actually reveals the mechanism by which literature is able to have emotional impact on Janko. That is to say, in reading the Russian novel, he becomes aware of his mental state, of the love that is growing more fervent: he defends himself and does not want to believe what his model is saying. The novel in question is Goncharov's *A Common Story*, written in 1847. And the mentioned paraphrased quote about the impossibility of a man and a woman loving each other as brother and sister is the opinion of Goncharov as a narrator, which in the original reads:

> This is why it is said that friendship between a man and woman is impossible, because what is called friendship between them is either the beginning or the end of love, or else indeed is love itself.[3]

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[2] Turkish outlaw, bandit, highwayman in the last century (T/N).

[3] *A Common Story*, Ivan Aleksandrovich Goncharov, W. Heinemann, London (1894), translated from the Russian by Constance Garnett, p. 211 (T/N).

So, it was not only *Werther* that served as a model, but also Goncharov's *Oblomov*. And the mention of Victor Hugo thus means that Janko also identifies with the protagonists of novels written by this French author. If by referring to Don Quixote, he merely personified the platonic perception of love as this character and identified with the characters of Victor Hugo, he associates modern French novels with adultery, and wants to suppress his knowledge of them. From the intertextual standpoint, however, they are present as palimpsests. Yet, they are actually images of real life.

Thus, the intertextual analysis of our *Werther*, the search for shifts in the meaning of the prior text to a new meaning, to the *semeions* in Lazarević's text, also brings us to some models that are characteristic of literary realism which, in terms of culture, indicates that we also have the desire to touch on reality. But, through a critical reckoning with obsolete thinking in order to introduce new social norms, the first conflict in *Werther*—the love triangle, exaltation, instigating suicide—transferred to the Serbian setting of that period, ends with a reasonable solution. We can follow all this by comparing the text to the prior text and following the dialogue of our writer with the main, prior text. In doing so, Lazarević does not share the extreme views of either Janko or Mladen, but relativizes them. As a whole, his text is nevertheless also an anti-Wertheriad, but an anti-Wertheriad that is adapted to our circumstances. Our Werther is made to suit the views of our early bourgeois class on Wertherism. This class originated mainly from a sober-minded class of merchants, who took the lead in the society of our small country through persistence and without much hesitation.

This is the reason why our Werther does not commit suicide but, he nevertheless remains a lonely idealist. Accordingly, comparing our text to the prior text also illustrates the distinct outlook of our society towards the significant spiritual formation of European society, towards Wertherism, and as a result, our mentality. It might be interesting if we were to remind ourselves at this point of the effects intertextual dialogue with Goethe's *Werther* had on literature in other countries. For example, in his story *Poor Liza* Karamzin wanted, for the sake of reconciliation and in the spirit of enlightenment, to solve the problem of social differences by forgiving the sins of his protagonist, a young Muscovite. As opposed to this great Russian writer, Ugo Fuscolo turned his Werther into a revolutionary, who fought for national ideals of the Italian people, while Chateaubriand's Werther, called René, will flee from the ideas of enlightenment to a deserted island, and finally, among the English revisions, the most characteristic is the anonymously published *Letters of Charlotte during Her Connexion with Werther*, in which Lotte first boasts to her friend about Werther's love, but at the same time

condemns him for being so passionate, and in the end, informs her of his suicide with relief.

All these variations represent an intertextual dialogue with the same and authentic material (it is indeed taken from Goethe's life, but also his social context), the same theme (the love of two young people, wherein she is already engaged to someone else), and the same impulse, the one that motivates such themes (the road to suicide as a way of escaping unrequited love). So, the dialogue is manifold. This is not only a dialogue that also includes contemporary society, but it is unique as well in the fact that, in the case of our author, it includes, to an even greater extent, literary experiences within the framework that reveals his text corpus or hypertext.

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

JOVAN DELIĆ

THE SEA GRAVE AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I

Milutin Bojić is another poet with whom Ivan V. Lalić had engaged in a double dialogue: by writing an essay on his poetry and by establishing an intertextual relationship with his poetry in his own verses.

One would have to live for many years to create something worthy and mature—it seems Ivan V. Lalić also had this, many times restated, notion in mind when he began writing his essay on Bojić's poetry.

Bojić's fate as a man and poet—his death at the age of twenty-five in 1917, the darkest year of World War I, far from his homeland, in Thessaloniki, having written poetry that only hints at maturity, but undoubtedly confirms exceptional talent—Lalić perceives as summed up "bitterness of the expression of a poet who writes in this language": he is allowed to announce and foretaste his abilities, without fully actualizing them, only confirming "the paradox of a prematurely deceased poet", "the paradox of both the comprehensiveness and roundedness of an uncompleted work of literature".[1]

This "roundedness" is, therefore, violent and unnatural: the "circle" was completed by death and not the poet's hand. Even when he was suffering from a deadly fever, Bojić was nevertheless preoccupied with his future projects and "extremely aware that as a poet, he had just begun to utter his true words".

For this reason, Bojić's poetry, interrupted by premature death, appears to Ivan V. Lalić "as a kind of apotheosis of the magnitude of interrupted growth". In Bojić, Lalić sees an *extremely self-aware poet*,

[1] Ivan V. Lalić, „O poeziji Milutina Bojića", *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 4, *O poeziji*, priredio Aleksandar Jovanović, Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd, 1997, p. 56.

who "knew precisely the direction he could and should take", which is why "his death is so compellingly devastating".[2]

Then, Lalić takes us back to the context of Serbian *Moderna*: Bojić's poems were published in *The Serbian Literary Herald* as early as 1911, followed by his drama "Kraljeva jesen" (The Autumn of a King) only a year later, at the age of twenty. Jovan Skerlić chose Bojić's collection of poems "Pesme" (Poems) (1914) for his final literature review because he saw him as a promising, new addition to Serbian literature, and in his "Istorija nove srpske književnosti" (The History of New Serbian Literature), he singled out Bojić and Mirko Korolija due to the distinctive poetic style and originality they were bringing to Serbian poetry. The righteously inclined Lalić added that Mirko Korolija was also not "accurately evaluated and correctly perceived within the rugged streams of Serbian poetry" and that, in his opinion, Korolija's poetry had a motivating and inspirational effect on Bojić. In Greece, during World War I, V. Ćorović predicted that Bojić would be "the most productive poet in emigration", publish his "Pesme bola i ponosa" (Poems of Suffering and Pride) (1917), and earn the right to be described as the "king of words" by B. Lazarević.

After World War I, before the onslaught of avant-garde, anti-war poets, who challenged tradition, Bojić "sank into the background" and fell into the category of second-rate poets whose voice was viewed as an echo of Dučić and Rakić. Lalić perceives his review as an act of rectifying such assessments, emphasizing a significant theoretical view that enables the revaluation of tradition—a view essentially Eliotonian:

> The opportunity and need for a more accurate assessment of his poetic efforts arise only after Bojić's deepest and most interesting cadences began reaching—across an arc of years—voices that were new and different in maturity, but able to sense the type of kinship that stimulates organic growth of tradition. It is the moment we are living in today; the moment of re-examining our poetic heritage from the standpoint of contemporary developments in our poetry.[3]

In that revaluation of tradition today—and *today* is 1974—and his dialogue with tradition, Bojić is *unavoidable*, and his contribution to Serbian poetry *undeniable*, Lalić states, emphasizing the importance of Bojić's ascent into spaces that the unfortunate poet "only *anticipated* correctly", but also the "*obvious significance*" of what he succeeded and managed to express in the time he had.

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[2] Ibid, p.57.
[3] op. cit., p. 59.

Could it be that Lalić also sees a bit of himself on Bojić's continued path: Bojić was a poet with *pronounced autopoetic self-awareness*, a pretty clear idea as to what direction to take next, and a desire to create *greater poetic aggregates*, while he had already anticipated the *inspirational aspect of Byzantium* and engaged in *poetic dialogue with the Bible*? Is it that Lalić recognizes in Bojić a fellow poet-ancestor, and is paying him due respect?

Bojić's poetic productivity lasted only seven years (1910-1917), but in this short period, Ivan V. Lalić recognizes several phases, which are the result of Bojić's rapid growth and deepening his vision of the world, just as, on the other hand, this rapid growth was inevitably accompanied by poems and verses ranging in quality. Lalić interprets Bojić's obsession with future poems as a manifestation of the author's self-awareness, that is, his dissatisfaction with what he expressed and wrote. In the seven years, the poet will journey from lyrical simplified sensuality to complex poetic visions of history as human fate".[4]

In the beginning, Bojić was noticeably indebted to Dučić and Rakić, who were "established names and, to a significant degree, shape the Serbian poetry scene at the time", but "his distinctiveness is just as obvious", and Ivan V. Lalić describes this distinctiveness as "unfermented restlessness which gives colour to his perception of the world". In the beginning, Bojić is a poet of youth for whom "(...) youth is a universal life force, and passion is its strength"; his poetry is "a raw impulse of an energy that seeks to be affirmed, without an axis around which to crystalize, but aware of its *distinctiveness* that seeks to be identified",[5] which is evident in his very first published poem, *Vrane* (The Crows), where the keyword is *Will*:

Ala je užasno s drugima jednak biti.

(*How awful it is to be like everyone else.*)

Thus, Lalić considers Bojić's first phase (1910-1912), especially his first poetic cycle, to be marked by pathos "of a turbid unfermented feeling of strength", sonorously shaped into rhyming twelve-syllable verses. It is often characterized by "incoherence of the poetic narrative and ambiguity of the poet's experience, *who rages in pain but isn't unhappy*".

In the second poetic cycle, Bojić is "a poet of perception and sensuality": the poetic energy focuses on "celebrating life perceived as a feast of the senses", and Lalić sees the following verse from the sonnet *Himna* (The Hymn) (1911) as a pattern:

[4] op. cit., p. 63.
[5] op.cit., p. 61.

Hoću te, Živote, i strasno te štujem.

(*I want you, Life, and I worship you fervently*.)

As a poet of passion, Bojić is at his best when he weaves into his poems "external motifs", especially biblical, like in the poems *Zaljubljeni David* (David in Love) and *Saloma* (Salome).

Lalić thinks that Bojić had already discovered, in his first development phase, the language and sound, rhythm and rhyme, which he will use in his best poems, but in a stricter, more organized, and refined manner.

Thereafter, Lalić recalls an essay on Bojić, written by Miodrag Pavlović, who praised his work, and joins Pavlović in pointing out "a set of elements, which were relevant to the development of Bojić's poetry". Dučić played a significant role in Bojić's development as a poet and, to a much lesser degree, Rakić. He just skimmed over Baudelaire. Then, there was Edmond Rostand and a few minor French poets, as well as Wilde, who was trendy at the time, and who steered him towards the *Bible*. Bojić was also drawn to German poets and German translations, which was how he became familiar with Swinburne and Verhaeren, and especially the somewhat older and more established Mirko Korolija, who was at one point a highly esteemed poet, featured in anthologies. Lalić believes that Korolija might have influenced Bojić "with a poetic style that inflames the Mediterranean, southern spiritedness around motifs of love and passion, an ancient sensuality.[6]

Bojić's sonnets could have been modeled on those of Korolija, and even Ž. Milićević pointed out the similarities between Korolija's *Himna Vardaru* (Hymn to the Vardar) and Bojić's *Himna pokoljenja* (Hymn of Generations).

Bojić's second creative phase (1912-1915) is characterized by a few simultaneous and rapid processes: he continues to write "in line with his poetry of passion" which leads to "samples of more layered and complex love lyrics", however, his keen and intense interest in history (the drama "The Autumn of a King", 1912) also permeates his verses, as well as the turmoil of war and momentous historical events. Lalić places special emphasis on the poems *Svakidašnja pesma* (An Everyday Poem), *Jesenja šetnja* (Autumnal Stroll) and especially *Jezero* (The Lake)—"an extremely calm, collected and deep moment in Bojić's love poetry"—and then reveals Bojić's affinity for the sonnet and his understanding of "the architecture of the sonnet, which is sturdy and precise: conjoined tercets and quatrains, that critical joint in the structure of a sonnet, which Bojić (...) almost always flawlessly executes".[7]

[6] op.cit., p. 63.
[7] op.cit., p.65.

This could be Lalić's significant autopoetic view on the sonnet and its "architecture", in other words, on the importance of the "critical joint" between tercets and quatrains. And when Lalić adjudicates on something in this area, undoubtedly relying on his long and profound experience in translating, then it holds great significance.

This phase takes place during a time of war (the Balkan Wars and the beginning of World War I); "the response to the challenges of the period (...) is layered, and inconsistent concerning the intensity of the message"; this poetry expresses both the ecstasy of victory and its flipside—doubt and anxiety, which Lalić, regarding M. Pavlović, associates with the dichotomy of national consciousness at that point: "the nation was supposed to celebrate its victories and hold services for the dead and the destitute". The War triggered in Bojić "a profound process": he begins "*to write about history as the great tragedy of human fate*", all the more passionately because "Bojić had a certain predilection for history as a poetry theme".[8]

Could it be that Lalić's experience as a poet is revealed here: from the poem *Zarđala igla* (A Rusty Needle) to an intense experience of Byzantium? The same applies to the statement regarding Bojić's poem *Zemlja oluje* (The Country of Storms), which Lalić considers to be one of his best works: in this poem, "*the experience of the current moment of history rises to a higher level of transmission, spirals into a vision of history as a phenomenon that goes beyond the coordinates of given space and time*". Lalić is looking for "new accents" in Bojić's poetry about history: in the poem, *Razvejane vatre* (Scattered Fires) "there is growing doubt as to the course of human exploits, prompted by a vision of firestorms of human creation in an endless night of time":[9]

Kroz vekove duge pale se i trnu
Vatre ljudske moći, vere i saznanja...
(...)
Bog istine same pepelištem luta
Gde misao ljudska smrvljena se zgara;
(...)
On, grobar džinovskih ugaslih vatara;

(Over centuries-long, they are set ablaze and quenched
Fires of human power, faith, and knowledge...
(...)
God of truth roams through the ashes

[8] op.cit., p.65.
[9] op.cit., p. 66.

Where human thought, shattered, burns;
(...)
He, the gravedigger of massive extinguished fires;)

In the poem *Herostrati*, this vision obtains "a concrete tone" by adhering to "the experience of a moment filled with trepidation":

Iznad naših grana leden vetar briše;
Zalud naša delta i napori dugi:
Ni rušiti ništa mi nemamo više,
I hramove već su porušili drugi...;[10]

(Icy winds sweep above our branches,
Our chisels and long labour all in vain:
There is nothing left to tear down,
Even the temples have already been torn down by others...;)

In the poem *Deus Deorum*, "the gravedigger of massive extinguished fires" is identified as Eternal Doubt, thus reaching the "zenith of the poet's skepticism". That "gangrene of doubt" had to have been very familiar and well-known to Lalić, all the more so because, in the deep subtext of all three of Bojić's poems, Lalić sees the poem *Himna vekova* (Hymn of Centuries) by Vojislav Ilić, in which history is disguised as "a funeral with horrid songs". Like the previous three, the poem *Hor* (The Choir) is also published in 1912, expressing "the anticipation of a shift in history" with all the horrors, hopes, and deceptions:

Mi čekamo užas iz dana u dan
Verujemo gordo u sunce i boje.
U želje i dela i ideje svoje.
U sav svet taj možda i lažan i čudan...[11]

(From day to day we await the horror
We believe proudly in the sun and colors.
In our desires and deeds and ideas.
In the whole world that may be false and bizarre...)

This is why Lalić sees the proximity of the poem *The Country of Storms* to these poems as "one of the pure happy moments in Bojić's poetry", in which history is perceived as "the actual link between

[10] op.cit., p. 66.
[11] op.cit., p. 67.

human fate and specific soil", as a timely arrangement of time, where "century above a century in the rock sleep", where centuries settle like layers of history coated with heterogeneous blood:

> Mačevi dački, sekire Japoda,
> Legije rimske i horde Tatara,
> Ili vitezovi s vizantijskih voda
> Krvavili su ova polja stara.[12]
>
> (Dacian swords, Japodian axes,
> Roman legions and hordes of Tatars,
> Or knights from Byzantine waters
> Covered these old fields with blood.)

The poem was written in the name of the people who were fated to be tied to this soil and "by their crude soul became great", and ends with a dramatic question that remained unanswered:

> Jesi li sita krvi što spasava?
>
> (Are you sated with the blood that brings salvation?)

This question becomes even more dramatic because it was uttered on the eve of the greatest bloodshed, which subsequently validates the poet's vision of history and his native soil as layers of bones and blood of generations.

As he writes about Bojić's vision and sense of history, Ivan V. Lalić formulates *his own fundamental poetic views on poetry and history.* He believes that the sum of experiences "accumulated and expressed in the language of poetry", can be reduced to the conclusion that "poetry expresses permutations of a very limited number of experiential ancient elements: *love, death, time, space*". History is also seen within these coordinates:

> History as a marriage of collective human efforts and a particular time and space, history as the continuity of human fate—and as the right to continuity, the right to remember the human determinant—is a subject of interest to a poet as a way of observing and qualifying the course of time, relevant to the context of his message". And this is where Lalić refers to Aristotle, who thinks that poetry should represent the universals and historiography the particulars. "Sense of history, or a

[12] op.cit., p. 67.

> poet's historical consciousness, is a very unique and intense aspect of a poet's attitude towards space and time, an attitude which is expressed as an integral part of his message.[13]

No doubt, we are talking about Lalić's personal views on poetry, seeking to rise to universal validity; about views on poetry that are at the very foundation of Lalić's sense of the world. Writing about Milutin Bojić is the perfect opportunity and incentive for articulating and verifying them. Because, according to Lalić, Bojić had a poetic sense of history—and he succeeded in taking his historical experience and "raising it to a universal level, adding exceptional appeal to his message".

When it comes to Bojić's vision of history, Lalić also problematizes Bojić's attitude towards the *Bible*. In his first phase (1910-1912), Bojić describes history "from a decorative and trivial standpoint", while the universal quality of his sense of history, the pervading spirit of several of the mentioned poems, indicates Bojić's experience of the *Bible* "was more layered and profound, influencing his most valuable poetic revelations".[14]

Perhaps Ivan V. Lalić is describing not only his unfortunate predecessor, but also a spiritual brother, even more so because he finds that there is a direct link between Bojić's experience of the *Bible* and his interest in Byzantium, which Stanislav Vinaver confirms in his account, and thus concludes:

> For Bojić, the Byzantium he pursued was only a type of spiritual homeland, which he wanted to reach with his poem; a spiritual homeland that would enable him to perceive more clearly the contours of the inherited universal human drama, and interpret it through a specific historical experience.[15]

Universal human drama, "interpreted" through specific historical experience, is perceived more clearly from the spiritual homeland of Byzantium—are we not at the very heart of the poetics of Ivan V. Lalić? The critical statement about Bojić's poetry and poetics becomes an exceptional, and autopoetic expression.

Ivan V. Lalić notes that I. Sekulić and M. Pavlović "insisted on the significance of history" in Bojić's spiritual world, and then concludes that the mode of "raising historical experience to the level of a vision with a universal message takes shape in several of Bojić's poems", written in 1913: *Vera* (Faith), *Sin velmoža* (The Son of a Squire), *Strah* (Fear),

[13] op.cit., p. 68.
[14] op.cit., p. 69
[15] op.cit., p. 69.

Protivnici (Rivals), *Jesen na Vardaru* (Autumn on the Vardar), *Himna pokolenja* (Hymn of Generations) and *U dan mrtvih* (On the Day of the Dead). Enemies are united by "the sorrow of eternal tides" (*Rivals*), and the poem *Autumn on the Vardar*, presents a vision of "events moving in a circle". The final verse: "Even the bush of forgetfulness blooms", touches on the poem *Hymn of Generations*: the dead are left alone and sink into oblivion, after the exultation of victory.

Of the poems written between 1915 and 1917, Lalić singles out Bojić's poem *Kroz pustinju* (Across the Desert), and remarks that it was "built on biblical parallels", shaping Bojić's fundamental view on the history of his people, which is "universal concerning human experience in general".

According to Lalić, the poem *The Sowers* is elevated "to a higher level", moulding the awareness of the tradition of tragedy in national history into "a vision of the super dimensional aspect of that tragedy":

> All the universe became our infinite field
> For this seed of honor which will grow to the sun.
> Oh, Lord, did you not punish us enough?
> It is harvest time, time to cut the wheat,
> Time to raise the stone that covers the tomb.
> (...)
> Proud, though we have no kinfolk nor roof
> Intrepid we shall face new cemeteries.[16]

The verse of the poem *Belo usijanje* (White Heat):

> A ja znam na pesku dići Jerusalim
>
> (And I can build Jerusalem on sand)

most accurately sums up the "poetic credo of Bojić's later poems".[17]

The poem *Bez uzvika* (Without a Cry), summarizes very calmly and unpathetically the tragic historical experience of an exiled people, that is, their soldiers: in exile, they are undefeated and discover the deeper truth about themselves; moreover, they also broaden their understanding

[16] Translated by Mihailo Đorđević, *Serbian poetry and Milutin Bojić*, East European quarterly, New York (1977), p. 90, (T/N).

[17] Ivan V. Lalić, „O poeziji Milutina Bojića", *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 4, *O poeziji*, priredio Aleksandar Jovanović, Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd, 1997, p. 71.

of the meaning of a homeland: it cannot be destroyed by occupation or the conquests of empires; it is in the people and their awareness of the continuity of their tragic experience; each exile carries his homeland within. Lalić is explicit and unambiguous in his assessment:

> The young poet demonstrated in this poem that he had experienced actual history more deeply and intensively than many of his elder and more famous contemporaries.[18]

Lastly, Lalić takes note of one more constellation of Bojić's poems, which might be good to remember: *Without Fatherland*, *Women*, *Untold Thoughts*, *The Snowstorm*, *Narandžin cvet* (Orange Blossom), *Self-Awareness*, *Tuđoj krvi* (Another's Blood), *Before the Promised Land*, all from Bojić's last phase, which he concludes with the famous poem *The Sea Grave*.

But, we will discuss this poem a little later.

Ivan V. Lalić sees Bojić's dramatic poetry as a component of his poetic work, expressing undeniable disagreement with M. Pavlović's statement that with the death of Bojić, Serbian drama had lost more than Serbian poetry: for Lalić, Bojić's work is, first of all, lyric, and then dramatic, while the latter refers to historical dramas in verse: "The Autumn of a King" and "Uroševa ženidba*"* (The Marriage of Uroš).

Although he wrote "The Autumn of a King" at the age of twenty, he demonstrates great diligence in his preparatory work and just as much interest in history, which determined his poetry to a great degree. The drama is much more than a poeticized image of the fragments of the past; here, Bojić points out certain universal motifs, linking them to the character of Hegumen Danilo:

> In the drama, Danilo is meant to represent conscious service to history and its 'great momentum': a dispassionate law that moves experience in one given direction.[19]

According to Bojić's stage directions, Danilo "speaks for the tragedy of Law and God, and the future is what sets in motion the actions of both the king and Danilo. 'The Autumn of a King' was on its way to becoming, but did not, a drama "with a vision of the mechanism of history," says Lalić. However, it does confirm that this poet did possess a valuable "sense of history", to which Ivan V. Lalić, perhaps influenced by Eliot, undeniably attached great importance.

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[18] op.cit., p. 72.
[19] op.cit., p. 75.

> "The Marriage of Uroš" (1916) was written in wartime and although it was labelled "a comedy in three acts", its comic elements do not hold precedence. In this drama, Lalić sees an inherent presence of tragedy in the confrontation between two antipodes: the father, Dušan the Mighty, and the son, Uroš the Weak—but he also recognizes a connection between the poem *Fear* and the fundamental problem of this drama. Lalić also gives Bojić credit for the verse structure: he adapted our symmetrical twelve-syllable verses—the counterpart of the French alexandrine—to the stage, speech requirements, and the functionality of the drama.[20]

In the conclusion of this review, Lalić does not hide how impressed he is by the "rapid ascending line, (...) the exuberant growth and maturity of an extraordinary talent, interrupted almost at the beginning"; recognizing in Bojić "a serious poetic effort, feverishly focused on major topics". He took on a great deal, quickly developed and expressed "an entire program", but then focused on "shaping one great recognizable topic"—the topic of history. He sensed that much of his strength lay in the language; what he should create and which path to take. In terms of verse, he relied on Dučić and Rakić, but "indisputably moved forward", because his twelve-syllable verses "possess a different, more unrestrained tone". He rejuvenated and enriched the rhyme scheme. He subordinated his temperament to his talent, and died "unreconciled with death, discontented" because he was looking to the future and his unrealized great poem, although—considering the accomplished work in the twenty-five years he was given—he could have died "with a smile of satisfaction on his lips". Ivan V. Lalić sees and perceives him as an authentic poet and concludes his review with a paradox:

> The paradox of a poet who dies prematurely is that he lives on in the future, echoing the past, which he wanted, unsuccessfully, to deny and outgrow in the course of that future.[21]

II

Ivan V. Lalić is one of Bojić's continuators in the future with his poem *The Sea Grave*, whose subtext is Bojić's great poem of the same name.

Milutin Bojić wrote his poem *The Sea Grave* in a "deadly sweat, flaming fever", in his dying moments in 1917; at a "time of death" for the Serbs, when the Greek seas were transformed into blue graves of Serbian soldiers. Bojić's poem was written, "at the scene".

[20] op.cit., p. 77.
[21] op.cit., p. 78.

We gather from the notes at the end that Ivan V. Lalić's poem, with the identical title, was written in 1985 on the island of Corfu and assumed its final form four years later, in 1989 in Belgrade: shortly before the major conflicts in Yugoslavia and its dissolution.

These two poems may be regarded as a dialogue between the two Serbian poets at the beginning and end of the century, from the standpoint of two turning points in national, but also world history. Lalić "tailored" his poem according to Bojić's; one might even say that Lalić's poem is "a rhythmical quotation", that is, an "implicant" of Bojić's. Both contain fourteen strophes, four of which—the first, sixth, tenth, and fourteenth—are written in the format of a pseudo-hexameter, and the remaining ten as symmetrical twelve-syllable verses—"alexandrines"—one of the favorite verses of Serbian modern poetry. Bojić's alexandrines are more exact, while two of Lalić's verses—the third line of the third strophe (*While cooling in the midday mist*) and the first line of the twelfth strophe (*And I say: rest in peace withal*)—have one less syllable.

The "hexameter" strophes are comprised of an odd number of "full" lines, with fourteen syllables each, and an even number of "half-lines", with seven syllables. With a few exceptions, the former consist of six and the latter of three accentual units. It may be possible that both Bojić and Lalić resemble Vojislav Ilić in this respect: the remains of "Vojislavianism" is sensed during the entire Modernist era, even though his peak has already subsided, and for Lalić, Vojislav Ilić is the most significant poet of national tradition.

In Bojić's case, the "alexandrine" was in the spirit of the times, while in both their cases, this could have been a "wink" at Dučić, who was obviously their favoured poet and high authority.

The arrangement of the strophes in both poems is marked by the numbers three and four, or seven, which in Bojić's case, perhaps, did not necessarily have to have a symbolic meaning, but for Lalić it definitely did. The combination or synthesis of the numbers three and four, Lalić perceived as a cosmic symbol, the unity of Heaven and Earth, which is obvious from his review on Vasko Popa.

That is to say, in writing about the "layout of the architecture" in "Sporedno nebo" (Secondary Heaven), Ivan V. Lalić reveals "symbolic precision":

> The book is divided into seven cycles, each consisting of seven poems. The primary symbolic meaning of the number seven is perfect order, achieved in a complete period or cycle. (At the same time, the number seven signifies the unity of the principles represented by the num-

bers four and three, which means inscribing or superposing a triangle that symbolizes the sky, on a rectangle that symbolizes Earth; finally, the number seven creates a basic series of tones, colours, and planetary spheres; for poetic intention, almost all these meanings are highly functional).[22]

It is difficult to believe that Ivan V. Lalić recognized these meanings of numbers, or triangles and rectangles in Popa's poetry, without noticing the same in the composition of Bojić's, and especially his own poem: he, therefore, constructed his poem on the cosmic symbols of Heaven and Earth, in other words, perfection and order.

Both poems (*The Sea Grave*) have the following order of strophes: the first is a hexameter (there are a total of *four*), followed by *four* twelve-line strophes, then after the second and third "hexameters", *three* twelve-line strophes follow, and the end the fourth hexameter. Therefore: 1—4—1—3—1 – 3—1.

Earlier, we mentioned Dučić. Miodrag Pavlović was the first to mention him in connection with the poem *The Sea Grave*: he asserts that in the subtext of Bojić's poem, especially in the second strophe, there is a hint of the first of Dučić's *Adriatic Sonnets*, more precisely, the tercet, and concludes by underlining the differences between the poets:

> While Dučić successfully evokes the atmosphere of the landscape, Bojić, gushingly, with hymnal pathos, speaks to his people, the dead and the living, using nature and the night only as the background of his narrative.[23]

Pavlović's words, however, oblige me to cite and review Dučić's entire sonnet, especially since it was included in the *Anthology* of Bogdan Popović[24] and must have been held in high esteem by young Symbolist poets at the time:

> Samo ja i jedro iznad mrtve vode,
> Nepokorni, mračni, nemi podjednako!
> Noć... Mirisni vetar provejava lako,
> I oblaci tiho i nečujno hode.

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[22] Ivan V. Lalić, "O poeziji Vaska Pope", *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 4, *O poeziji*, Beograd, 1997, p. 113.

[23] Miodrag Pavlović, "Milutin Bojić", foreword in: *Milutin Bojić*, "Živi pesnici", priredio Miodrag Pavlović, Beograd, Nolit, 1963, p. 28.

[24] *Antologija Bogdan Popović*, priredio Predrag Palavestra, Antologijska edicija Deset vekova srpske književnosti, Book 108, Izdavački centar Matice srpske, Novi Sad, 2012, p. 150

Daleko je kopno: zaman pogled ode
Da ga traži morem. Ostrvo je svako
U večernju maglu uvilo se tako,
I duboki snovi nad vodama brode.

Mir, tišina smrti... Ali iznad mora,
Često ko da čujem glas dalekog hora,
Tajanstvenoga, strašnog, u dugoj tišini.

To se bude groblja pod širokom vodom!
Počinje opelo... Noć nad crnim svodom
Šumi psalme, paleć' sveće u visini.[25]

(Only my sail and I over dead waters,
Disobedient, dark, silent!
Night... A fragrant wind blowing softly,
And clouds quietly and silently floating above.

Far from the mainland: a look across the sea
Searching in vain. Each island
Thus cloaked with evening fog,
And deep dreams sailing across the waters.

Peace, the silence of death... But above the sea,
I seem to often hear the sound of a distant choir,
Mysterious, eerie, in the long silence.

Must be the graves awakening beneath the infinite waters!
A prayer begins... Darkness above the black arch
Murmurs psalms, lighting candles high above.)

Dučić's sonnet is an exemplary composition, in keeping with the classic sonnetic conflict between a quatrain and a tercet. That "joint" between the first and second part of the sonnet—which Ivan V. Lalić insists on—is achieved masterfully. The quatrains provide an image "above the dead waters": present is only the lyrical subject and the sail—an old couple, well-known from romantic poetry, which evokes Lermontov's poem *The Sail* (Parus)—both "restless, dark, silent". Then we have the *night*, which is also characteristic of Bojić's poem, followed by wind and clouds. In the second strophe, we find out that he is "far from the mainland" and is searching for it in vain: the islands are

[25] Jovan Dučić, iz "Jadranskih sonata", 1., *Antologija Bogdan Popović*, p. 150.

cloaked with evening fog. The last verse of the second quatrain introduces "deep dreams", which "sail across the waters", in other words, it signifies a shift, which will bring to the fore the inner and underwater world of the tercet.

The first, short, elliptical syntactic unit in the first verse of the first tercet (Peace, the silence of death...) seems to be in agreement with the motif of *dead waters* from the first quatrain, followed by a shift emphasized by the conjunction *but* at the beginning of the next syntactic unit. The lyrical subject hears the "sound of a distant choir" coming from *beneath the sea*, mysterious and eerie in the silence of the night. While the quatrains represent "an objective image" of what is found *above the dead waters*, the tercets reflect a world "beneath the sea", through the *response of the lyrical subject*.

In the second tercet, "the graves are awakening beneath the infinite waters", and "a prayer begins"—obviously also the motifs of Bojić's poem. The arch is *black*—a colour forced by both poets—and this colour will not be offset even by the metaphor "candles high above", which the darkness lights while murmuring psalms. The lyrical subject is passive: he absorbs sensations, experiences them intensely, reflecting everything through his response.

Even though Dučić's poem is not patriotic, but primarily symbolic and metaphysical, the images of the underworld could have, and probably must have, inspired Bojić, especially the motifs of prayer and graves "beneath the infinite waters". Hence, Dučić's first *Adriatic Sonnet* is definitely in the subtext of Bojić's poem.

The poetic image, that is, the comparison in Bojić's fourth strophe, is also reminiscent of Dučić:

> To je hram tajanstva i grobnica tužna
> Za ogromnog mrca, *ko naš um beskrajna*,
> Tiha kao ponoć vrh ostrvlja južna,
> Mračna kao savest hladna i očajna.[26]
>
> (This mysterious temple, this tragic grave
> For a common corpse, *infinite as our mind*,
> Is calm as midnight over a south island
> Yet dark *as a cold and desperate conscience*.)

The "tragic grave" "for a common corpse" is compared to the size and infinity of our mind, and its darkness to our conscience. In both

[26] Sabrana dela Milutina Bojića, 1. Poezija, priredio Gavrilo Kovijanić, Beograd, Narodna knjiga, 1978, p. 222.

cases, the concrete is compared to the abstract, whereby the comparison to our conscience is especially successful. A "troubled conscience" is the second participant in the comparison in Dučić's famous image of a calm sea:

> Kô nemirna savest što prvi put spava,
> Tako spava more u nemom blistanju.[27]
>
> (Like a troubled conscience, sleeping for the first time,
> So sleeps the sea in silent sparkles.)

In Dučić's sonnet, the second participant in the comparison is abstract, emphasized by inversion, and like in Bojić's poem, it is the *conscience*. Considering Dučić's prestige on the Serbian poetry scene at the time, it is very likely that his images and verses had influenced Milutin Bojić.

Bojić's poem, to use Lalić's words, "sprouted from first-hand, moving experiences", who then adds:

> We are familiar with what Bojić must have seen to have written this poem. Behind him stand columns of weary, living skeletons, who arrived in Corfu and continued to Vido, the "island of death" where they died in massive numbers. We have seen the photographs from Vido, scenes that Bojić saw with his own eyes; the skeletal bodies stacked like logs, awaiting a peeling *trabàccolo*[28] to take them out into the open sea and cast them into the water, silently and matter-of-fact. In our consciousness these photographs are associated with scenes captured by cameras some decade later, in the war that followed; we know these living skeletons and piles of dead bodies, like in a timber yard, from the concentration camps of destruction, the windswept entrances to cremation furnaces. Mass death had already shown and alluded to its later face in Albania, the face of the great defeat of humanity.[29]

So says Lalić. And then, using poetic license, which an essay allows, and which is hardly permissible for "scientists", he predicts that Bojić's later development would be in accordance with his idea at the time of a "new epopee", which implies a vision of the future of Serbian

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[27] *Dela Jovana Dučića*, Vol. 1, *Pesme*, priredio Rajko Petrov Nogo, Beograd, Rad, Trebinje: Dučićeve večeri poezije, Podgorica: Oktoih, 2000, p. 37.

[28] Italian for a type of Adriatic Sea sailing coaster (T/N).

[29] Ivan V. Lalić, "O poeziji Milutina Bojića", *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 4, *O Poeziji*, p. 73.

poetry: this poetry would have to concur with the war experiences of the Serbian people in the Great War, and Lalić believes that Bojić's later poetry would enter into this "domain of endless possibilities", which was abandoned by postwar poets; poets who gave preference to the shallower cosmopolitan experiences over recent historical ones". Not to Albania and Vido, but Paris and Nice, Lalić will say metonymically, leaving the question unanswered as to whether "an entire generation was unfit for something that could have become its main subject", and whether "the need to escape the reality of Vido" and the slaughterhouse of war drove them towards the "other extreme", in which case World War I will, for them, forever remain "an unsung war".[30]

The "other extreme" consists of almost all of the avant-garde poets, excluding Rastko Petrović, and above all the Surrealists. Lalić is, however, completely aware of the fact that this "other type of exile, referring to young poets, determined (...) to a great extent the course of our postwar poetry; not Albania and Vido, but Paris and Nice". It is, thus, no coincidence that Ivan V. Lalić expressed his attitude towards avant-garde poets with silence; again, Rastko Petrović is the exception.

The described scene of the mass transport of "skeletal bodies" is aesthetically moulded in Lalić's poem *Haron, prvi put zbunjen* (Charon, Confused for the First Time) from the collection "Vetrovito proleće" (Windy Spring); a poem of exceptional merit, which the poet did not particularly appreciate. Strict with himself, as he undoubtedly was, Lalić excluded this and several other poems when, out of his first five collections, he composed a more uncompromising and complete book entitled "Vreme, vatre, vrtovi" (Time, Fires, Gardens) (1961), which he considered his first real book:

> I imagined the book 'Time, Fires, Gardens' as a kind of reckoning with the poetry of my youth or, if you will, as an attempt to summarize one poet's path. In other words, I endeavoured to use the material from five of my previous books, including a handful of new poems, and create an aggregate that would, in terms of its firm structure and transparency of themes, represent a structural unity of five books, reduced to, or reorganized into one. When eight years later, I was given the chance to be published within the covers of the *Serbian Literary Guild*, my starting point was that the book 'Time, Fires, Gardens' was my first book.[31]

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[30] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 3, *Strasna mera*, p. 155. The fourth line of the second strophe in Lalić's poem "The Sea Grave" says: "Jednog davnog, nikad dopevanog rata" (A bygone, unsung war).

[31] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 1, *Vreme, vatre, vrtovi*, priredio Aleksandar Jovanović, Beograd, p. 333.

Thanks to Aleksandar Jovanović, the editor of the book "Dela Ivana V. Lalića" (The Works of Ivan V. Lalić) (1977), all of the excluded poems were published at the end of the book as a valuable addition. This is a good opportunity to bring back to life an excellent poem, despite the author's opinion. This is why we are going to cite it in its entirety:

HARON, PRVI PUT ZBUNJEN

Ta je voda tamna, i nema ribe i pene,
Na obalama pesak, crn kao hrpa gara.
Ta se voda pod pramcem ne brazda, nego puca
Kao staklo, i brzo opet postaje glatka.

Brodar je seo na pesak. Star je, i ima boju
Svoga broda, brod sa okamenjenim rebrima.
Odmor. Brod leži pramcem u pesku, ko staro pesto
Sa njuškom među šapama. A umoran je brodar.

Brodar je umoran. Malo niže od starog broda
Leže šlepovi, teški i crni, ko izvađeni
Između rebara noći. Šlepovi glomazni.
Još nedavno su bili puni, ko korpe grožđa.

Šlepove je vukao brodar za krmom broda,
Jer obala je bila puna, beznadno puna.
Prvi put zbunjen, brodar je teglio šlepove crne
I vraćao se obali strašnoj, ćutljivoj, punoj.

A sad je odmor, i brodar je seo na pesak,
Njegove su ruke umorne kao grane
Koje su ljuljale grozdove obešenih tela.
Brodar proklinje zanat. Sa zebnjom šlepove motri.

I prvi put misli brodar: treba dići u luku
Most preko reke, širok i čvrst, za sva vremena;
A on da se povuče najzad u mirnu starost,
U kuću sa golubinjakom, između suncokreta.[32]

[32] op.cit., pp. 274-275.

(CHARON, CONFUSED FOR THE FIRST TIME

The water is dark, without fish or foam,
On the shore sand, black as a pile of soot.
This water is not furrowing under the bow, but cracking
Like glass, quickly becoming smooth again.

The shipowner sits down on the sand. He is old, his face
The colour of his ship, the ship with a petrified frame.
Rest. The bow of the ship lying in the sand, like an old dog
With its snout between its paws. And the shipowner is tired.

Tired is the shipowner. Further down from the old ship
Barges lie, heavy and black, as if pulled out
Of the frame of the night. Massive barges.
Only recently they were full, like baskets of grapes.

The shipowner tugged the barges behind the ship's stern,
For the shore was crowded, hopelessly crowded.
Confused for the first time, he towed the black barges
Returning to a shore, eerie, silent, crowded.

It's time to rest now, and he sits down on the sand,
The shipowner's arms are tired, like branches
That rocked clusters of hung bodies.
The shipowner curses his craft. With trepidation stares at the barges.

And for the first time, he thinks: there should be an arch bridge
Erected over the river, wide and sturdy, for all time;
So he could retire, finally, to the peacefulness of old age,
A house with a dovecote, amidst sunflowers.)

This is one of the numerous poems written by Lalić with a Greek myth as its subtext, or a famous hero of the ancient Greeks. Here, it is Charon, a figure from Greek mythology who ferries souls of the newly deceased across the rivers Styx and Acheron that divides the world of the living from the world of the dead. In return, he would take from the mouth of the deceased an obolus, a coin that was placed there by his descendants to pay Charon for his services. It should be noted that Charon was devoted to his work, untiring and ready to transport the deceased to the underworld at any moment. Charon's key attribute in the Greek myth is—*tireless.*

Lalić is an extremely demanding poet; his poetry is filled with subtle utterances and not easy to interpret. In addition, he relies on a reader with broad background knowledge, who will be able to recognize the subtext of the poem and notice its dialogical nature, its dialogical reference to other texts.

Even the verse, or the rhythm of the poem, indicates such a reference, a dialog with ancient tradition. The poem is composed of six long meter quatrains—with thirteen to sixteen syllables—of which most are fourteen-syllable (twelve lines), and then fifteen-syllable (nine lines), while two lines are sixteen-syllable, and only one has thirteen syllables. There is an indication of Vojislav Ilić's verse form in the subtext, that is, the (pseudo)hexameter tradition, since most of the lines have six accentual units. Occasional deviations from the "norm", or the dominant, only confirm Lalić's autopoetic statements, according to which this poet constructed his free verse modeled on Ilić's hexameter. As for the verse and rhythm, Lalić combined—as he will do concerning the theme and motif—ancient tradition (hexameter) with elements of modern times (free verse), but also with the tradition of the (pseudo) hexameter in national poetry (Vojislav Ilić).

In the first strophe, Lalić evokes the image of a border river: its water is dark, without foam, lifeless, as smooth as glass, cracking under the bow without leaving a trail or furrow, immediately becoming vitreous and level. Its shores are covered with black sand, like "piles of soot".

A shipowner appears as early as the second strophe, not at work but during a moment of rest while sitting down on the sand. He is old and *tired*, and his face is the same colour as his ship. A ship with a petrified frame is lying in the sand. We learn his name from the title; there is no mention of it in the poem: he seems to have become anonymous; as if he had lost his significance. His dominant trait is *fatigue*: the epithet "tired" appears in as many as three strophes, in significant places at that. So, the second strophe *ends* with the sentence: "And the shipowner is tired", while the *beginning* of the third mirrors the end of the second strophe: "Tired is the shipowner"—the subject and predicate only changed positions like in a mirror. The shipowner's tiredness is stylistically more pronounced: the tiredness is metonymically shifted to the arms and emphasized with a comparison to branches:

> The shipowner's arms are tired, like branches
> *That rocked clusters of hung bodies.*

One of Charon's main traits in the ancient myth—*tireless*—was changed to its opposite—*tired*—in a poem from the second half of the

20th century. It is unequivocally clear that Ivan V. Lalić is "distorting" an ancient myth.

But let us go back to the third strophe. The ancient ferryman or boatman, Charon, is much better equipped in modern times: in addition to a ship, he also has *barges* at his disposal—heavy, black and massive—which lie further down from the ship while the shipowner rests. The last line of the third strophe emphasizes that the barges are "full, like baskets of grapes". This, of course, implies that they are filled with dead bodies.

The first three strophes are written in the present tense; but the fourth—and only the fourth—is in the perfect tense. It "explains" why the shipowner is tired and why he needs the barges:

> For the shore was *crowded, hopelessly crowded*.

And on this shore—"eerie, silent, crowded"—to which he kept returning, and which he could never seem to clear, the shipowner was "confused for the first time"—hence his tiredness and the cursing of his craft. He sits and "with trepidation stares at the barges" because he realizes that this mechanical innovation is no longer sufficient or capable of clearing the shore. Charon is a bit like Sisyphus: no matter how many of the deceased he transports, the shore remains "hopelessly crowded".

> Why is the shore crowded with dead bodies?

The poem does not tell us this but relentlessly implies that the modern era—the poet's 20th century—is an era of mass death. This is the century of two world wars. This was when the term *world war* was coined. The people who died in World War I did not know they were dying in a *world* war, but rather in the *Great War* (this was the term used in Serbia for a long time). The poet's nation had lost a third of their population twice, mostly soldiers.

This was a century of communist revolutions and counter-revolutions, civil wars, and the destruction of Yugoslavia on two occasions.

This was a century of two pernicious ideologies: fascism and communism. Both had built factories of death.

This was a century of concentration camps used as death factories. Invented by the British in the war against Boers, during World War I, they were revived mainly in the regions under Austria-Hungary rule, and reached perfection under the Nazis and Stalinists, taking tens of millions of lives.

Mass death, therefore, marked the century of Ivan V. Lalić, who was grievously affected by such loss of life, which is evident in the cited fragment of Lalić's essay on Bojić, as well as Lalić's other poems.

The description cited from Lalić's essay is overwhelmingly reminiscent of the shore crowded with dead bodies from the poem *Charon, Confused for the First Time*: "mass death", "piles of dead bodies stacked like logs", and a "peeling *trabàccolo*", transporting them. The distress over scenes of mass dying and bodies being thrown into the sea will be sublimated in Lalić's poem *The Sea Grave*, which is engaged in a dialogue with Bojić's poem—as a type of "counter-poem" to the poem that shares the same title.

The ancient idea of the ferryman, Charon, is based on an image of death of individuals, far from the experience of 20th century death factories. Human development is above all technical and technological development. One of the products of this development is also the modern technique and technology of killing, factories of mass death. The poor boatman or ferryman, Charon, must have felt confused and helpless in the modern era—simply anachronistic. The myth that originated based on an image of individual death cannot function within an "advanced" humanity of modern mass killing. The modern equipment, or the technical improvements, are not much help to Charon: the boat or ferryman is now a shipowner with a tug and barges at his disposal, but he cannot clear the shore covered with dead bodies. More thorough modernization is needed, a complete technical reorganization of the underworld, but especially the "liberalization of the border" between the living and the dead and in one direction—in the direction of the underworld. This is the reason why Ivan V. Lalić, that is to say, his overtired and worn-out Charon resorts to a technical (anti)utopian project. A technological utopia descended into the underworld, the world of the dead, in the last strophe of Lalić's poem *Charon, Confused for the First Time*. A brilliant idea dawned on the shipman, which was to be realized in the future, and so the last strophe is written in the future tense: instead of Charon, the ferry, boat, ship, and barges, there should be a bridge between Acheron and Styx rivers—a bridge, "wide and sturdy", *for all time*.

Charon will finally retreat "to the peacefulness of old age", retire in some idyllic place: "A house with a dovecote, amidst sunflowers". The deceased will cross the bridge to the underworld on their own.

Hades would be providing self-service.

The myth, characterized by eternity, proves to be limited and anachronistic, and the (anti)utopian project will be there "for all time". The underworld becomes a "duty free zone", and the descendants will not have to place a coin in the mouth of the deceased. Numerous and various savings are achieved.

Now we can define Lalić's usage of the myth: it is "distortion", but "distortion" filled with irony, which turns Lalić's poem into a *parody* of the myth about Charon and the passage of souls into the underworld.

However, the myth serves Lalić as an excellent way of illustrating all the horror and atrociousness of mass death in modern times. For this reason, it seems that Ivan V. Lalić has treated his poem *Charon, Confused for the First Time* unfairly—in the end, it is a great poem. The poem is undoubtedly in agreement with Lalić's essay on Bojić, and it is included in Lalić's lyrical dialogue with Bojić based on the motif of the sea grave.

For this reason, here are a few more views Lalić had on Bojić's poem, *The Sea Grave*: "for decades, this poem has been most closely associated with the poet's name" and it "possesses exceptional qualities due to which it was included in various anthologies". Lalić describes its pathos as noble and finds that the poem holds "true strength and beauty": uplifting our experience to "a synthesis of a requiem for a hero and a paean for the living that uphold the experience of the dead" and so, the aim of invoking silence and stopping the royal galleys "is not to provide the peacefulness of eternal and final sleep, but rather, the poet demands silence in the name of the voices of the living that are rooted in it."[33]

Bojić's poem, *The Sea Grave*, had to have appealed to Lalić as a combination of a poem and a prayer—a requiem or prayer poem that brings peace to the souls of the deceased—which is so characteristic of Lalić's poetry. All one needs to do is look at the titles of Lalić's poems: *Requiem za majku*[34] (Requiem for a Mother), *Requiem*[35], and *Pomen za majku*[36] (Memorial for Mother).

Well before writing *The Sea Grave*, Lalić wrote another requiem for the victims of mass murder: *Opelo za sedam stotina iz crkve u Glini*[37] (Requiem for the Seven Hundred from the Church in Glina).

The poem is about genocide committed by the Ustasha during World War II: about the execution—massacre—of over seven hundred Serbs in a church in Glina, a Serbian town in the Banija region, after which the church was also torn down. The poem consists of three parts: the first has eleven (1-11), the second twenty-eight (12-39), and the third only eight (40-47) lines, which comes to a total of forty-seven lines.

The *Requiem* begins by rebelling against the silence over the killing and suffering of the Serbs because, for half a century, this silence was ideologically desirable, in the name of brotherhood and unity. To keep silent about a crime means to accept it, consent to it, push it into oblivion, while poetry and culture needs to remember, possess historical awareness,

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[33] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 4, *O poeziji*, p. 72.
[34] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 1, *Vreme, vatre, vrtovi*, p. 107.
[35] Ibid, p. 272.
[36] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 3, *Strasna mera*, p. 22.
[37] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 1, *Vreme, vatre, vrtovi*, p. 152.

and develop a sense of history—at least the poetry written by Ivan V. Lalić. And thus, in the first line, the poet says:

> I cannot stay silent; the walls stayed silent
> And crumbled (...)[38]

using enjambment, or transferring a part of the syntactic unit to the next line, whereby *And crumbles* is emphasized semantically and intonationally. The walls of the church crumbled because they responded with silence to the screams of the suffering.

The lyrical subject became a metaphor: it turned into a *dwelling* inhabited by more than seven hundred victims that cannot be evicted from the *Infinite glassy space of the sleepless nights*:

> They are not grass. At night, from within
> They cautiously tap at the trembling panes
> Of my eyes; all dead, and all their throats
> Have blossomed into roses.[39]

The modern poet, living in the times of mass killings, becomes a medium, not for muses or gods, but anonymous victims.

We have already encountered a similar response to victims in the poems of Ivan V. Lalić from the collection "Bivši dečak"[40] (Once a Boy), that is, in the poem *Zarđala igla*[41] (A Rusty Needle). Although now an adult, recovered from childhood traumas, the lyrical subject feels the gaze of the boys of his generation, who were killed in the bombing, like "a rusty needle just under the skin" in the nape of his neck.

The second, longest and middle part of the poem is a sequence of images of the victims and their massacre in the church, seen through the eyes of the lyrical subject, the one who was "once a boy", "Within the walls, behind the bolted doors". There is a series of horrifying, unforgettable scenes, often from the perspective of the victims themselves, who are abased, stripped of self, and deprived of "all but death".

In the third, shortest part, the victim-lyrical subject relationship is thematized again: first, the line from the beginning of the poem is repeated, followed by a depiction of the situation of those who died:

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[38] Ivan V. Lalić, *A Rusty Needle*, trans. Francis R. Jones (London: Anvil, 1996) p. 57.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ivan V. Lalić, *Bivši dečak*, Lykos, Zagreb, 1955.

[41] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 1, *Vreme, vatre, vrtovi*, pp. 89-90.

... But the ones from the church, the ones
Who are dead, have not yet fallen asleep. They lie awake,
Unbidden, in one who was once a boy. I cannot evict them
Into the space of wind where the church once stood,
Where the weeds grow all red with their blood.
So let them stay, awake, unbidden, for they would despise me
If I were to try to sing them to sleep.[42]

It is impossible to drive away the victims of the massacre from the lyrical subject/dwelling: this is the only place they are remembered. Outside, where the church once stood, there is only "wind", an area of destruction, and red weeds that are so characteristic of the destroyed places, dear to the one "who was once a boy". In the mentioned poem *A Rusty Needle*, we find "the green rust of weeds" on the location where the mountain cabin once stood. Here, however, a folktale is revived, much better known for Kosovo's blue and red peonies, according to which plants with signs of their bloody human origin sprout from human blood. This time the color is red. The blood of the victims, however, does not transform into peonies, nor any other flower, but into weeds. The victims remain awake in the lyrical subject; their everlasting presence, does not allow for silence, or a lullaby.

Thus, well before his poem *The Sea Grave,* Lalić has already dealt with both the theme of mass death as a contemporary experience (*Once a Boy*, *Charon, Confused for the First Time*, *Requiem for the Seven Hundred from the Church in Glina*), and the "requiem" as a kind of prayer poem and actualization of a Greek myth in modern times (*Charon, Confused for the First Time*). Let us look at another similar re-actualization—the myth of Sisyphus.

Owing to Aleksandar Jovanović, we were given the opportunity to read Lalić's poem, *Podatak o Sizifu*[43] (Information about Sisyphus), featured in the Notes at the end of Vol. 2 of "Dela Ivana V. Lalića" (The Works of Ivan V. Lalić), "based on the poet's manuscript". The poem is dated September 16-19, 1970, and Jovanović points out that it was written in the same month as "fifth poem of "Smetnje na vezama" (Fading Contact), but was not published in this collection of poems. Jovanović believes that this fact "may shed light on certain aspects of cultural, literary and even social life in our country at the time (1970-1975)". The motif of the poem "is the similarity between the fate of Sisyphus and that of the Serbian people", variations of which the poet later used

[42] Ivan V. Lalić, *A Rusty Needle*, trans. Francis R. Jones (London: Anvil, 1996) p. 58.

[43] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 2*, O delima ljubavi ili Vizantija*, pp. 273-274.

in the poems *Vojničko groblje*[44] (The Military Cemetery) (featured in the collection of poems, "Fading Contact") and *The Sea Grave*[45] (featured in the collection of poems, "Pismo") ("The Letter").

PODATAK O SIZIFU

Sizif je bio Srbin, pa makar da je
Zemljouzom stada pasao, Efirom kraljevao
U davno, strašno doba višnjih kavgi na zemlji;
Ovo je nesaglasje prividno, kao brzina
Streline senke, kao blizina zvezda:
Bio je svakako Srbin, Sizif među ljudima
I među nebesnicima uvek na sredokraći
Sedam sudbina mogućih,
Sizif zvan vrlo mudri
U ljubavi, u pobuni, u inatu, u spletki—
Rodonačelnik onih koji će kovčege kamene
Sa mrtvim kraljevima venčanim gorkom vatrom
Vući preko bregova, reka i dimnih dolina
S juga na sever i natrag, u dugoj vežbi vekova
U kojoj dah se gubi i tle izmiče stopi—
Sizif je bio Srbin
U životu najpre, zatim u smrti, odlaganoj uvek
Usudom koji ga void do kamena i vraća
Sa kamenom, teškim koliko božja suza.

Oni što tvrde da Sizifov kamen sunce,
Što tvrde dakle da je Sizifov zanat svetlost,
Razlog da kažemo: jutro – Oni propovedaju
da je svetlost starija od nesreće.

(INFORMATION ABOUT SISYPHUS

Sisyphus was a Serb, even if he
Grazed his cattle along an isthmus, reigned over Ephyra
In ancient, terrible times of divine quarrels on Earth;
This contradiction is an illusion, like the speed of
An arrow's shadow, like the nearness of the stars:
He was definitely a Serb, Sisyphus among the people

[44] op.cit., pp. 218-220.
[45] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 3, *Strasna mera*, pp. 155-157.

And among heavenly bodies always in the middle
Of seven possible fates,
Sisyphus the very wise
In love, in rebellion, in spite, in intrigue—
The forefather of those who will drag stone coffins
With dead kings wedded with bitter fire
Across hills, rivers and smoky valleys
From south to north and back, in a long exercise of centuries
Which leaves you breathless and on your last legs—
Sisyphus was a Serb
In life first, and then in death, postponed always
By fate that leads him to the boulder and back again
With the boulder, as heavy as a god's tear.

Those who claim that Sisyphus's boulder is the sun,
Who thus claim that Sisyphus's craft is light,
The reason to say: morning—They preach
that light is older than misfortune.

Sisyphus is identified with a Serb at the very beginning of the poem, and the fact that he "grazed his cattle along an isthmus" and "reigned over Ephyra" only seems to contradict the truth that he is a Serb. The seeming contradiction is illustrated by comparisons that associated Zeno's arrow paradox and his teaching about One, motionless and eternal existence—which supports Parmenides's doctrine that existences are one—which had to have been familiar to Lalić: "the speed of an arrow's shadow" and "the nearness of the stars" is an illusion, just as the distance between Sisyphus and the Serbs is an illusion, and their oneness a reality. Based on the "logic" of the myth, the Greek mythological hero is the personification of the fate of the Serbs through history.

First, in the context of cosmology: "Sisyphus among the people / And among heavenly bodies always in the middle / Of seven possible fates". His position lies *between*—and among the people and heavenly bodies, in the middle of seven possible fates—and this makes him a Serb.

Then with respect to character: "Sisyphus the wise / In love, in rebellion, in spite, in intrigue"—everywhere the Serbs have demonstrated their abilities. Sisyphus and the Serbs possess a special kind of wisdom, as extraordinary as God's punishment—but for Sisyphus and the Serbs, nevertheless, the same.

Historically: Sisyphus is "The forefather of those who will drag stone coffins / With dead kings wedded with bitter fire / Across hills, rivers and smoky valleys / From south to north and back, in a long exercise of centuries / Which leaves you breathless and on your last legs". The fate

of the Serbs through history is marked by forced migrations and exile, great suffering and futile sacrifices. During these migrations, the Serbs dragged with them stone sarcophagi of their kings, tsars, and saints, from south to north and north to south, with the crazy hope of finding lasting peace and their home ground. Their migrations can be compared to Sisyphus rolling the boulder up a hill only for it to roll down again. No matter how close they came to achieving their historical goals, like Sisyphus, who neared the top of the hill, the Serbs would plunge down to their historical foothill and climb again.

In life and death: "Sisyphus was a Serb / In life first, and then in death, postponed always / By fate that leads him to the boulder and back again / With the boulder, as heavy as a god's tear. Sisyphus's death is being postponed: he had cheated it several times, just as the Serbs had eluded death when the destruction of the entire nation seemed inevitable. That is to say, Sisyphus had tricked and outsmarted Hades and Persephone; the Serbs held out under the pressure of some of the greatest world empires, and the empires met with their own downfall.

The end of the poem—its final quatrain—centres on the relationship between light and misfortune. That is, "Those who claim that Sisyphus's boulder is the sun, / Who thus claim that Sisyphus's craft is light, / The reason to say: morning—They preach / that light is older than misfortune". Light and misfortune are, therefore, also a common characteristic of Sisyphus and the Serbs; light is older than misfortune. Graves tells us that "Sisyphus's boulder of punishment was (...) a sun-disk, and the mountain slope, the vault of heaven".

Therefore, Lalić had already identified the historical efforts of the Serbs with Sisyphus in 1970.

The Military Cemetery is a considerably longer poem, comprised of seven strophes, nine lines each. It is, of course, about the Serbian Military Cemetery in Zeitenlik, in which Lalić once again reverts back to the unsung theme of World War I. *The Military Cemetery* is, therefore, very similar to *The Sea Grave* with regard to the theme. The last lines of two strophes—second and fifth—contain the motif of a famous song from World War I entitled *Tamo daleko* (There, Far Away), except that in Lalić's poem, it is lacking in optimism: "Tamo daleko, *bez nada daleko*" (There, far away, hopelessly far away). This motif varies somewhat in the seventh strophe and shifts to the second last line, while the whole strophe, although stylized in the form of three questions, expresses doubt in the realization of historical and divine justice:

> Šta preostaje nama, pred tom slikom
> Nerazorenog muškog savezništva
> Sa smrću koja nije ispunila

Zadano obećanje? Da li sumnja
U istinitost slike? Ili znanje
Da će se druga izvršiti pravda,
Negde daleko, bez nade daleko,
Gde stopa Boga okleva da stupi?

(What are we left with, before that image
Of an unscathed male alliance
With death that did not keep
The promise made? Perhaps doubt
About the trueness of the image? Or knowledge
That some other justice will be done,
Somewhere outside this dream, outside this fury,
Somewhere far away, hopelessly far away,
Where God hesitates to set foot?)

The poem is heightened by this combination of questions. The image of a military cemetery with eight thousand crosses is undoubtedly an image of "an unscathed male alliance with death", and the death of the soldiers is suddenly illuminated like a new anthropological discovery, like a universal truth about the alliance between men and death. However, death "did not keep / The promise made"; historical ideals were not reached, nor was justice served on Earth. It is unlikely that justice will ever be achieved, except in some kind of utopian spaces, but they are "Somewhere far away, hopelessly far away". "God hesitates to set foot" in such spaces, suggesting that the vision of history, which will be realized much later, in *Četiri kanona* (Four Canons), according to which history does not move in a straight line and with a purposeful stride, but at certain intersections of time and space contains "impure" areas, "*sugrebi*"[46] of history. The absence of God's grace and the weariness of "the spirit above waters" will be a recurrent theme in Lalić's poetry.

We find Sisyphus, or his "impassive indignation", in the seventh line of the sixth strophe:

Pamtimo raspored slike, po dubini;
Na ulazu je kapija od gvožđa,
Pa kosturnica kamena, parcele
I kiparisi, i geometrija,
I ruže; ono što je izvan slike
Raznose vetrovi godinama:

[46] Trails that animals make when digging the ground, which is said to bring about misfortune if stepped on—Serbian superstition (T/N).

Spokojnu srdžbu Sizifa, tišinu
Neostvarenog, zvuk jutarnje kiše
Po oštrom šljunku i po krstovima.

(We memorize the arrangement of an image, by depth;
An iron gate at the entrance,
Then a stone ossuary, grave plots
And cypresses, and geometry,
And roses; that which is outside the image
Is scattered by the winds for years:
The impassive indignation of Sisyphus, the silence
Of the unaccomplished, the sound of morning rain
Falling on sharp gravel and the crosses.)

Here, emphasis is given to Sisyphus with alliteration and an effective oxymoron (*The impassive indignation of Sisyphus*), and his "impassive indignation" is outside the memorized image, in other words, it belongs to things "scattered by the winds for years", as they also scatter "the silence of the unaccomplished"; to things destroyed like consciousness and forgotten, although the historical struggles of Sisyphus, or the Serbian people, will be repeated. Thus, the theme becomes the problem of historical memory, or lack of memory, the nature and meaning of national history and the point of purposeful mass sacrifice. Poetry is proving to be a unique and irreplaceable aspect of historical memory, like a "pillar of memory", like a vision of history and historical fate, like a kind of "metahistory".

After referring to poems with motifs and ideas that will characterize Lalić's poem *The Sea Grave*—Greek mythology, Sisyphus, Charon, mass death and sacrifices, the requiem—and discussing the symbolic meanings, we can now go back to Milutin Bojić and his poem of the same name.

Bojić's poem, *The Sea Grave,*[47] begins ceremoniously with three commands, which the lyrical subject utters to his imperial galleys (*hold, stay*, *proceed*[48]) in order to create an atmosphere for his "proud mass". The tone is uplifting, hymnal, ceremonious, but the poem is nevertheless *a mass*, a prayer for the souls of the deceased. It is, therefore, an unusual and effectual *combination of a hymn and a mass*, and this combination is in keeping with the meaning of the poem, its focus on the living, or belief in the significance and historical purpose of sacrifice.

[47] *Dela Ivana V. Lalića*, Vol. 3, *Strasna mera*, p. 155.

[48] The translation from the Serbian by Mihailo Đorđević, *Serbian poetry and Milutin Bojić*, East European quarterly, New York (1977), was used in the analysis of Bojić's poem *The Sea Grave*, (T/N).

Mass is held at a curious time of day—"in the midnight horror"—and in an unusual place—"in these holy waters". The poet does not question the holiness of the sea transformed into a blue grave. Besides, a grave is a holy place where the deceased is laid to rest until the Second Coming of Christ or Judgement Day. The pathos is true and honest, and permeates the entire poem. Epithets also contribute to the hymnal, uplifting tone (*proud* mass, *holy* waters).

The first two lines of the second quatrain give an image of the bottom of the sea. It is characterized by sleep and death even before the Serbian soldiers were lowered into the sea: "on sleeping shells / And weeds that gently fall". The dead soldiers fall into a space of sleep and death, creating "a grave of heroes" where "brother next to brother" lie. It is these two phrases that once again elevate the tone and pathos, after the description of the bottom of the sea, upon which it culminates in the fourth line: "Prometheuses of hope, apostles of tragedy". The nouns used are charged with higher moral imports: the first comes from Greek mythology, and is used in the plural tense, whereby Prometheus carries the meaning given to him by the Romantics: a hero and titan, who sacrifices himself in a conflict with the gods for the future of mankind; the second comes from Christian tradition, meaning Christ's disciple and follower, teacher of the gospel message of Jesus and martyr, also used in the plural tense; both the embodiment of purposeful and meaningful sacrifice and bright examples for future generations.

The harmony between nature, the mass and the sea grave is apparent in the first half of the second strophe, but is fully established in the third and fifth: "gently the sea swells / Not to disturb their eternal rest", "a sense of peace prevails", "an exhausted moon gazes at the sea", "from these blue depths / (...) piety rules these seas", and "the souls of heroes walk the seas", which one can feel in the air.

In the fourth strophe "the holy waters" become "this mysterious temple, this tragic grave / For a common corpse", endless, silent, cold and desperate. In this description of the grave, not one word is merely descriptive, axiologically neutral, and every word conveys values and emotions.

The verse form in the sixth strophe is once again a hexameter, written in the imperative mood (*hold*, *muffle*, *let sing*), calling to mass. The lyrical subject is identified as brother to the sunken soldiers; he again stops the "imperial galleons", requesting that they "muffle their trumpets in black" and that the "men-at-arms sing the mass".

The seventh and eighth strophes display and explicate historical optimism: after many centuries, which will pass "like waves that rule the seas", "a new generation will build a house / Of glory over these very seas". The dying poet is convinced of the importance of sacrifice

and history: the grave will "cradle immortal glory / For future times to come".

The ninth strophe seems especially significant because of the new symbolic meaning of location:

> Resting here are laurels of the past
> And the shattered joys of a nation
> In this somber grave under blue waves
> Between earth and sky.

There is a causal relationship between the location of the grave and the magnitude of the sacrifice and this is emphasized with the pronoun *this*. The large grave is located between earth and sky, in the medial space between man and God. In the world of the poem, the bottom of the sea is lifted and transformed into a kind of intermediate sky. By being placed in this medial space, the "Prometheuses of hope" and the "apostles of tragedy" were given the mediation space and role of mediators between God and man—they have become saints, holy warriors and martyrs.

The tenth strophe is the third hexameter strophe, and it too is written in the imperative mood (*hold*, *snuff out*, *cease*, *glide*), and directed towards the imperial galleons, requesting "serenity and quiet" so that the dead could hear "the battles of the living" and feel their boiling blood running through the veins of "their sons under the wings of victory". The living and the dead, the warriors and the dead soldiers, all are connected by blood, which is also the theme of the eleventh and twelfth strophes. And the antithesis in the second half of the twelfth strophe, accompanied by grammatical parallelism, does not contrast and oppose, as much as it brings closer and connects the living and the dead:

> Here peace reigns over the fathers,
> While sons there make history.

The final two strophes talk about the nature of the requiem and its uniqueness. It is "without words, tears, or weak sighs"; it unites "the clouds of incense and gunpowder" "with the muted rumbling of drums". The poem also ends by describing the uniqueness of the requiem, that is, the second part of the last hexameter strophe underlines this quality:

> I say a requiem like the heavens have yet to hear
> Over these holy waters.

Calling on the heavens to bear witness and reemphasizing the holy waters in a favorable place upholds and intensifies the pathos and

hymnal tone. At the same time, the requiem is also a hymn for the living, the sons, a hymn of victory, characterized by historical optimism, all the more moving because it comes from the pen of a dying man, from his deathbed. Here, death is not a hollow, pathetic abstraction, but a personal and national dramatic reality. Bojić's poem, *The Sea Grave*, in the words of Miodrag Pavlović, "represents an example of poetry of the hero cult"; at the time of its creation it was "a poem of a nation". Could we ask for anything more in a patriotic poem?

Lalić's poem, *The Sea Grave*, holds a somewhat special place in the collection "Pismo" (Script): it is the only poem that takes up an entire—fifth "chapter"—of the collection, or lyrical epos. The first part of the "Script" is comprised of eight poems; the second includes *Deset sonata nerođenoj kćeri* (Ten Sonnets to an Unborn Daughter); the third has six titles; the fourth incorporates four poems under the common title *Heksametri* (Hexameters); the fifth—and second last—includes only one poem *The Sea Grave*; and the sixth—final and most abundant—contains nine poems.

The first "hexameter" strophe of Lalić's poem, *The Sea Grave*, begins as a quote from Bojić's poem. The only difference in the first two lines is the word order at the end of the first line: Instead of Bojić's "oars mighty",[49] where the adjective, or epithet, is positioned after the noun, which could be a signal for establishing "action" and a ceremonious tone, Lalić's solution is "mighty oars", which could be interpreted as setting up the rhyme in the third line and the shift beginning with this line:

> Opelo neko *šapćem u podne* puno srme
> Istopljene nad vodom.
>
> (I *whisper a mass at noon* filled with silver strings
> Melting over the face of the waters.)

While Bojić's lyrical subject says a "proud mass", Lalić's is only "a mass", devoid of pride, and the lyrical subject "whispers at noon" and not "in midnight horror". We discover the reason for the whispers much later—in the fifth strophe, where Lalić's lyrical subject says:

> Šapćem ga u sebi, da ne budem smešan
> U oku vodiča što rutinski brblja
> O Nausikaji, sasvim neumešan
> U moje opelo i hud udes Srblja.

[49] In the translation of Bojić's poem by Mihailo Đorđević, "mighty" was omitted (T/N).

(I whisper to myself, as not to look ridiculous
In the eyes of the guide as he chatters
About Nausicaä, completely oblivious
To my prayer and the ill fate of the nation of Serbs.)

Saying a public, solemn and "proud" prayer, at noon, before a crowd of tourists and their chatty guide, would be ridiculous. This is why you whisper it deep within yourself, as an expression of personal and national sorrow and the ill-fated history of the Serbs, about which no one else cares, and generally knows nothing about. This shatters the universal dimension of Bojić's hymnal, tragic pathos, introduces irony, and with it, doubt in the importance of history.

For Bojić, the waters where the prayer is held are undoubtedly holy ("In these holy waters"), whereas Lalić avoids the intensifier in the first strophe of his poem. Furthermore, in Lalić's poem the holiness will be problematic and problematized—ambivalent, to say the least.

Hence, in the fourth strophe the holy is discerned behind the profane just as there is a sense of the invisible behind the visible. Furthermore, the visible is real and the invisible is an illusion:

Tu gde besposleni turist snima barke,
Sa slamnim šeširom spuštenim na čelo,
Hram nazirem, stvaran ispod letnje varke
Mora što treperi dok šapćem opelo.

(There, where an idle tourist is photographing boats,
With his straw hat pushed forward,
I discern a temple, real beneath the summer illusion
Of a shimmering sea, as I whisper my prayer.)

The idle tourist with the straw hat implies modern times, a shallow and easy life.

The tourist probably does not discern, nor can he discern a temple or anything else holy; he has no idea about the historical suffering or sacrifice, nor does he care. The temple or the presence of holiness can only be discerned or sensed by someone whose fate is in some way linked to those who had sacrificed their lives, someone deeply affected by this sacrifice and the ill-fated history, and in this case, it is the lyrical subject. In the thirteenth strophe, he will be identified as the *singing passenger*, who discerns and sees the invisible, or holy, with his inner eye, the eye inherited from Byzantine tradition ("In the inner eye of the singing passenger").

This is why the waters in which "the prayer is whispered" can only be *holy to the lyrical subject*, which is made unequivocally clear in the eighth strophe ("Beneath waters **holy to me**"). For everyone else, the water is defiled and desecrated, ecologically problematic: floating in the water is the "Foam from the ferry rushing towards the mainland / An orange peel, oil stain...".

We have already touched on the second strophe when we discussed the Bojić-Dučić connection. Lalić insists on the subtext, underlining it—as he often does—by referring to a poet: "as a poet once said":

> Tu gde na dnu, kako reče pesnik,
> San umoran hvata, leži brat do brata,
> Leže zlatne senke, znakovi udesni
> Jednog davnog, nikada dopevanog rata.
>
> (Beneath the sea, as a poet once said,
> In the sleepy waters, lies brother next to brother,
> Golden shadows, ill-fated signs
> Of a long-ago, unsung war.)

Only the first line of Bojić's poem was taken and then arranged in the first two lines of Lalić's poem, as well as the second half of the third, which became the second half of Lalić's second line. In doing so, Lalić created an internal rhyme. Bojić's "Prometheuses of hope, apostles of tragedy" were completely left out in Lalić's poem, while the third line took on the meaning of a symbolic, but fateful foreboding: "Golden shadows, ill-fated signs".

The use of a qualifier for World War I, expressed in periphrasis in the fourth line of the second strophe, is especially characteristic of Lalić: this is a *long-ago* war, almost forgotten by the people who lost half their army, the people who made the greatest sacrifice and experienced it as their personal Golgotha and Resurrection, but barely made mention of it in poetry. This is why the war is "unsung", and Bojić's poem *The Sea Grave*, is one of the rare lyrical masterpieces dedicated to it. We have already heard Lalić's view on avant-garde poetry, especially his negative attitude towards the surrealists, in his essay on Bojić.

However, the Prometheuses and apostles from Bojić's poem were not completely left out, or forgotten. They can be found behind Sisyphus in the third strophe, and Sisyphus and Tantalus in the seventh. There is also disagreement between Lalić's and Bojić's poems in terms of myth.

The first line of Lalić's third strophe is a quote of Bojić's corresponding line; however, the disparities begin in the very next line:

Zar ne osećate kako more mili
Ovde gde se Sizif sa Sizifom grli?
Dok u popodnevnoj sumaglici čili
Trajekt što bez žurbe prema kopnu hrli.

Don't you feel how gently the sea swells
Here, where Sisyphus with Sisyphus embraces?
As in the afternoon mist a feeling of freshness is spread
By the ferry slowly rushing towards the mainland.

So, instead of Bojić's "Prometheuses of hope" and "apostles of tragedy", Lalić turns to Sisyphus; the same Sisyphus in whom Lalić already recognized the historical fate of his people—in the earlier analyzed poems *Information about Sisyphus* and *The Military Cemetery*. Both the Prometheuses and the apostles are transformed into Sisyphuses, embraced in the blue grave of the Serbian soldiers. This unequivocally brings into question the importance of sacrifice and the simplified, rectilinear and one-directional historical path.

This view of history unfolds once again from the sixth to the tenth strophe, wherein it is especially emphasized in the eighth strophe. The sixth strophe—hexametrical—releases the dragon, a bitter thought, combining quotes from Bojić's poem with images from the present and, as is often the case with Lalić, from modern civilization:

Stojte, galije carske! I vi *gliseri bučni*,
Vozite s *pola gasa*.
Misao jednu gorku hoću da razobručim,
Makar u pola glasa.

(Hold Imperial galleons! And the *noisy speedboats*,
Ease up on the *gas pedal*.
A bitter thought I shall release,
Even if only half aloud.)

The *Imperial galleons* from Bojić's poem are combined with the *noisy speedboats* from the present. The lyrical subject is silencing them in order to release a bitter thought; release it from the forbidden ninth room, from the harness, to speak out "even if only half aloud". And this bitter thought is polemically directed towards Bojić. As he releases it, Lalić continues to quote Bojić's lines contrasting them, almost as a rule, with a different vision of history in the second part of the strophe:

Sahranjeni tu su nekadašnji venci
I prolazna radost celog jednog roda...
Samo da unuci u njihovoj senci
Krvare zbog istog nedostižnog ploda.

(Resting here are laurels of the past
And the shattered joys of a nation...
Just so the grandsons in their shadows
Can bleed for the same unattainable fruit.)

Historical goals prove to be unattainable even when they seem to have been achieved, when they are almost within grasp. Grandsons repeat the sacrifices of their grandfathers because of the same historical goals, thus also repeating Tantalus's punishment.

And thus in the eighth strophe, Tantalus emerges from Greek mythology as the other face of Serbian national history; the first is, of course, Sisyphus:

Zato tu se Sizif sa Tantalom grli
Ispod vode, meni svete, kojom pluta
Pena od trajekta koji kopnu hrli,
Narančina kora, mrlja od mazuta.

(This is why Sisyphus lies here embracing Tantalus
Beneath the waters, holy to me, with floating
Foam from the ferry rushing towards the mainland,
An orange peel, oil stain.)

Ivan V. Lalić's vision of the ill-fated history of the Serbs is not marked by Bojić's Prometheuses and apostles, but rather Sisyphus and Tantalus. This vision is virtually an indication of the historical events that will transpire in Serbia towards the end of the 20th century.

Lalić's ninth strophe is in a complete polemical relationship with Bojić's seventh strophe. Bojić viewed with optimism the new and great historical replacement, which will "build a house of glory over these very graves". Lalić accepts Bojić's vision of sea foam as the passing of centuries, but makes a complete turn concerning the vision of the great historical replacement:

I proći će mnoga stoleća ko pena,
Kako reče pesnik u samrtnom znoju,
U vrućici rujnoj; al' velika smena,
Koju sanjao je, još gine u stroju.

(For many centuries will pass like foam,[50]
Says the poet in a deadly sweat,
Flaming fever; but the great replacement,
Which he dreamed of, is killed still standing in formation.)

Hence, there is no *house of glory over these very graves*; only endless, massive graves, and fresh burial mounds. This is why the grave in Corfu and Vido is an "unhealed wound"; why it stings at the end of the 20th century as much as it did at the beginning:

Stojte galije carske! Slabo vas nešto vidim
U omaglici dana.
Pred nevidljivim hramom otvara se i bridi
Nezaceljena rana.

(Hold Imperial galleons! I can barely see you
In the haze of daylight.
Before the invisible temple I feel the sting of the open
Unhealed wound.)

An ironic overtone resonates around the imperial galleons in the first line of the tenth strophe; the lyrical subject can barely see them. They are probably not even there; just an anachronistic illusion, still lingering like the aura around Bojić's poem from the beginning of the 20th century. The contemporaries see ferries, noisy speedboats and tugboats that leave an orange peel and oil stain above the Serbian blue grave.

Lalić's favourite poetic motif, from the title of one of his earlier collections of poems—the motif of *fading contact*—appears quite explicitly in the eleventh strophe.

The lyrical subject wants to send "a signal over static interference", to make way for his whisper "through the noise of clicking cameras" and "fragments of pointless summer chatter", and send a message to the victims belonging to the generation of Lalić's father, the young Bosnian:

I kažem: ipak mirno počivajte;
Nije ovo podne ono što nas spaja,
Nego jedna povest koja dugo traje,
A vas usijava do crnog sjaja,

Pa podnevno ovo sunce crno biva
Unutrašnjem oku putnika pevača;

[50] In the English translation of Bojić's poem, Mihailo Đorđević translates foam as waves (T/N).

Dok mi pogled klizi po ploči zaliva
Sa još svežom brazdom promaklog tegljača.

(And I say: even so, rest in peace;
This noonday is not what connects us,
But a history that has continued for a long time,
Bathing you in the glow of black heat,

So this noon sun black becomes
To the inner eye of the singing passenger;
As my gaze slides across the surface of the bay
With a fresh trail of a passing tugboat.)

A single afternoon, one visit to the blue grave does not connect the lyrical subject to the victims of World War I, but rather the ill-fated history that keeps repeating itself, in other words, the "history that has continued for a long time", the enduring tragic history with no prospect of fulfilling the historical goals. It is precisely this "history that has continued for a long time" that bathes the victims "in the glow of black heat", turning them into a black, underground (underwater) sun of death.

The eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth strophes are syntactically connected, that is, they are not separated with periods. There is even a causal relationship between the twelfth and thirteenth strophe. Because "history has continued for a long time", it bathes those buried in the blue grave in the "glow of black heat", and in the inner eye of the "singing passenger" the noon sun also changes: it also "black becomes". Thus the black glow beneath the ground is projected through the inner eye of the "singing passenger" onto the sky as a black noon sun; as a tragic deadly sun of history. The historical, personal, and cosmic all mutually permeate one another, and refract through the inner eye, the eye of the soul and spirit. These two black suns—one in the sky and the other under water—represent a double tragic stamp of a vision of history, created and established by Lalić in this poem.

The last—fourteenth—strophe is, of course, a hexameter. The lyrical subject asks that respects be paid to the dead / Even if unconsciously", without the pathos characteristic of Bojić, but with a reminder of the bloody price of history:

(...) A istorija košta:
Krv ipak nije voda.

(... History comes at a price:
Blood is still thicker than water.)

The connection with the tragic war victims is established despite the numerous interferences. The result of this connection is the two black suns.

Lalić's poem *The Sea Grave* is, therefore, a counter poem to Bojić's true hymn and requiem. Lalić's poem is almost a requiem for history. However, without the subtext, without Bojić's poem *The Sea Grave*, it is unlikely that Lalić's creation would have been understood correctly. Also, now we have a clearer understanding of Lalić's rather excellent review of Bojić's poetry, and the praises with reference to his treatment of the Bible and Byzantium, and especially Bojić's sense of history. Lalić's essay on Bojić and Lalić's poem *The Sea Grave* also mutually illuminate one another. This study rests on these manifold mutual illuminations.

Translated from Serbian by
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SLOBODAN VLADUŠIĆ

POSTCOLONIAL CRITICISM AND SERBIAN LITERATURE

The significance and importance of thinking about the relationship between Serbian literature and postcolonial criticism does not stem from the affirmative answer to the question of whether Serbia was a colony in its history, but above all from the fact that postcolonial criticism is a global phenomenon. This is acknowledged by those theorists who are critical of postcolonial criticism: one of them is Arif Dirlik, who notes that "a description of a diffuse group of intellectuals, of their concerns and orientations, was to turn by the end of the decade into a description of a global condition".[1] The global status of postcolonial criticism obliges us to seriously consider its assumptions as well as its repercussions on Serbian literature.

Although the beginning of postcolonial studies is connected to the book *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) by Frantz Fanon, it seems that they gained decisive momentum with the book *Orientalism* (1978) by Edward Said. Inspired by Foucault's concept of discourse, Said shows how the West constructed the image of the Orient. The two basic theses that run through the entire book can be formulated as follows: first, the image of the Orient in the West is not a reflection of the true Orient, but a construct that was supposed to provide and legitimize the process of its colonization. The construction of the image of the Orient was performed through the Orientalist discourse. The second thesis: the image of the Orient constructed in this way essentializes its identity and prevents its dynamic understanding, but also change.

These theses, on the one hand, served as inspiration for further theoretical dismantling of Orientalist discourse within postcolonial studies;

[1] Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism*, Westviewpress, Colorado & Oxford, 1997, p. 53.

on the other hand, Said's theses were exposed to various critical readings. Some of these criticisms concern Foucault's term of discourse and doubts about the possibility of establishing some pre-discourse knowledge. Namely, if Said believes that Orientalist discourse deformed the image of the Orient under the influence of the power that constituted it, that would mean that there is a real, true image of the Orient in relation to which one can testify to the deformations of that image performed by Orientalist discourse. However, if (for the purposes of this text) we accept as correct Foucault's postulate that there is no possibility for some knowledge to bypass the discourse,[2] then it would mean that such a true picture of the Orient does not exist. More precisely, the image of the Orient in that case would be the result of two different discourses—Orientalist and postcolonial—which in both cases, but in different ways, would deform the image of the Orient. An analysis of that principled critique would lead us to the history of the image of the Orient in Said's texts, and that image would not be homogeneous. In that sense, the analysis of Said's opus made by Aijaz Ahmad would be important. This theorist notes that around 1984 there was a turning point in Said's opinion: the position of Third World cultural nationalism (Said is of Palestinian origin) was abandoned in the name of a globalist position characterized by "rejecting nationalism, national borders, nations as such."[3]

This reversal in Said's opinion points to a special kind of identity, and we will see, of the concept of literature. To show that, we need to clarify what Edward Said's attitude is towards the literary canon of the West. In this sense, the following remark by Said in the introduction to his book Culture and Imperialism is significant: "The novels and other books I consider here I analyse because first of all I find them estimable and admirable works of art and learning, in which I and many other readers take pleasure and from which we derive profit. Second, the challenge is to connect them not only with that pleasure and profit but also with the imperial process of which they were manifestly and unconcealedly a part; [...]"[4]

The quoted part shows us that Said cared about preserving the aesthetic concept of literature, but the passage also unequivocally states that the direction of his interpretations is ideologically motivated: he is primarily interested in the connection between works of art and the imperial process, either through the ways in which this process is silenced,

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[2] Mišel Fuko, *Poredak diskursa*, preveo Dejan Aničić, Karpos, Loznica, 2007, p. 40.

[3] Ahmad Aijaz, *In Theory*, Verso, London, 1992, p. 202.

[4] Original text. In Serbian: Edvard Said, *Kultura i imperijalizam*, translated by Vesna Bogojević, Beogradski krug, Beograd, 2002, p. 14.

or through the ways in which literature participates in the construction of the image of the Orient.

Although at first glance Said tries to make a compromise between aesthetic criteria and political reading, it turns out that this compromise is not easy to maintain. The reason for that is the fact that the aesthetic criterion, from romanticism onwards, influences the individualization of literary works. Eliot's conception of the literary canon, which he presented in his famous essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", is aimed at reconciling individuality and tradition. This reconciliation is achieved on the ground of a novelty that unites the individuality of the work and the tradition. Namely, individuality is conceived as a new work that recognizes the present in the past and the past in the present in a new way, and in that way changes the relations in the canon, and at the same time only joins the canon. The Eliot canon, therefore, can be imagined as a series of individual works that are in the process of mutual communication. The canon opens for a truly new individual work that is new if it adds a new replica to that dialogical process—a replica of the present, that is, a new, different time in which the work is created.[5] Somewhere on this trail is Bloom's fear of influence, a concept that shows the ways in which new poets ("ephebes", in Bloom's terminology) revise the works of great predecessors and thus create space for their own voice.[6] In the same context, one can read the poetic notion of "anti-painting",[7] which was installed by Miodrag Pavlović—whose origin is unequivocally Eliotesque—as well as Kiš's notion of "anti-book".

Finally, it should be mentioned that Auerbach's famous book *Mimesis* functions in a similar way, in which the canon of Western literature is derived through a series of different works of literature that present reality in new, different ways. Mimesis is, therefore, the history of Western literature, and that history consists of works that introduce novelty in the way of presenting reality—the skeleton of that history. Implicitly, this means that the canon is shaped as a combination of continuity (portrayal of reality) and poetic novelty that allows a new view of reality and which, ultimately, individualizes the work, as irreducible to other works.

Said's more astute critics noted that his postcolonial reading of the canonical works of Western literature was in fact a counter-reading of Auerbach's *Mimesis*. Ahmad notes that Said in *Orientalism*, "like Auerbach, [...] is preoccupied with the canonical author, with tradition, with

[5] Original text. In Serbian: Tomas Sterns Eliot, „Tradicija i individualni talenat", in *Teorijska misao o književnosti*, ed. Petar Milosavljević, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 1991, p. 469-476.

[6] Original text. In Serbian: Harold Blum, *Antitetička kritika*, translated by Maja Herman Sekulić, Beograd, Slovo ljubve, 1980.

[7] Miodrag Pavlović, *Dnevnik pene*, Slovo ljubve, Beograd, 1972, p. 10.

sequential periodization."[8] The difference, however, is that "Auerbach *finds* humanist value in those books" while Said, on the other hand, "finds only a lack; but both look for the same values, in the same books—or at least, the same *kind* of books."[9] Of course, Said does not find humanist values because, from the point of view of postcolonial critique, the canonical works of Western literature either actively participate or actively conceal the imperialist process that Said ambiguously criticizes.

This brings us to the operation characteristic of every political reading, and that is the deindividualization of the literary text. There are two types of deindividualization: first, it is the abolition of formal specifics that make the text irreducible to another literary text. Then political reading reduces the texts to their common denominator, which degrades the value of a group of literary texts to a greater or lesser extent. The most extreme and inadmissible example is certainly the Nazi "reading" of Jewish literature, which reduced various literary texts to the origin of their authors, which led the texts to the stake. Certainly, however, we should not forget the communist "reading" of literature that was not class-conscious, so as such it was rejected in various ways as bourgeois babbling.

Undoubtedly, these two examples, which are not accidentally characteristic of totalitarian systems, nevertheless made Said acknowledge to some extent the aesthetic relevance of the literary texts he subjected to postcolonial reading. However, the problem is that postcolonial reading remains an ideological reading that reduces the works of the literary canon to a moral transgression: active and passive participation in the process of the colonization of the Orient. This is not surprising: the act of the deindividualization of literary texts, which reduces them to a common denominator, always devalues these works to a greater or lesser extent. Devaluation is greater in those cases when there is a political situation behind the ideological reading in the Schmidt-ean sense of the word, that is, when the ideological reading is conducted by a group of people who take on the right to determine the enemy. Then deindividualized literature is labeled as enemy literature, and ideological reading turns into political reading. Devaluation is less when ideological reading does not have a clearly defined political situation: so we could say that deconstructionist reading also belongs to the sphere of ideological reading, because it reduces all literature to heating up the logocentric illusion, or, in De Man's version of deconstruction, to the allegory of illegibility.

Ideological and political reading are united by the fact that they abolish the aesthetic criterion of the opportunity to analyze a literary

[8] Ahmad Aijaz, *In Theory*, Verso, London, 1992, p. 168.
[9] Ibid.

work: it is not just a matter of simply overlooking the aesthetic relevance of the work, but of abolishing the possibility of the existence of an aesthetic criterion.[10] The aesthetic criterion, and thus the autonomy of a literary work—autonomy that does not have to be understood as separation from the world but as a special way of speaking about the world—is presented only as an illusion that conceals the ideological message of the work, which degrades it to a greater or lesser extent, and which, depending on different angles of ideological or political reading, is interpreted differently.

In any case, ideological and political reading is based on the so-called "moral reasons" in the name of which the literary work is deindividualized and degraded. In ideological reading, such as, say, deconstructionist reading, it is the "morality of truth" that dictates that the logocentric illusion be presented as an illusion. In political reading, it is the "morality of the group" in the name of when a certain corpus of literary texts is defined as "hostile". Ideological and political reading coincide in that there is a kind of prejudice, *a priori* of a given topic and a given attitude, which the literary text only confirms and testifies to. So, political and ideological reading does not start with the text, but with something that is outside it and that should be included in the reading process in the text, not only in those texts that offer less resistance to this operation, but especially in those that offer maximum resistance.

At first glance, Said tried to distance his postcolonial reading from political reading (which induces opposition between morally superior members of colonized peoples and morally inferior members of the empire) by distancing himself from the so-called "rhetoric of condemnation" on the example of Jane Austen's novel: "Yes, Austen belonged to a slave-owning society, but do we therefore jettison her novels as so many trivial exercises in aesthetic frumpery? Not at all, I would argue, if we take seriously our intellectual and interpretative vocation to make connections, to deal with as much of the evidence as possible, fully and actually, to read what is there or not there, above all, to see complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated, or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history."[11]

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[10] This is exactly how we can understand the transition from deconstructionist reading to new historical reading, which criticizes deconstruction precisely because it was performed only in the sphere of canonical works. In contrast, new historicism celebrates the expansion of the field of texts being analyzed. This expansion is a direct consequence of ideological arbitrariness in new historical reading, and that is the radicalization of the connection between text and culture. This arbitrariness makes canonical works more dependent on the assumptions of the culture in which they are created than on the individual talent of their authors, so they are no longer individual images but documents of the epoch and time in which they are created.

[11] Original text. In Serbian: Edvard Said, *Kultura i imperijalizam*, translated by Vesna Bogojević, Beogradski krug, Beograd, 2002, p. 191-192.

This is a very important passage. The first thing we notice in it is that Said condemns the rhetoric of condemnation by denying the opposition between morally superior slaves (members of colonized nations) and morally inferior masters, including Jane Austen and her novels that participated in constructing Orientalist discourse. Instead of this opposition, Said constructs another opposition: the opposition between isolated experiences and the experience of interdependence / connection. However, this opposition cannot—or rather does not want to—save aesthetic relevance as a criterion for evaluating literature, because it itself postulates a moral distinction: "isolated" experiences are attributed repressive power over what Said calls a "the hybridizing intrusions of human history"; thus, isolation is defined as morally inferior to moments of interdependence / intertwining / hybridity.

Thus we come to the second topic of this passage, and that is hybridity itself. Namely, the passage we quoted is in the introduction to the book *Culture and Imperialism*, which was written after Said revised his attitude towards the nation. In that sense, it represents a repackaging of the critique of Orientalist discourse derived from Orientalism from the position of an intellectual belonging to the colonized people into a critique of Orientalist discourse derived from the position of hybrid identity, i.e., the intellectual of the Metropolis / Megalopolis, who originates from the Third World (former colony). There is one continuity between these two positions: the critique of imperialism. However, there are two differences that divide these two positions: the first is that the position of the hybrid intellectual assumes the status of a victim that was previously intended for the colonized people.[12] Another difference: the hybrid intellectual distances himself from the country of his origin, which he *a priori* accuses of nationalism by denying the difference between patriotism and chauvinism, i.e. delegitimizing the notion of national interest: "And so in the late twentieth century the imperial cycle of the last century in some way replicates itself, although today there are really no big empty spaces, no expanding frontiers, no exciting new settlements to establish. We live in one global environment with a huge number of ecological, economic, social, and political pressures tearing at its only dimly perceived, basically uninterpreted and uncomprehended fabric. Anyone with even a vague consciousness of this whole is alarmed at how such remorselessly selfish and narrow interests—patriotism, chauvinism, ethnic, religious, and racial hatreds—can in fact

[12] "Whereas we write and speak as members of a small minority of marginal voices, our journalistic and academic critics belong to a wealthy system of interlocking informational and academic resources with newspapers, television networks, journals of opinion, and institutes at its disposal." (Original text. In Serbian: Idem, p. 80)

lead to mass destructiveness. The world simply cannot afford this many more times."[13]

Said's last sentence could be attributed to any CEO of a multinational company who distances himself from "old" imperialism for tactical reasons, to use that moral credit to discredit a government's decision to, say, nationalize water or oil reserves. Thus, the position of hybrid identity proves to be very suitable for a new cycle of imperial politics in which the titular of colonization would no longer be an individual country but a trust of multinational companies that would pacify any form of intellectual resistance by constructing the moral superiority of hybrid, supranational identity. Said, however, was reluctant to talk about the connection between hybrid (transnational) identity and instances of power in the age of transnational companies whose headquarters are in the same megalopolises inhabited by postcolonial intellectuals. This silence has already been the subject of criticism by theorists who have devoted themselves to dismantling postcolonial critique, but also by those who have approached hybrid identity as a global phenomenon, regardless of the postcolonial context.

Instead of that critique, which I have already written about elsewhere,[14] I will dedicate myself to the repercussions of postcolonial critique of Serbian literature. I would like to single out three moments: 1) changed perception of national literature, 2) thematic and poetic shifts and 3) axiological shifts.

1) Hybrid identity reserves the right to be the exclusive representative of the space of origin. This is confirmed by the case of Professor Ali Mazrui, who Said cites in the context of the attacks that postcolonial intellectuals are experiencing in the metropolis: "This series [The Africans] was written and narrated by a distinguished scholar and professor of political science at the University of Michigan, Ali Mazrui, a Kenyan and a Muslim, whose competence and credibility as a first-rank academic authority were unquestioned."[15] Professor Mazrui's competencies are not questionable for Said, nor is the possibility of a hybrid identity intellectual (Third World origin, residence Metropolis / Megalopolis) to represent the space he left and to whom he no longer belongs geographically or existentially. The possibility of an African intellectual representing Africa was not taken into account.

That this case is not a coincidence but an element of structural changes is also testified by the story of one of our Slavists who works

[13] Original text. In Serbian: Idem, p. 67.

[14] See: Slobodan Vladušić, *Crnjanski, Megalopolis*, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2011.

[15] Original text. In Serbian: Edvard Said, *Kultura i imperijalizam*, translated by Vesna Bogojević, Beogradski krug, Beograd, 2002, p. 95.

in Italy. At one gathering, she asked who represents Serbian literature in Italian public life, and then concluded that it was neither Andrić nor Crnjanski, but several writers living in Italy, who came there as refugees in the 1990s.

Undoubtedly, there is a tendency for Serbian literature to be represented, to a greater or lesser extent, by members of hybrid literature. In that fact, we can recognize the reduction of the status of Serbian literature to postcolonial literature. The affirmation of hybrid literature as its representative, which takes place in the Megalopolis, testifies to the fact that national literature is implicitly accused of nationalism. Also, the affirmation of hybrid literature is also an implicit, but unequivocal message that (Serbian) literature is possible only as hybrid literature, therefore, without a national prefix.

2) Postcolonial critique produces postcolonial literature in the sense that literature is not the source of theory here, but vice versa: theory determines the boundaries of literature. These boundaries are geographical: e.g., the "An Afghan in London" theme gains global validity through postcolonial critique, while on the other hand, the "An Afghan in Afghanistan" theme is tacitly removed as local, isolated, morally inferior. Speaking in Ransier's terminology, postcolonial literature shapes the field of the sensory by narrowing it to the individual / representative of the minority group, while pushing the member of the whole into the shadow. In this way, we are witnessing a paradox that is not accidental: postcolonial critique has turned its critical sting to a literary canon based on aesthetic criteria, under the pretext that there is no place for minorities (specifically: colonies) in the depiction of the whole that literature conceives. Now, however, postcolonial critique itself conceives postcolonial literature as a representation of a minority (hybrid identity) or a fragment that obscures the whole.

There is a possibility that this will be reflected in the poetic and thematic aspects of Serbian literature. In the first case, it may mean abandoning the intention of a novelistic depiction of the totality of time in the name of portraying a privileged minority, which leads to the "feudalization" of literature. In the thematic sphere, this leads to the formation of a topos of a hybrid situation, which could be generalized as a description of the (limited) stay of newcomers in the Megalopolis. The *a priori* negative attitude of postcolonial critique towards the country of origin, based on the moral superiority of the hybrid identity, but also the space of the Megalopolis, makes Megalopolis appear in such prose as morally superior to the country it comes from, which means that the image of the Megalopolis must be idealized (just as, conversely, the image of the country from which it came must be more or less stigmatized).

3) Postcolonial critique works through the political reading of literature: this means that it is burdened with a strong "moral" engagement that is in fact the "morality of the group." In this particular case, it is, of course, a group framed by a hybrid identity. However, postcolonial critique is also a form that can give legitimacy to political readings of Serbian literature, with some local corrections being likely. The result of such a political reading, however, may be identical to the postcolonial reading: the deindividualization of the canon as an introduction to the imposition of guilt, or the "moral" disqualification of the canon in the name of "group morality." Besides, political reading almost naturally leads to "inquisitorial reading". The inquisitorial reading is, therefore, the reading that starts from the *a priori* guilt of the text and which is therefore directed towards the "confession" that the text will give, after the hermeneutic torture to which it will be exposed. It is, therefore, a process of loading, to which legitimacy is given by the "morality of the group".

Translated from the Serbian by
Jovanka Kalaba

BORIS BULATOVIĆ

BASIC CHARACTERISTICS AND IDEOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF THE POLITICAL EVALUATION OF SERBIAN LITERATURE FROM THE END OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ONWARDS

In the last decade of the twentieth century, in a significant segment of foreign academic criticism (in the fields of literary science, historiography, sociology, cultural anthropology, political science), the prevailing way of dealing with Serbian literature is such that it does not take into account the aesthetic relevance of literary works nor does it attach importance to them by functionalizing their aesthetic reach, in order to—drawing examples from artistically representative works—present and prove the ideological unacceptability and danger of even the most important Serbian prose and poetry works and their authors (Peter II Petrovic Njegoš, Ivo Andrić, Vasko Popa, Dobrica Ćosić, Milorad Pavić, Slobodan Selenić). Thus, artistically relevant works are indicated—from the above critical aspect—not as areas for the research and elucidation of aesthetic values in Serbian literature, but as samples in which the ideological views of writers are sought. When it comes to this type of foreign, but also a part of domestic criticism (from the late twentieth and early twenty-first century), it is necessary to point out an important methodological distinction of the approach in this study from that of Edward Said, which he explicitly stated in the afterword to later editions of his *Orientalism*. He states there (disputing the justification of certain accusations he faced[1]) that in his book he "has no

[1] See Afterword (written in 1994) published in Serbian edition: Edvard Said, *Orijentalizam*, translated by Drinka Gojković, Biblioteka XX veka—Knjižara Krug, Belgrade, 2008, 439. Said states that the 'anti-Westernism' of Orientalism is unjustifiably attributed to him, as well as indirect support for Islamism and Muslim

interest, much less the ability to discover what the true Orient and true Islam is".[2] The methodology of the author's intention in this study is somewhat differently designed and set in relation to Said's critical view of the Western patrocentric discourse on societies, cultures and literatures of former colonies (in the colonial and postcolonial period). Namely, having in mind the expansiveness, political motivation, and even neo-colonial pretensions of the mentioned work of foreign criticism of Serbian literature, the goal of research thinking should not be limited to showing how the interpretation of Serbian literature neglects its aesthetic significance, but emphasizes the political factors it contains; the degree of impartiality and objectivity of the interpretation of political and ideological phenomena that this critique applies in its analysis of literary works by Serbian authors should also be problematized on a synchronic and diachronic level (of course, to the extent that it is relevant to understanding the nature of the critical process we are talking about, and without pretensions to forming some 'final' and 'true' picture of political phenomena and processes from recent history). In other words, if Said's somewhat reductive approach were consistently used, the presentation of ideological engagement with Serbian literature (i.e., ideological aspects in foreign literary science that have been largely present since the late twentieth century)—accompanied by primary critical interest in 'political and 'ideological' in it (i.e., for politics and ideology in the literary works of domestic authors as a subject of interpretation)—would be aimed at reducing the so-called 'hate speech' in critical analyses of texts belonging to the corpus of Serbian literature. At the same time, taking into account the meaning of the mentioned phrase (and neglecting its ideological functions), it does not necessarily suggest the unfoundedness and inaccuracy of this 'speech', but above all its inappropriateness. Thus, if Said's model of opposing Orientalist

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fundamentalism. Regarding the remark about anti-Westernism, Said points out that he is wrongly "imputed that Orientalism is a synecdoche, or a miniature symbol for the whole West, and that, in fact, it should be taken as representative of the West as a whole. As it is, this argument reads, the entire West is the enemy of the Arabs and Islam [...] and many other non-European peoples who have suffered under Western colonialism and prejudice." Paraphrasing another objection, Said ironically intones and expresses it from the point of view of one of the critics of his Orientalism (primarily referring to Bernard Lewis): "To criticize Orientalism, as I did in my book, is to—according to this—support Islamism and Muslim fundamentalism." It is possible to gain insight into the scientific objectivity and reasonableness of this type of dispute (as opposed to a much more grounded form of Ejaz Ahmad's critique focused on the key inconsistencies of Said's approach and his authorial position)—in an indirect way, i.e., and without the necessary detailed analysis—through the present assumption that any opposition to the current ideologically instrumentalized discourse on Serbs (instead of Arabs) is marked as a metonymy for anti-Westernism, as well as implicit support for Milošević's politics.

[2] Idem, 439.

discourse[3] was fully accepted in order to preserve the autonomy of Serbian literature and its interpretation, the defense of Serbian literature would have a narrow space and limited argumentation: as an objection, it could then be pointed out that foreign criticisms and interpretations of the 'ideological' in the works of Serbian authors are possibly accurate and reasonable, but that it is inappropriate that Serbian literature is viewed mainly in its ideological meanings, instead of exploring the aesthetic values of literary texts.[4]

[3] Marija Todorova, writing in the introduction to her study *Imagining the Balkans* on the reception of *Orientalism*, states that Said, having already postulated the untruthfulness of the Orientalist approach, is accused of not drawing any logical conclusions that there must be at least the possibility of some representation that would be true („Саид оптужен да, кад је већ постулирао неистинитост оријенталистичког приступа, није из тога извукао логичан закључак 'да мора да постоји бар могућност некаквог приказивања које би било истинито"'. Marija Todorova, *Imaginarni Balkan*, translated by Dragana Starčević i Aleksandra Bajazetov-Vučen, Biblioteka XX vek—Knjižara Krug, Beograd, 2006, 56.). The key distance in this paper set in relation to Said's method refers to the absence of his more detailed interpretation of the political phenomena that the Orientalists (those he speaks of) stereotypically shape. Thus, although it is not questionable that Said sometimes considers the content of Orientalist discourse inaccurate and biased in explicit statements (when, for example, he claims that the discourse [in the case of the Austrian Orientalist Gustave von Grunebaum] is marked by "canonical pseudoscientific prejudices" [*Orientalism*, 39]), and that the action of Bernard Lewis "consists in distorting the truth, in making false analogies" [*Orientalism*, 453]), in the level of concrete achievements—by omitting this type of interpretation in a more pronounced and detailed way (which, as the author himself states, was not his intention)—the argument used by Edward Said (both in *Orientalism* and in the book *Culture and Imperialism*) leaves the impression that he primarily registers the Western academic colonial-imperial discourse on the Middle East (in *Orientalism*) and literary works that justify colonial conquests (in *Culture and Imperialism*), without challenging (in a more developed form) the truth of Western doctrines and notions of the 'Third' world, nor indications of the way in which science should be dealt with (as well as logical, real and moral insights that should serve as a basis for objective study).

[4] Slobodan Vladušić points out the inadequacy of this interpretation of Serbian literature, believing that it is thus displaced and expelled from the domain of European literature, and that this type of its study—as if it were the literature of former European colonies in Africa and Asia—is an attempt to 'turn it into the literature of the colony'. Vladušić states this conclusion referring to Said's claim that—instead of aesthetic criteria—a different criterion should be applied in the study of African and Asian literatures (created in colonies where literature has a different function), and their political engagement should be treated as "a feature equal to aesthetic autonomy of literature". For Said, however, this distinction does not imply the value inequality of "European" and "non-European" literature. Vladušić, on the other hand, believes that postcolonial criticism undermines the idea of world literature with such an attitude—by disputing the universality and ideological neutrality of the aesthetic relevance of a literary work. See: Слободан Владушић, »'Европеизација' и 'колонизација' српске књижевности', Нова српска политичка мисао, 06.12.2009 [http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-poIitika/nacionaIna-knjizevnost-i-evropa-evropeizacija-i-kolonizacija-srpske-knjizevnosti.html]; »Како од једне европске књижевности начинити зулу књижевност', Нова српска политичка мисао, 01.06.2010 [http://www.nspm.rs/kulturna-politika/konkurs-narodne-biblioteke-srbije-ili-kako-od-jedne-evropske-knjizevnosti-naciniti-zulu-knjizevnost.htmI?aIphabet=c]. Also, in connection with

As we have already mentioned, there are a significant number of scholars and 'commentators' of Serbian literature (and South Slavic / Balkan cultures and societies in general) from foreign universities and scientific institutes who—engaging in research in various scientific fields (not only philology but also historiography, sociology, political science, etc.)—are primarily interested in the relations that literary and critical achievements of Serbian literature establish (or, interpreted from a certain critical point of view, can in some way establish) with the political context. On the one hand, it is evident that such a way of dealing with Serbian literature points to an approach that Edward Said considers appropriate in the study of the literature of the former colonies (therefore, for the literature of non-European nations).[5] A typical type of such interest in Serbian literature is expressed, for example, in two monographs by the American Slavist Andrew Baruch Wachtel: *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation* (1998) and *Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe* (2006).[6] In addition, it should be noted that the critical search for political and ideological within the work does not have to, by analogy, make the critique itself ideological, since some literary products may indeed serve to justify or implement a certain aggressive political idea (consequently, the original postcolonial criticism does not necessarily make it ideological to discover and thematize the affirmative attitude towards colonialism that is present in the literary and artistic works of some Western authors). On the other

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the postcolonial subjection of the traditional literary canon to criticism, see the same author: Crnjanski, Megalopolis, Službeni glasnik, Beograd, 2011, 46-48.

[5] Said says: "I think it is a mistake to try to show that the 'other' literatures of Africa and Asia, with their more obviously worldly affiliations to power and politics, can be studied respectably, that is, as if they were in actuality as high, as autonomous, as aesthetically independent and satisfying as French, German or English literatures. The notion of black skin in a white mask is no more serviceable and dignified in literary study than it is in politics," Edward Said, "Figures, Configurations, Transfigurations", *Race and Class*, vol. 32, no. 11, 1990; quoted in *Ibidem*, in *Subject to Change: Teaching Literature in the Nineties*, ed. Susie J. Tharu, Orient Longman Ltd., New Delhi, 1998, 69. In the last sentence quoted, Said refers to the book *Peau noire, masques blancs*, written in 1952 by Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist and philosopher born in Martinique, who was educated in France and worked in Algeria. Thus, ironically saying that the notion of black skin under a white mask—that is, the unacceptable subconscious aspiration of Africans to identify with their white occupier (which Fanon writes about in his book)—"is no more serviceable and dignified in literary study than it is in politics", Said actually suggests that even the literary standards for the literature of the oppressed colonies must not be at any cost equal to the standards that exist in Western societies and science.

[6] Andrew Wachtel: *Stvaranje nacije, razaranje nacije* (*Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation: Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia. Cultural Memory in the Present)*, translated into Serbian by Ivan Radosavljević, Stubovi culture, Belgrade, 2001; Ibidem, *Književnost Istočne Evrope u doba postkomunizma* (*Remaining Relevant After Communism: The Role of the Writer in Eastern Europe*), translated into Serbian by Ivan Radosavljević, Stubovi culture, Belgrade, 2006.

hand, representatives of the academic circle of, say, American, British and German critics in a significant number of cases insist in their studies on the political component (even when they do not belong to the 'ideological type' of interpreters of Serbian literature),[7] especially by: analyzing the way in which key cultural and political phenomena from the recent past are interpreted in Serbian prose and criticism, understanding (from their critical perspective) the responsibility and guilt for the breakup and war events in Yugoslavia in the last decade of the twentieth century (and the role of Serbian writers and their literary works in that), then understanding the hierarchy of relations between the Yugoslav peoples in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, actualizing and redefining the role of the Kosovo myth in literature and its subsequent effect on real events, as well as interpreting the positions of nationally endangering / endangered, and justification and acceptability of political consequences which could have resulted from that position (in both countries).

However, when it comes to this approach in the research of Serbian literature (which neglects the aesthetic features of the text and comes down to the observation and analysis of political meanings in the literary works of Serbian authors), interest in studying it is often caused primarily by political and ideological reasons.[8] Moreover, the urge and motive for including Serbian literature and writers in the domain of academic interest is, in a significant number of examples, completely outside the realm of literature (since we will interpret most examples in detail later, here are just some of the authors: Michael Sells, Reinhard Lauer, Andrew Wachtel, Alexander Greenawalt, Sabrina Ramet, Holm Sundhaussen). Or, if the type of criticism we are talking about initially has no non-literary motivation, it is again ideologically almost in full accordance

[7] For example, on the website of the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies at the University of Nottingham, among the data on experts in Serbian literature (David Norris and Vladislava Ribnikar) are the following fields of their scientific research: 1. David Norris: "Serbian literature, film and cultural identity; Serbian fictional narratives since 1980 in which I intend to analyse representations of the critical events of those years as they are interpreted through cultural production; effect of negative representations of the Balkans on the constructions of self-images in Serbia and Croatia", 2. Vladislava Ribnikar: "Serbian Literature of the 1990s in the context of trauma studies; contemporary Serbian literature, especially the historical novel; I am interested in the ways in which the narrative text responds to wider cultural issues". Source: http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/slavonic/staff/index.aspx (accessed in November 2008).

[8] Vesna Cidilko thus states that since the 1990s, the reception of Serbian literature in the German-speaking area (she, however, in her text speaks of the interest of translators and publishers) "primarily depends on non-literary and unaesthetic factors" (741), and the most important "non-literary factors of reception include major political and historical events" (742), i.e., "war and war events" (743). Vesna Cidilko, "Српска књижевност у немачким преводима: жанр као фактор рецепције", Зборник Матице српске за књижевност и језик, књига 51, свеска 3, 2003, 741-749.

with those foreign policy strategies and state (and non-governmental) geopolitical projects through which—from the position of power of some Western countries—Serbian topics are treated in an anti-civilizational way, along with the prevailing media image (shaped in the form of a negative stereotype) about Serbs.

Also, there are two more incidental cases in which Serbian literature is subjected exclusively to political contextualization and interpretation, when in the field of studies in other fields (history, sociology, political science, international relations, communication, anthropology, ethnology): 1. the role and public influence of Serbian writers and intellectuals (as well as their works) from the 1980s are presented in a negative way (Dobrica Ćosić,[9] Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz,[10] Dimitrije Bogdanović, Antonije Isaković, Vojislav Lubarda, Gojko Đogo, Jovan Radulović,

[9] Among those mentioned, the most frequently mentioned and criticized writer as a public figure is Dobrica Ćosić, who was taken into account primarily in connection with the Memorandum of SANU from 1986 (emphasizing, as a rule, that he is an important writer). For example, British journalist Christopher Bennett, later a lecturer in Yugoslav history at the School of Slavic and Eastern European Studies at London University College (and head of the Office of the High Representative in Banja Luka), claims that "the deadly Greater Serbian agenda for the late 20th century grew out of the thinking and writing of Dobrica Ćosić, one of Serbia's most distinguished novelists. Ćosić was renowned as a writer of popular, historical epics, mostly set during wars and overflowing with references to Serb mythology", who "could not come to terms with Albanian emancipation and was purged from the LCY for nationalism in 1968". Christopher Bennett, *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequences*, 4th edition, Hurst and Co., London, 1998, 79-80. Philip Cohen, United Nations Adviser for Bosnia and Herzegovina and author of Serbia's Secret War, in the preface to the collection prepared by Thomas Cushman and Stjepan Meštrović, describes Ćosić as an 'unpunished ultranationalist' who in his novels and political essays "glorified Serbian militancy" and as an ideologue—creating a Serbian 'war program'—advocated the overthrow of the multinational Yugoslavia in order to create a Greater Serbia and "fanned the flames of war" ("Dobrica Ćosić, whose novels and political essays portrayed Serbs as the superior nation of the Balkans, glorified Serbian militancy [...]. He shocked a Communist Party meeting by proposing that Serbs rise to destroy multi-national Yugoslav state to fulfill 'the old historical goal and national idea' of a Greater Serbia. Ćosić later fanned the flames of war. [...] As a principal ideologist of the 1986 memorandum, [he] was not alone among politically active intellectuals who worked to advance Serbia's war agenda"). Phillip J. Cohen, "The Complicity of Serbian Intellectuals in Genocide in the 1990s", in: Thomas Cushman and Stjepan Meštrović (eds.), *This Time We Knew: Western Responses to Genocide in Bosnia*, New York University Press, New York, 1996, 40, 55, 57.

[10] Nicholas Miller, an American researcher of the cultural and political history of Yugoslavia, is the author of several works (included in the later book *The Nonconformists*) examining the development of nationalism in Serbian intellectual circles (primarily the public activities of Ćosić, Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz and painter Mićo Popović). Among the larger number of papers see: Nicholas J. Miller, "The Nonconformists: Dobrica Ćosić and Mića Popović Envision Serbia", *Slavic Review*, Volume 58, No. 3, 1999, 515-536; "The Children of Cain: Dobrica Ćosić's Serbia", *East European Politics & Societies*, Volume 14, No. 2, 2000, 268-287; "Mihiz in the Sixties: Politics and Drama Between Nationalism and Authoritarianism", *Nationalities Papers*, Volume 30, No. 4, 2002, 603/621.

Matija Bećković, Momo Kapor, Rajko Petrov Nogo); and 2. when the genesis of the Kosovo myth and its later transformation in Serbian folk epics, romantic poetry of the nineteenth century, and primarily in Njegoš's *The Mountain Wreath* are seen as literary and spiritual inspirers and sources of 'Greater Serbian' and 'genocidal' conquests, and lead to direct connection—with its "genocidal" potential (as a kind of "call for genocide")[11]—with the war and Serbian 'war-mongering' political discourse from the late twentieth century (Sells, Norman Cigar, Tim Judah, Branimir Anzulovic, Mujeeb Khan, Sundhaussen, Christopher Catherwood etc.). In cases where the Kosovo myth and *The Mountain Wreath* are not accused of directly inciting violence, the subject of scientific interest again belongs to the political domain: their instrumentalization, 'nationalist' reception since the mid-1980s and aggressive political use are exposed to critical remarks (Bruce MacDonald, Ger Duijzings, Paul Cohen or Matthias Buchholz).[12] Although the polemical views of the latter foreign authors differ from those previously named in a somewhat more moderate academic tone and approach, they ideologically belong to identical discourse.

Summarizing the previous considerations and insights expressed at the beginning of this study, the preliminary conclusion regarding the type of foreign criticism in which the study of literary works of Serbian writers neglects their aesthetic features and excludes all elements of literary autonomy can be formulated as follows: this critique—in most cases—is not about criticizing the very presence of an ideological component in Serbian literature, but about criticizing a specific, certain ideological or political attitude (inconsistent with the official policy of the 'West') recognized by an author, implicitly suggesting (sometimes implicitly imposing) the need for the 'correct' political position of the Serbian writer in his work. This critique—in most cases—is not about criticizing the very presence of an ideological component in Serbian literature, but about criticizing a specific, certain ideological or political attitude (inconsistent with the official policy of the 'West') recognized by an author, implicitly suggesting (sometimes implicitly imposing) the need for the 'correct' political position of the Serbian writer in his work. Where does this kind of research and evaluation of the validity (or more precisely 'suitability') of Serbian literature in foreign science

[11] Branimir Anzulović, *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*, New York University Press, New York, 1999, 67.

[12] Matthias Buchholz, "'Die ewige Fackel der ewigen Finsternis/Nicht verlischt sie, noch vergeht ihr Leuchten': Der *Bergkranz* P.P. Njegoš", in: *'Apokalypse der serbischen Seele': Gedanken zum Ethos des Opfers im Kosovomythos*, Der Andere Verlag, Uelvesbüll, 2011, 102-135 (the titles of the studies of the other above-mentioned authors are not mentioned here as they will be discussed later).

come from? It stems from the politically caused and motivated intention for Serbian literature to be presented as an accomplice and instigator of Serbian "aggressive politics", i.e., from the desire to recognize the roots of "colonizing" and "genocidal" ambitions. Therefore, the research task in this discussion is not focused only on shedding light on the circumstances under the influence of which the reception of Serbian literature in Western European and North American science dealing with Balkan / Southeast European studies changed, i.e., turning the literary form of reception into the current and dominant political reception. The author's task and work are somewhat more comprehensive and imply the need to point out that such foreign academic criticism has the characteristics of political reading of Serbian literature and has key features that make it an ideological critique, as well as that it is conditioned by specific political interests, as well as that it is conditioned by specific political interests, and that it performs its function within the framework of wider propaganda activities with the aim of stigmatizing the desired image of the 'targeted Other' (Serbs as a national and cultural community) into the image of the 'criminogenic and pathological Other', for which evidence is sought—among other places—in Serbian literature, too. Ideological critique is also based on a consciously and deliberately altered picture of reality (one-sided and isolated, with tacit neglect of the comparative context at the synchronic and diachronic levels) brought into line with the geostrategic interests of militarily and politically dominant Western states and organizations, hence meeting the "ideologically assigned critique of Serbian culture".[13] According to Slobodan Vuković, in the international public and media discourse in the early 1990s, a consensual agreement was established on "how to write and talk about the Yugoslav crisis. If, on the other hand, facts are found that do not agree with the established paradigm, they are not paid attention to [...], they are bypassed or silenced, that is hidden", while individuals in public discourse who "opposed the imposed and constructed 'truth'" are marginalized.[14] From the sphere of global media, dominant images and attitudes have been taken over by humanities, as a result of which the propaganda paradigm has gradually become ingrained in the scholarly literature (Michel Foucault calls this academic discourse "a discourse

[13] This phrase was used by Milo Lompar when writing about the reductive conception of the interpretation of Njegoš's opus in Radomir Konstantinović's *The Philosophy of Parochialism*. Мило Ломпар, *Дух самоūорицања: ūрилоī криūици срūске кулūурне ūолиūике: у сенциūуђинске власūи*, 2. допуњено издање, Orpheus, Нови Сад, 2012, 354.

[14] Слободан Вуковић, Етика западних медија: антисрпска пропаганда деведесетих година XX века, Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, Сремски Карловци—Нови Сад, Институт друштвених наука, Београд, 2009, 9.

with scientific pretensions").[15] If—in the context of our topic—we look at Said's analysis of the harmonization of Western science and politics in the interpretation of the Middle East, his claim that studies of Orientalism should be viewed "not so much as a scientific activity but as an instrument of national politics"[16] is fully applicable to the ideological type of the critical study of Serbian literature.

Furthermore, the emphasized ideological evaluation of Serbian literature in a large segment of foreign criticism does not produce a neutral effect, but directly and indirectly establishes a horizon of expectations (primarily thematically and ideologically) from the literary works of Serbian writers. Indirectly, the horizon of expectations is formed 'ex-negativo': by highlighting 'negative' examples among Serbian authors (the already mentioned Njegoš, Pavić, Ćosić, Selenić, and to a much lesser extent Andrić [mostly, though not only, by Bosniak authors[17]], etc.), whose political views or ideologically (re)interpreted works are not in line with the interests of the dominant discourse of power (transferred to the academic sphere). Also, the indirect course of the thematic framework of Serbian literature (the one that is currently being created) is contained in favoring[18] specific topics: war conflicts in the first half and late 1990s, with the need for unambiguous political determination of the author in accepting and emphasizing Serbian responsibility as primary, and blame for the casualties during the wars, as well as for their outbreak. Also, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, at a time of

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[15] See: Мишел Фуко, Рађање биополитике: предавања на Колеж де Франсу 1978-1979 (Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*), translated by: Бојана Новаковић, Бојан Стефановић etc., Светови, Нови Сад, 2005, 56.

[16] Edvard Said, *Orientalizam*, 366.

[17] When it comes to critics of Andrić (and Njegoš) from the Bosniak academic environment, it should be emphasized that the negative critical reception was realized in a typologically consistent way with the ideological type of studying Serbian literature by Western authors, but from a different perspective: first, from the point of view which is allegedly incriminated in Andrić's oeuvre and according to which the writer—in the words of Esad Duraković—shows "contempt on the verge of hatred" (a similar attitude characterizes some critics with marginal literary competence from the Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the seventh decade of the 20th century), and then from the position of self-perception of their own (Bosniak) people as victims of the wars of the first half of the 1990s (this perspective is especially recognizable in the Tuzla collection of papers *Andrić and Bosniaks*, while, for example, it is missing in the extensive study by Muhsin Rizvić, although it was written during the war).

[18] By favoring this thematic framework, we mean greater accessibility and access to international and domestic projects (related to the region of Southeast Europe) funded by foreign foundations (or ministries of science / culture / education in cases of literary science) for writers whose ideological views—in terms of a critical attitude towards the current and historical role of the Serbian people—are compatible with the ideological orientation of these projects. See, for example, the projects and publications of the Robert Bosch Stiftung: http://WWW.bosch-stiftung.de/content/language2/html/38866.asp (accessed in July 2013) Also, compare: Слободан Владушић, "Српска књижевност *for Sale*", in: *На ūромаји: сūуūује, есеји и криūике*, Агора, Зрењанин, 2007, 36-43.

aggressive and active efforts of international political power to promote the Albanian point of view on Serbian-Albanian relations on the 'Kosovo issue', the attitude of Serbian writers towards this phenomenon affects their literary reception. And directly, the horizon of expectations is created by pointing to "positive" examples among the post-war works of Serbian writers and their literary and political engagement.[19] Of the authors from the period of socialist Yugoslavia, the most accepted Serbian writer in the current ideological horizon is Danilo Kiš,[20] in accordance with "the principle according to which the modern classic must be a pre-projected critic of nationalism".[21] The reason for that (leaving aside Kiš's literary work on the suffering of Jews in the Second World War and his critique of Stalinist camps) is largely Kiš's essay on nationalism published in 1973.[22] Based on this often quoted text[23] (both by domestic and foreign critics, but also in the publications of some non-governmental organizations in Serbia), meaningful redirection (and restriction) and a kind of monopolization of Kiš's work establishes ideological closeness between current criticism of Serbian nationalism and the writer, creating an image of Kiš that would—accepted in such a form—imply the supposed inconsistency of the writer.[24]

It is possible to draw important conclusions from the considerations presented in the previous two paragraphs. Namely, in its ideologically conditioned and propaganda-determined appearance (which, along with extra-literary motives and exclusively political reception of Serbian literature, implies falsification of the socio-political context, strengthening of existing and production of new stereotypes, as well as marked coincidence of scientific attitudes with expansive geopolitical and economic interests) the ideological critique in question simulates the position of postcolonial (or anti-colonial) critique, attributing to the literary works

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[19] Radoman Kordić calls the prose and dramatic works of most of these authors "neoliberal realism" (where, therefore, the ideological aspects and political origins of this literature for Kordić are crucial in finding its terminological definition). See: Radoman Kordić, *Politika književnosti*, Filip Višnjić, Beograd, 2007, 36-42 (in connection to this theme, the entire chapter entitled "Рад доксе", 31-68).

[20] See: Vesna Cidilko, "Serbische, kroatische und bosnische Autoren in deutschen Übersetzungen des letzten Jahrzehnts", Berliner Osteuropa Info, Bd. 13, 1999, 32-35 (part of this text has been translated within the already cited work of the same author: "Serbian literature in German translations: genre as a factor of reception").

[21] Мило Ломпар, Idem, 233.

[22] See for example: Andrew Baruch Wachtel, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation*, 264.

[23] This text was first printed in the published interview conducted by Boro Krivokapić with Danilo Kiš: Данило Киш, "Наши путеви се разилазе: доба сумње—то је наше време: (разговор *Идеја* са Данилом Кишом)", разговор водио Боро Кривокапић, *Идеје* (Београд), година 4, број 4, 1973, 97-131.

[24] See: Борис Булатовић, *Критичко-есејистичко дело Мирослава Егерића*, Научно удружење за развој српских студија, Нови Сад, 2012, 146, фуснота број 569.

of Serbian writers and poets the role of spiritual inspirers or accomplices of Serbian colonial, imperial, hegemonic and genocidal endeavors.[25] In other words, ideological critique by means of mimicry—taken from global political and media discourse[26]—uses an identical tool as the American neo-imperial type of totalitarianism that hides its aspirations (including the pursuit of cultural hegemony) under the guise of responsibility for world peace, human rights, democracy and modernity, anti-terrorism and the need to create an open society.[27] Thus, this academic

[25] Although we have already done so, it is not superfluous to point out once again the essential difference between the two positions from which literature is perceived primarily in the political key: the action of the imperial subject from the position of power and the falsification of the socio-political context are in the function of justifying one's own offensive activity, while the 'nationalist' opposition (in the cultures of the so-called 'Third World' countries) to this cultural imperialism has—in ethical and existential terms—a completely different, defensive character. In that sense, Serbian literature and Serbian writers are accused of cultural imperialism and ideological connection with political hegemony.

[26] There is extensive literature on the dependent relationship between media and cultural imperialism (based on the theoretical considerations and beliefs of Antonio Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Noam Chomsky, Edward Herman, Richard Falk, Jacques Derrida, Edward Said, Robert Young, John Tomlinson, Gayatri Spivak and others Western authors close to the Marxist, postcolonial or poststructuralist school). Said states that they are "a key factor in any culture" (513), that "the idea of American leadership and excellence is always present" (504), that American global media have the task of "effectively presenting foreign cultures as threatening and strange" (514), as well as the "uniform correctness of plans, phrases and theories that each succeeding generation creates only to somehow justify the serious tasks of America, which is penetrating every corner of the world" (511). Едвард Саид, *Култура и империјализам*, превела Весна Богојевић, Београдски круг, Београд, 2002.

[27] Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky describe the workings and structure of the media "propaganda model" subordinated to American imperial interests and write about ways to create privileged, established and institutionalized 'truths' (through control instruments) that limit public debate and discussions, and thus contribute to the creation of a consensus on the correctness of American foreign policy. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1988. (A section of this book was translated into Serbian, see: Едвард Херман, „Политичка економија масовних медија: модел пропаганде", Српска политичка мисао, година 1, број ¼, 1994, 117-128; the last edition of the book in English was published in 2010). Regarding the media and political treatment of Serbs, the same authors (co-authored with David Peterson) in the book *The Politics of Genocide* talk about the system of American ideological domination (based on media influence, academic intellectual circles and local regimes) and so-called genocide management, i.e., on the selective use and politicization of the terms 'genocide' and 'terrorism' (in interviews with Pečat magazine, Herman points out that his co-authored book "shows how the propaganda system turns its enemy into a genocidal killer, and on the other hand ensures that its genocide is never recognized as such", while—accordingly—terrorism policy means that people those in power can call their enemies terrorists and present themselves and their allies as fighters against terrorism.") ["О политици геноцида", разговарала Биљана Ђоровић, Печат, број 126, 06.08.2010, 24-30; "Србија је провинција америчке империје", разговарала Биљана Ђоровић, Печат, број 142, 26.11.2010, 8-13]). Edward S. Herman and David Peterson, *The Politics of Genocide*, Foreword by Noam Chomsky, translated by Mirabo, Vesna knjiga, Belgrade, 2010. Among the

critique presents its colonial approach as its own anti-colonial attitude in the interpretation of Serbian literature, whose conditions of origin, aesthetic function and ethical meaning it deconstructs and depicts as morally inferior to the colonizer's literature. When it comes to the constituted horizon of expectations from Serbian literature, its placement in a comparative context leads to the observation of important paradoxes: critical demands of the ideological segment of foreign criticism and its desired image of Serbian literature (as an artistic medium in which political themes are reflected in an adequate, i.e., ideologically acceptable way), on the one hand, are, on the other hand, at odds with the expectation of this critique from their own national literatures (in terms of the primacy of aesthetic relevance). Slobodan Vladušić, speaking about the topicality of Kiš's observations from the essay "*Homo poeticus*, in spite of everything" (from 1980) and the comparability of the treatment of former Yugoslav and current Serbian literature, points out that

> By accepting the horizon of Europe's expectations, Yugoslav literature does not become part of European literature, but, on the contrary, confirms its difference from it (approaching, due to its strong connection with politics, Third World literature). [...] Contrary to that, by refusing to obey the political horizon of expectations, local literature is becoming European, even though it is being denied the right to be accepted as such.[28]

In order to understand and shed light on the inconsistencies of this extremely important phenomenon (not only in the cultural, but above all in the social, national, political and existential sense), it is necessary to consider—in the Serbian case—the existing complexity of relations (in short at this point) between: 1) today's understanding of modernity in certain Serbian intellectual circles, as well as in political and non-governmental organizations, and 2) taking over other people's principles (i.e., the way 'Others', in this case Western societies and nations perceive themselves) or other people's interests (i.e., adopting the Other's image of us as our own). The inconsistency stems from the notion that autochauvinism (absent as their own principle in the 'Other' whose negative stereotypical image of Serbs is accepted) is presented in a politically and media-aggressive way as a form and proof of modernity, caused by accepting other people's (Western) interests, instead of their principles. Therefore, consistently following logic and European principles, the conclusion is that "privileged representatives of European values"[29] and

works translated into the Serbian language that refer to this topic, apart from the above mentioned, see: Noam Chomsky, *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies*, translated by Andrej Grubačić, Svetovi, Novi Sad, 2000.

[28] Слободан Владушић, "'Evropeizacija' i 'kolonizacija' srpske književnosti".

[29] Milo Lompar, Idem., 76.

"agents of modernity" among Serbs (late twentieth and early twenty-first century) advocate those values that are fundamentally and existentially contrary to the principles of Western European and North American states, so instead of following the principles pertaining to the 'other', they meet the expectations horizon (opposed to Serbian interests, but also to their own principles of the 'Other'), i.e., they act as advocates of other people's interests and imposed images of Serbs.

Taking into account the previous considerations presented in this paper regarding the ways of creating a foreign horizon of expectations from Serbian literature (i.e., its predominantly ideological type), which—except that it is in conflict with the principles that apply in foreign literatures and foreign science (when it studies the works of its own national authors)—as a key feature necessarily implies thematic and ideological coincidence with the already mentioned non-literary, i.e., foreign policy interests of countries (and other subjects of power) from whose university centers Slavic critics come, we will single out and explain another conclusion. Current ideological forms of critical perception and reception of Serbian literature seek to thematically and ideologically direct the literary work of Serbian authors on the one hand, and to limit and favor a certain type of literary creation (actually literary-political engagement) on the other hand, by Serbian writers themselves confirmed the politically and media-generated 'interesting' image of the 'Other' about Serbs, and that—on the other hand—sanctioned cases of thematic and ideological inadequacy of Serbian literature (striving to show that nationalism is its most visible feature, accordingly are 'inappropriate' literary works presented as cultural exponents of Serbian politics). This type of literary work is one that would confirm the politically and media-generated 'interested' image of the 'Other' about Serbs by Serbian writers themselves, as well as sanction cases of thematic and ideological inadequacy of Serbian literature (trying to show that nationalism is its most visible feature, according to which 'inappropriate' literary works are presented as cultural exponents of Serbian politics).[30]

[30] Compare Vladušić's claim (from the text "'Evropeizacija' i 'kolonizacija' srpske književnosti") in which, emphasizing the usefulness of Kiš's former insights in the context of current politically motivated types of interpretation of Serbian literature, he states: *Let us recall Kiš's diagnosis of the first and basic stereotype of Yugoslav literature at the time: Yugoslav writers are good only as long as they are—critically—focusing on themselves, that is, as long as they confirm the stereotype of their exclusion from the European space. In that case, Serbian literature will also show a critical amount of anachronism, because while all European literature is going through a process of imagological deconstruction in which stereotypes about national characters are dissolving, Serbian literature would have the opposite role: to strengthen extremely negative stereotypes about the people among whom it arises.* Summarizing his observations (in the quoted excerpt), Vladušić pointed out one of the key inconsistencies in the set horizon of expectations from Serbian literature, although

Acting in this way, that is, assigning and prescribing to Serbian literature the function of propaganda of desirable ideological and political attitudes, ideologically directed criticism in question—except that, when interpreting Serbian literature, re-actualizes (late twentieth and early twenty-first century) antinomy between utilitarian and aesthetic approaches to literature, giving priority to the understanding of art as its own ideological projection of reality—shows properties that basically make it akin to a rigid communist matrix and its patterns (in cultural policy and the science of literature), with the identity of certain important ideological views of Serbs. By reaffirming such a cultural-political concept that conceives literature (and art in general) as an instrument of ideological struggle, today's critical studies of Serbian literature (those dominated by ideological aspects) are largely reminiscent of the outdated and infamous Ždanian regime in the field of culture and thus bring to life a method whose nature is similar to socialist realism (which in one-party communist states was indicated as "transmission of party policy in the literary sector" and "helper in propagating a new social order").[31] In this way, foreign ideological criticism—in forming the horizon of what is expected from Serbian writers as politically acceptable—becomes doubly inconsistent with the standards and principles that apply in the societies and sciences of culturally and economically developed Western countries. It differs, first of all, in emphasizing the political relevance of literature as the basic measure of its evaluation (in the case of Serbian literature), to the detriment of its aesthetic significance (which, in turn, exists as the most important parameter for representatives of literary theory and criticism of these countries in their study and evaluation of their national literatures); and then, on the example of Serbs (their literature, culture, history and attitude towards their own national identity), it advocates the principles of national indolence and autochauvinism, which in that form do not exist as their own principles among intellectuals and politicians in the West.[32]

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the nature and meaning of Kiš's views (expressed in his essay "*Homo poeticus*, in spite of everything everything") differ somewhat from Vladušić's, since Danilo Kiš—in the paraphrased indication of "critical focus (on oneself)" by Yugoslav authors—had in mind the chauvinistic, not autochauvinistic critical attitude of writers (Kiš, therefore, in his text meant the critical engagement of domestic writers with the 'Other' and not 'oneself', as paraphrased in the above quote).

[31] Ратко Пековић, *Ни рат ни мир: панорама књижевних полемика: 1945-1965*, Филип Вишњић, Београд, 1986, 32-33.

[32] It should be noted here that the principles and values of anti-nationalism, anti-militarism and cosmopolitanism in a significant part of Serbian public discourse are manifested and interpreted in a paradoxical and unprincipled way. Under the influence of the foreign media image transmitted by certain domestic non-governmental and political organizations (as well as intellectuals close to them), the named principles are given a specific political function by inadequate interpretation. Thus, for example,

On the other hand, this ideological critique is at the same time doubly harmonized with the communist literary-theoretical, cultural and ideological-propaganda views. First, with its critical activity of interpreting (Serbian) literature, it treats works by Serbian authors as a medium, an instrument for promoting geopolitical interests (governments of their countries), as a result of which its engagement with Serbian literature is not autonomous (as was the case with the aesthetic doctrine and repressive cultural policy of socialist realism, whose "political meaning was in the control of art"),[33] but it is a means and an academic reflection of totalitarian political aspirations (although due to the conditionality of scientific views it is more expedient and correct to speak of the 'pseudo-academic' reflex). Secondly, it takes over, shapes and emphasizes stereotypes (and ideological doctrines) about Serbian guilt and 'Greater Serbian hegemony', understanding them as active constants in interethnic relations in the Balkans. It should be emphasized that these stereotypes were introduced into the public discourse and political life of Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century by the Habsburg Monarchy[34] (i.e., its political and intellectual elite), but that the Comintern ideology

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when it comes to the Serbian case, the affirmative attitude towards the protection of endangered cultural and national identity is identified with nationalism, and the principle of defending state territorial integrity (present in all Western countries) is ridiculed and qualified not only as nationalistic but also anachronic. On the contrary, anti-nationalism—in such a propaganda setting—is either identified with national negligence and disinterest (at a time of pronounced historical temptations that threaten Serbian national existence); or—in an even sharper form—manifests itself through an uncritical attitude, often as open support shown by the object of militant enemy policy towards the imperial subject, i.e., the titular of such a policy (which directly endangers any kind of survival of the object), while condemning 'nationalist' reactions of one's own people and state. The absurdity is reflected not only in the selective approach to different nationalisms, but also in the preferential treatment of some of them, i.e., in the fact that conspirators (among Serbs themselves)—in the name of seemingly principled opposition to all nationalism and militarism—in the context of Serbian-American relations) emphasize and criminalize Serbian 'nationalist' resistance to American imperial politics, culture and propaganda, while at the same time supporting American nationalism and militarism (which could be called passionate chauvinism).

[33] Душан Бошковић, *Естетика у окружењу: сукоби о марксистичкој естетици и књижевној критици у српско-хрватској периодици од 1944. до 1972. године*, Институт за филозофију и друштвену теорију—Филип Вишњић, Београд, 2003, 88. In his study, Dušan Bošković notes that the socialist realist doctrine was appropriate for "party control in the field of art, which should be understood only as part of a more comprehensive action on the state and society as a whole" (67) and that it served as "a management instrument of cultural and artistic life" (76).

[34] Василије Ђ. Крестић и Марко Недић (ур.), *Велика Србија: истине, заблуде, злоупотребе: зборник радова са Међународног научног скупа одржаног у Српској академији наука и уметности у Београду од 24-26. октобра 2002. године*, Српска књижевна задруга, Београд, 2003; Чедомир Попов, *Велика Србија: стварност и мит*, Издавачка књижарница Зорана Стојановића, Сремски Карловци—Нови Сад, 2007.

strategically formulated them (with the aim of breaking up / reorganizing federally the Yugoslav monarchy[35] and taking over power through revolution) and programmatically incorporated, and then—within its program[36]—accepted by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (later the League of Communists of Yugoslavia).

Serbian literature in ideological criticism from the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century—having in mind the way in which it is perceived and critically valorized, as a type of interest shown to it—exists, therefore, exclusively as political literature, binary stratified according to the measure of political and ideological suitability to: 'negative' (inappropriate) and 'positive' (politically relevant, whose eventual aesthetic importance derives from political). The manipulative meaning and restrictive character of this approach to Serbian literature is reflected in the fact that, in the desired appropriate literature, catharsis

[35] From 1924 to 1934, the Comintern pursued a policy of breaking up the Yugoslav monarchy (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1929) and supporting national and certain regional separatisms, which—after many years of disagreement among various factions within the CPY (conflicting over the mode of action, the degree of dependence of the party on the views and directives of the Comintern, as well as advocating for the preservation or disintegration of Yugoslavia)—the CPY definitely adopted in 1928 and its Fourth Congress in Dresden. Under the threat of fascism, the Comintern changed its position on the need to disintegrate Yugoslavia in 1935 and 1936 (the position also adopted by the CPY), and advocated its federalist reorganization, without correcting its own theses on the hegemony and oppressive national policy of the Serbian bourgeoisie (although during the 1920s not only the bourgeoisie but also the Serbian nation was accused of imperial, occupation and colonial politics). On the chronology of the relations between the Comintern and the CPY towards the Yugoslav state during the 1920s and 1930s, see: Божидар Кошутић, „Да ли је Броз знао шта ради?", *НИН*, број 2040, 04.02.1990, 22; Бранислав Глигоријевић, *Коминтерна: југословенско и српско питање*, Институт за савремену историју, Београд, 1992; Коста Николић, *Бољшевизација Комунистичке партије Југославије 1919-1929: историјске последице,* Институт за савремену историју, Београд, 1994; Димитрије Богдановић, „Политика КПЈ и Коминтерне према националном питању", у *Књига о Косову*, СКЗ, Београд, 2006, 337-352.

[36] For example, the 1958 Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia continued to speak of "Greater Serbian hegemony and centralism" as the source of the "gap between the Yugoslav peoples" in the first Yugoslavia, which had previously served as a basis for communist leaders relations, ignoring the mass suffering of Serbs in the Independent State of Croatia and Kosovo and Metohija during World War II (*Program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia: adopted at the Seventh Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia 22-26 April 1958*, Komunist, Belgrade, 1974, 90). In addition, see the authentic programmatic positions of the Yugoslav communists regarding the solution of national issues by Sima Marković, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (which existed under that name since 1920) and a member of the Executive Board of the Comintern, as well as by Josip Broz. Сима Марковић, *Национално питање у светлости марксизма*, Централни одбор НРПЈ, Београд, 1923; Јосип Броз Тито, „Национално питање у Југославији у свјетлости народноослободилачке борбе", *Пролетер: Централни орган Комунистичке партије Југославије (Секција Комунистичке Интернационале)* (Загреб), година 17, број 16, 1942.

instead of propaganda is attributed to those works that write about Serbian topics in accordance with the ideological assumptions and interests (and not the principles) of the bearers of global political power. In that way, the literature that favors the establishment of the normative horizon of expectations, has an auxiliary function in propagating the current political demand for 'change of Serbian consciousness'. On the other hand, from the position of a biased political arbiter, inadequacy and nationalism are postulated and 'guilt' imputed to some of the most important authors and works of Serbian literature (*The Mountain Wreath, The Bridge on the Drina, Bosnian Chronicle, Dictionary of the Khazars*), regardless of the time and circumstances of their origin, nor of aesthetic and ethical significance. The consequence of these considerations is the paradoxical knowledge that the former dogmatic and anathematized criterion of political eligibility—which existed in the literatures of the former communist bloc (especially in the Soviet Union) as a form of so-called 'partisanship of art'[37]—has changed its bearer, and from repressive and ideologically hostile communist doctrine it moved to the western science of literature.

Translated from the Serbian by
Jovanka Kalaba

[37] Stanko Lasić states that the socialist model of understanding the role and instrumentalization of literature was "a form of partisanship in art: through it, the party realizes its policy and ideology in the field of art." Станко Ласић, „О партијности умјетности", у: *Сукоб на књижевној љевици 1928-1952*, Либер, Загреб, 246.

IVAN NEGRIŠORAC

LITERARY WORK OF JOVAN DUČIĆ: ENCYCLOPEDIC SKETCH

Dučić's creative opus is very diverse in terms of genre and includes poetry, travelogues, essays, literary and art criticism, historiography, and political journalism. He did not consider other genres he dealt with as an integral part of his selected and revalued opus. The most valuable part of his opus is, without a doubt, poetry, which belongs to a narrow circle of several of the most valuable lyrical opuses in Serbian literature.

Poetry: poetics and metrics

The poet went through three poetic phases on his path of development—which began with the first poem "Single Mother" published in Sombor magazine *Golub (Pigeon)* in 1886, and lasted until the last hours of his life. In the first, pre-modernist phase, which is partly testified to by the collection *Poems* (1901), he was mostly influenced by Vojislav Ilić during the period of searching for his individual expression, but the presence of pre-romanticists and romanticists is also evident, most obviously by Serbian writers (Zmaj, above all, but also J. Subotić, B. Radičević, Đ. Jakšić, L. Kostić). His openness to themes, experiences or the kind of imagery we find in foreign poets is also present: German (J. V. Goethe, F. Schiller, Novalis, L. Uland, H. Heine, J. Eichendorf, E. Merike, N. Lenau), French (W. Hugo, A. de Lamartine, A. de Vigny, A. de Mise, L. de Lille, T. Gauthier), English (J. G. Byron, W. Blake, W. Wordsworth), Russian (A. S. Pushkin, M. J. Lermontov, F. I. Tyutchev, A. A. Fet), Polish (A. Mickiewicz, J. Slovacki, C. Norvid), Italian (G. Leopardi, A. Manconi, G. Carducci), Hungarian (S. Petefi), Romanian (M. Eminescu) and the others.

In the second, programmed, modernist phase, which started after his leaving to study in Geneva, partly expressed in the collection *Poems* (1901), and to the full extent in the books *Poems* (1908) and *Poems* (1911), he became completely connected with the poetics of the Parnassians and the Symbolists, especially with French poets like L. de Lille, T. Gautier, José-Maria de Heredia, A. Samain, H. De Regnier, J. Rodenbach, S. Predom, Ch. Baudelaire, P. Verlaine, M. Maeterlinck, Verhaeren and the others, achieving results for which he will be included among the most important Serbian poets. He is open to all the poets of such sensibility, so the intertextual contacts can be noticed with the poets writing in German (H. von Hoffmannsthal, S. George, R. M. Rilke, D. von Liliencron, M. Dauthendey), English (E. A. Poe, A. Tennyson, D. G. Rosetti, A. C. Swinburne, J. M. Hopkins), Russian (F. Sologub, V. Ivanov, V. Brysov, A. Bely, A. Blok), Polish (L. Staf), Italian (G. D'Anuncio), Hungarian (E. Ady) and the others. So, we can conclude that Dučić's poetry is a work in progress: he was changing his poetic patterns trying to find more sensible, more expressive and more symbolic modes of lyrical discourse.

In his poetic maturing and defining his programme attitudes, the crucial events took place in the first years of the 20th century for Dučić, which were revealed in the text "Monument to Vojislav" (magazine Delo, 1902). In these poetic processes of Serbian poetry, Vojislav Ilić was the one who Dučić valued the most, who quite spontaneously, without a programme attitude, but with a special sensibility, appeared as a turning point in the development of Serbian post-romantic and early modern poetry. In his further development, Dučić determined the importance of several poetic attitudes, which served as extremely important landmarks both for him and the poets of his generation: the orientation towards Western cultural patterns, especially the French ones; a developed sense of the poetic form, beauty for its own sake, and experience of French *l'art pour l'art*; concentration on the power of the poetic image, refinement of sensory perceptions, and in that sense reliance on the poetry of the French Parnassus; exploring the freedom and unexpectedness of the individual experiences together with the absorbing the experiences of modern decadence; perceiving the world in the perspective of the philosophy of symbols and in that sense also seeking support in modern symbolism. On the basis of such an explicit poetic programme, Dučić made it much easier both for himself and the other poets, as well as the critics and readers in general, to see the poetic processes of modernization not only of poetry but also of the other genres in Serbian literature.

In the third, mature modernist poetic phase, after the First World War which is the most convincingly revealed in the collection *Lyric Poetry*

(1943), the poet reached an even higher and more concentrated measure of poetic sobriety, which paid less attention to the perceptibility of poetic changes but was more directed towards the purity of the lyrical experience. Therefore, in this phase, we find poems which testify to the late symbolist writing and emphasized lyrical sublimation, but also the effort to be present in the decisive events of the world, and even his own people, which makes Dučić related to R. M. Rilke, A. Blok, B. Pasternak, P. Valéry, W. B. Yeats, E. Ady, O. Župančić and the others. Dučić selected his entire lyrical opus, divided it into the books and cycles, and presented them in the *Collected Works* whose poetry books were published in 1929 and 1930. In the first book, the poet left a Note in which he says that this is "the editing of his writings which must remain without anyone's additions and changes in further editions", and that it must be so "against anyone's possible contrary intention". This edition is only supplemented by the book *Lyrics* (1943), to which the poet precisely determined the place in the structure of Collected Poems so that the final composition consists of four books: 1. *Poems of the Sun* (116 poems, divided into cycles *"Shadows on Water"*, *"Adriatic Sonnets"*, *"Morning Poems"*, *"Evening Poems"* (poems from the book Lyrics should be added to that cycle by the author's order), *"Sunny Poems"* and *"Soul and Night"*; 2. *Poems of Love and Death* (38 poems without any divisions into cycles) 3. *Imperial Sonnets* (28 poems divided into three cycles: *"Imperial Sonnets"*, *"My Homeland"* and *"Dubrovnik Poems"*) 4. *Blue Legends* (37 poems in prose without any divisions into cycles) This means that the Collected Poems contain a total of 219 poems, of which 182 are in bound verse and 37 in prose.

In poetry, Dučić used the forms of bound verse (the first three books of Collected Works) and poetic prose (the book Blue Legends), while he did not try free verse. In his metrical repertoire, he most often uses the symmetrical dodecasyllable, which appears in 126 texts out of a total of 182 poems in bound verse. Use of other verse forms is less frequently performed. In terms of frequency, the nine-syllable verse, which is most often actualized in the final poetic phase, stand out, and it appears in only 22 poems. Other verse forms are even rarer. For example, a 10-syllable line, decasyllable (specifically, iambic pentameter) appear in 7 poems: in the asymmetrical form 1, and in the symmetrical form 6, but there is also a mixed form in one poem. Hendecasyllable appears in 5 poems, eight in 4, seven in 2 and thirteen in one poem. Different forms of combined verses (nine-syllable verse and octosyllable, octosyllable and seven-syllable verse, nine-syllable verse and octosyllable, dodecasyllable and nine-syllable verse), in which we recognize the use of catalex and synaloepha, but also the partial verse, are found in 12 poems. The metric repertoire is not particularly wide, but the poet explored the expressive

possibilities of that repertoire very carefully and meticulously, using extremely refined rhythmic, intonational, euphonic and melodic procedures.

In terms of stanza forms, Dučić tries to narrow his repertoire, so he presented himself with great consistency as a quatrain poet. Out of a total of 182 poems in the bound verse, we find quatrains in a total of 177 poems, and we find only the quatrain organization of the text in 149 poems. Those 28 poems in which there are quatrains, but together with the other forms, are reduced only to a combination of quatrains and tercets, and these are the sonnets of Petrarch's, Italian form. Of those 5 poems in which we do not find the quatrain organization, three poems are octaves and two are sextines. However, even with regard to these octaves and sextines, interesting phenomena can be observed that testify to the poet's connection to the expressiveness of quatrains: all three octaves after the fourth verse usually have a punctuated end of the syntactic whole and in only one case one loose connection, i.e., a dependent sentence which continues in the next stanza. Similar features are shown by the two remaining poems written in sextines: both poems have a clear punctuation mark at the end of the sentence after the fourth verse, and only in the final sextine of the second poem ("Secret") this model (quatrain with a couplet) is disturbed, so an extended form of septima appears. All this shows that the quatrain was a very strong mental and stylistic model according to which Dučić's creative verbalization moved most easily and most productively.

Poetic topics

Dučić wrote about major lyrical themes, such as the experience of nature, love, patriotism, history, everyday life, poetry, death, metaphysics, God and the like. In the book *Poems of the Sun*, the experience of nature dominates, but within it, not only the position of the lyrical subject and the human soul is clearly emphasized, but the symbolism of light and the principles of discrete divine presence are constituted even more strongly and suggestively. Especially the love and metaphysical themes appear in the cycles "Soul and Night" and the collection "Lyrics", so these poems from the first book are quite close to the second book of Collected Works. That second book, *Poems of Love and Death*, is composed in such a way that it is dominated by reflective poems with metaphysical experiences of life, love, poetry, death, God, etc. The third book, Imperial Sonnets, is full of experiences of history, patriotism and socio-cultural specifics, so it clearly constitutes a collective experience of the world that members of the same people and the same culture can keep as a common treasure. The book of poetic prose *Blue Legends*

contains almost all of the mentioned thematic obsessions, but the identity of this book is still provided by the form of the poem in prose that has been consistently preserved.

In his **poetic poems**, Dučić thematizes the problem of poetic and even artistic creation in general, completely in accordance with the type of poetics that he nurtures at the time of writing. Thus, in his premodern phase, he writes the poem "Come on, O Muse! Give me your dear hand" (1900), while in the phase of full openness to Parnassism and partly to Symbolism, the poem "Poetry" will be written (also known under the older title "My Poetry", (1904). The position of developed modernist corrosivity will be explicated in the poems "The Way" (1906), "Why" (1901), "The Sun" (1903), "Work" (1905), "Creation" (1914), while the principles of mature and late symbolist poetics are most essentially exposed in the texts "Poem" (1909) and "Poem" (1938): here the poet is presented as a medium of transcendent forces capable of turning all the negativity of this world into a sublime aesthetic reality, and in full comprehension of the divine worlds (Here the lyrical subject stands ("aside for real happiness and real pain of people—/Staring at the sky in the astonishment").

Within the **theme of everyday life**, which includes images of individual and family, social and urban life as dominant, Dučić's poetry shows a rather high restraint regarding the possible true description of external reality. The very reality of a modern man is presented with a characteristic process of the aestheticization of negativity and with an ambiguous inclination towards decadent reality. In poems such as "Waiting" (1903), "Boredom" (1905), "Companions" (1905), "Effort" (1905), "The Saddest Poem" (1920), "Silence" (1920), "Waiting" "(1924), "Poem" (1929) and others, life is presented as a source of "apathy of the world", weariness and boredom, fear and anxiety, pain and suffering, loneliness and sorrow, silence and stillness, death and oblivion, etc. Such a state makes the lyrical subject constantly feel lost, and asking: "What time is it in space? / Day or midnight, what is it?" Life is, therefore, understood primarily as a state of negativity, and only true poetry and pure aesthetic sublimation manage to neutralize such an experience at least temporarily.

Dučić is undoubtedly one of the most important Serbian poets dealing with the love themes, and eros, love and sexuality are factors that contain enough energy to oppose the negativity of everyday life. Thanks to that, the poet's erotology and philosophy of love establish three basic thematic patterns: in one, love appears as a factor of empirical, negative reality; in the second, love is seen as transcendent overcoming the negativity; and in the third, love appears as a symbolic structure that unites the abstract, metaphysical, and cosmic principles. It is obvious that Dučić

nurtures distinct masculinity, a phallocratic image of the world in which the female principle is presented as secondary, derived and passive, just as it corresponds to traditional understandings. Therefore, in poems in which some form of female activism appears ("Peaceful Poem", 1914; "Mirrors", 1918; "Punishment", 1918; "At the Crossroads", 1929), it is, as a rule, presented in a negative light, as a form of ambiguous and pretentious performance, and more often as a source of problems and unhappiness than as a path to pleasure and joy. In contrast, male activism ("Fatigue", 1908; "Return", 1905; "Gamma", 1906; "Soul", 1903) is often a sign of extreme, sincere rudeness, even cruelty, and all this testifies that in one part of the poet's opus, love relationships are only an expression of the negativity of everyday life and reality that is far from any idealism.

In the second part of Dučić's poetic opus in love poetry, the character of a woman appears with the power of overcoming negativity, and in that context, the two characters of a woman are especially impressive. On the one hand, a woman appears as beloved, privileged being, so in the poems ("Secret", 1910; "Beauty", 1910; "Crossroad", 1925), a woman and a man enter the world of beauty and light together, but at the same time the corporeality of these beings is significantly reduced and turns into an emphasized symbolism of erotic relations. On the other hand, the character of a strong woman appears who strives to control her partner ("Eyes", 1911; "Chastity", 1912; "Moments", 1914; "Premonitions", 1933, etc.) and such poems portray the woman-ruler as a being of strong contradictions that spontaneously lead her to a world of negativity and eternal dissatisfaction, as well as to extreme conflicts and misfortunes. In the third place, the image of a woman also appears as an expression of the highest, cosmic principle ("My Love", 1897; "Woman", 1909; "Poem of Dying", 1918; "Poem of Silence", 1918; "Poem of Twilight", 1918; "The Last Poem", 1918; "Poem of Love", 1918; "Verses to a Woman", 1920) whereby there is a pronounced dematerialization of her being, turning her into a presence in absence, into the materialization of the dream of a woman-saviour, into a longing for pure light substance and the like. Otherwise, in the whole of Dučić's love poetry, the image of pure sensuality, corporeality and sexuality was distinctly absent, and the metaphysical aspects of love were distinctly dominant.

In one part of his opus, Dučić expresses himself as a poet with a **distinct historical consciousness**, and in that domain, he showed interest in three basic models of writing. One is based on the humorous hedonism of the Renaissance-Baroque world of old Republic of Dubrovnik ("Dubrovnik Carnival", 1906; "Dubrovnik Epitaph", 1908; "Dubrovnik Archbishop", 1911; "Dubrovnik Poem", 1918), and it is the only thematic circle (gathered in the cycle "Dubrovnik Epic Poems") in which humour is the dominant form of lyrical mood. The second

model is based on describing the situations related to the Serbian Middle Ages ("Hagiography", 1917; "Record", 1918; and the entire cycle "Imperial Sonnets"), and the basic experience is without full depth and the existential abyss, and is mostly decorative. According to the third model, poems were formed in which dominate mythical-historical visions and distinct metaphysical projections, either in the form of the heroic-victorious glory of the Balkan Wars and the First World War ("Macedonia", 1913; "Ave Serbia", 1916; "Anthem of the Winner", 1918) or by tragic victims and massacres to which the Serbs were exposed in the Second World War ("Vrbas", 1941; "Prayer", 1941). Leaving a deep trace in the development of Serbian patriotic poetry, Dučić wrote about it precisely in the times of current historical events, and he always chose essential events and situations as topics.

Dučić accomplished the highest achievements in the genre of **descriptive poetry**, in which he showed exceptional sophistication in terms of thematization of the world of nature, actualizing several distinct thematic-motive models. In his portrayal of nature, he was very fond of images of the twilight landscape ("In the Twilight", 1900; "Sunset", 1901; "Falling Leaves", 1902; "Man and Dog", 1905; "Evening Poems", 1905) when the hard materiality of the world begins to fade gradually into unreliable sensory impressions. He was also extremely fond of the seascape ("Love", 1900; "Village", 1901; "Noon", 1902; "Love", 1905; "Stars", 1908, etc.) not only because of the physical vastness of the sea but even more because of its various manifestations that depend on the circumstances of the time of day, season, meteorological conditions, etc., in a word, because of the overall metaphysical mystery of the sea. Due to the specifics of the sensory experience of the world, Dučić achieved particularly successful effects in terms of acoustic images ("Listening", 1901; "Chords", 1902; "Hour", 1903; "Nostalgia", 1904; "Hours", 1906; "Hearts", 1907; "Heart", 1908; "Wind", 1918), pointing to specific sound consonances that can be found in the world of nature or in the world of symbols. Of the special phenomena from nature, his attention was drawn to the vertical images of trees and their trunks ("Sea Willow", 1903; "Poplars", 1903; "Pine", 1918; "Beech", 1924; "Sunflowers", 1929), but also the appearance of the evil sun ("Sun", 1918; "Drought", 1918; "Fatigue", 1918; "Rain", 1918; "Scops Owl", 1918; "Ants", 1924; "Poem of Darkness", 1924) when, by violating the principle of measure, the undoubted life-giving element begins to act as a source of hardship and destruction of life. Never before Dučić had the landscape spoken in Serbian poetry in so many semantically different and symbolically refined ways.

In the domain of **reflexive, thoughtful poetry**, Dučić also accomplished the highest achievements in Serbian poetry, achieving strong

thoughtful penetrations to the very spaces of the afterlife where the human mind reaches its own limits and inevitably stops. By actualizing several poetic models, in a series of his poems, he, above all, raised the question of the limitations of the human being, existence and the mind, which should reflect all this both mentally and poetically. The phenomenon of dividing line, of the border, appears in his poetry on at least three levels: as the border between life and death ("Infinite Song", 1910; "Happiness", 1918; "Boundary", 1929;), the border between the instances of Me and the Other ("Enemy", 1914; "Shadow", 1938), as well as the border that turns out to be the imperative of crossing into some other worlds ("Inscription", 1932; "Destiny", 1933; "Return", 1943). The next phenomenon that attracted his poetic and thoughtful attention is related to the relationship between illusion and essence, and very often he considered the human world only a certain form of illusion ("Prophets", 1918; "Doubt", 1920), and in that case, it is necessary to understand the whole dialectics of illusion and essence ("Chimera", 1908; "Nest", 1910; "Chimera", 1943).

The most intensively Dučić dealt with the manifestations of light as a material and symbolic phenomenon necessary for understanding the complexity of the human world and reality in general: thus images of longing for the primordial light appear in the poems (Brightness, 1918; Saint, 1925; Path, 1931); then the image of being and its changes, and the general change as an integral factor of reality ("Nomads", 1912; "The Traveller", 1943); and, finally, there is an image of reality in which light is expressed as an indisputable ontic principle of everything that exists ("Following the Stars", 1911; "Wings", 1914). At the very end of this chain of thought processes is the lyrical subject's longing for the otherworldliness and the need of facing the God. There are ranges from tempting the ways of God-seeking ("Poem to Christ", 1925; "Encounter", 1929), through facing the God's secret ("Poems to God", 1923; "Secret", 1938; "Man speaks to God", 1938), to the miraculous discovery of the hidden God ("Vow", 1909; "Poem of the Heart", 1920; "Pious Poem", 1932; "To God", 1943). Considering the fact that Dučić is a poet with a distinctly metaphysical image of the world, then it should come as no surprise that in this genre he also reached the highest achievements in Serbian poetry.

Dučić is first and foremost a poet of the soul, with an exceptional power of introspection, so he described the secrets of mental experiences in a much nuanced way, as well as the ranges from the internal tensions to the search for calmness. He nurtured a poetic language in which the soul of self-knowledge manifests itself as dominant, as a soul that mediates itself using the intellect. As a poet of synesthetic experiences, Dučić pointed out the sensory complexity of reality, the conditionality

with which the matter of the world manifests itself, and even began to disappear as a solid empirical fact, but the reality presented in his poetry was never completely opaque and obscured but remained always available to the human mind, at least as anticipation. All his poetry was therefore in the vein of longing for the otherworld, so that is why he is one of the most expressive Serbian metaphysical poets. His metaphysics is the metaphysics of foreboding, not the metaphysics of vision, and that is the poetry of metaphysical duality of a man, his constant discrepancy between ideals and reality, desire and realization, dream and reality. In that sense, he tries to harmonize the language of transcendence with the language of the intellect, so he tries to intellectualize the notion of the otherworld and turn it into a kind of knowledge, giving it a rational form. As one of the most important Serbian poets who turned sense-making, the construction of the meaning of human existence as a primary mission, he is a deeply philosophical poet with methodological doubt as a constant form of checking all the cognition he came to. Such a mental attitude highlighted the entirety of Dučić's poetic opus, and in that sense, he belongs to the circle of not only development-oriented but also the most accomplished Serbian poets. Dučić's poetry represents the highest and the strongest outcome of lyrical metaphysics that Serbian poetry has reached, not only in the form of bound verse. The changes and development of Serbian poetry during the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century only stabilize and confirm such a high assessment. However, even within the broader European context, Dučić withstands comparisons with the best poets of his time, ranging from C. Baudelaire, P. Verlaine, J.M. de Heredia, A. Samain, S. Predom, E. Verhaeren, P. Valery, G. Carducci, G. D'Anuncio, H. von Hofmannsthal, S George, G. Trakl, R. M. Rilke, W. B. Yates, J.J. M. Hopkins, E. Ady, to V. Brysov, A. Bely, A. Blok, O. Mandelstam, B. Pasternak, et al. Dučić is, without a doubt, a poet of European and world views, so his value format is of such heights.

Travelogues

Dučić started writing travelogues when he left his homeland for the first time, that is when he went to Switzerland, to Geneva, to study, so he published the first articles of that kind (under the titles: "Letters—Geneva on July 15, 1900" and "Letters—Geneva in August 1899") in the Mostar magazine *Zora (Dawn)* in 1900. For a long time, he published such texts only in periodicals, and he published a book of travelogues only three decades later. In the book *Cities and Chimeras* (1930), Dučić, writing about his travels in Switzerland, France, Greece, Italy and Spain, offered extraordinary patterns of erudite travelogue, with many

cultural-historical comments and reminiscences. All travelogues are written in the form of an epistle, which the author sends from the journey to an unnamed interlocutor. During his travels, Dučić paid the greatest attention to Western European, mostly Catholic (France, Italy, Spain) or Catholic-Protestant countries (Switzerland): there he dealt with large and influential peoples and cultures which became so thanks to the strong development of their literature, art and education, culture, science, economy, etc. He paid special attention to Greece i.e., the country and people with the longest historical, cultural and spiritual tradition in Europe, which, after its special polytheism, came to Orthodox Christianity, and together with the Roman Empire and Catholicism founded the spiritual community of Europe.

The textuality of Dučić's travelogues implies very complex intersections of different types of discourse. Narrative discourse is the least pronounced, so the story of touring, visits to different places, encounters with people, artefacts and material facts in Dučić's travelogues is important, but it is set in a very discreet way, so it is more implied than expressed. In addition, the position of the narrator/traveller is also unobtrusive and is more recognizable by the type of attitude, the nature of the worldview and the values that are presented than they are imposed by the specificity of the narrative form. More than the curiosities of the story, the author is interested in the overall knowledge of an entire nation, its culture and the way of life. The central theme of Dučić's travelogues is an encounter with the Other (people, culture, religion, values, customs, way of life, etc.), with the distinctiveness of the way the Other is understood and how it is connected with the culture from which the travel writer comes. In that sense, these travelogues are always preoccupied with various forms of comparisons, both comparisons of Serbian culture with other Balkan, Slavic and European cultures, and comparisons of different cultures among themselves. Dučić very often and abundantly uses the usual, even stereotypical notions that some nations have about the others: these ethnic stereotypes were most often confirmed in travelogue textualization, but sometimes the travel writer was able to deviate from the given patterns and expose them to re-examination, deconstruction, and even disapproval.

In his presentation, Dučić often relied on the anthropogeographic method of thinking and concluding, so in that sense, Jovan Cvijić's experience in researching the Balkan Peninsula was undoubtedly the basic pattern of thinking that the travel writer applied in the cases of other nations and their cultures. Apart from natural factors (relief, mountains, plains, rivers, lakes and the sea, climatic circumstances, etc.), Dučić especially emphasized socio-geographical factors (economic development that directly derives from natural causes and the way in which society

responded to the challenges of these factors), he mostly emphasized the system of cultural factors, in which he pointed out the importance of religion and its manifestations, education, literature, history of ideas, philosophy, art, science, etc. In his travelogue research, Dučić directly aspired to observations that showed how certain nations successfully used natural circumstances to achieve the highest degrees of creativity, cultural achievements and civilisation progress.

At the same time, Dučić regularly aspired to perceive something that, in the footsteps of Leo Špicer's stylistics, we could call the 'spiritual etymon' of an entire nation and its culture: in that sense the mental pattern by which the whole nation can be recognized emerging from a wide range of scientific, socio-economic and cultural-historical factors that need to be viewed in a strong interactive relationship. Serbian travel writer especially emphasizes the importance of cities in these processes, because it is in such places of intensive social life that the mentality of the entire nation and its culture is created, manifesting itself in some characteristic features. It is not easy to come to such insights, especially since Dučić did not draw knowledge only from literature, but he personally searched for a long time and checked the stereotyped patterns of opinion in order to come to the knowledge that he can personally represent and defend. Thus he put forward the thesis that Geneva is a city without a soul, and that that soul was destroyed by the Protestant, Calvin's and Calvinist, mystical rigour that prevailed in that area from the 16th century, and made the utilitarian, in many ways boring Geneva whose people do not know how to express joy. These people reflect strong creative antitheses between Voltaire and Rousseau: the former created a "work of vanity and poison," with a powerful critical attitude that shattered established patterns of thought and behaviour, and the latter composed a "work of dream and love," introducing a new spirit of freedom, poetic ecstasies and emphasized subjectivity: to all this he recognizes the collisions of cold, Calvinistic mysticism and warm, Romanesque Hellenism. Unlike Geneva, Paris is a real city full of soul, and therefore a world metropolis that represents a place of great crossroads, but with the distinct ability of the French spirit to give everything a decisive logical basis and Cartesian clarity of opinion. Such a crossroads was established by a strong spirit of enlightenment, strengthened by the power of liberal ideas derived from the Civil Revolution of 1789 and its slogans of freedom, brotherhood and equality, further strengthened by the openness to the processes of modernization, and all this was accompanied by the permeation of French patriotism and undisguised cosmopolitanism, complex creative spirit, as well as playful wit without which communication between people cannot be imagined in France.

Of all the peoples and cultures, Dučić wrote the most about the Greeks, even on three occasions, and about three different places, but in his reflections, he came to two, somewhat different types of insights. On the one hand, there is Corfu as a marginal phenomenon within Greek culture, and the Serbian travel writer will not have many nice words about it. On the other side, there are two strong spiritual and cultural centres of the ancient Greece, Delphi and Athens, centres that shaped the basic Hellenic spirit, its culture, thus creating a foundation for the ultimate specificity with which the Greeks embraced Christianity and nurtured their own Orthodox spirit. What these different places have in common is a Mediterranean type of beauty in the illumination and ambience of the warm sea, and such a geographical ambience during its long ancient history has successfully shaped the cultural ideal of Hellenic beauty based on the ideas of harmony, truth, goodness and beauty, just as it built the "Idea, Beauty and Silence" as the very basis of the ancient spirit. Despite the fact that he highly appreciated it, Dučić paid much less attention to Italian culture but pointed out some of its most important characteristics. First of all, he pointed out the continuity of the Roman state, which has existed for less than three thousand years, whereby the ancient, Caesaric state found its natural continuation, among the survivors, in the papal state, that is The Vatican. As such, Catholic Italy with its ancient, pagan hinterland was of most interest to the travel writer, but he emphasized, above all, the universal significance of Rome with the idea of "a general state" and "common faith": only in that way could Christianity spread along the same paths built by Roman Empire during its conquests. In medieval, Catholic Italy, Dučić sympathetically emphasizes faith, love for God and people, prophetic devotion, as well as the mild religious idyll of St. Francis, and in contrast, he puts St. Dominic and his commitment to dogma, church order, obedience and cruel religious policy. On the basis of such antithetical relations, today's culture of Catholic Italy and its soul was built, which cannot be understood without those huge verticals that lead to the ancient foundations. When discussing Spain, Dučić does not focus on big cities that indicate the development of modern civilization and culture but finds the soul of Spain in Avila, a town that was known primarily for St. Teresa of Avila and her mystical delights, but also for El Greco, who illuminated with mysticism his church painting.

In the second edition of *Cities and Chimeras* (1940), Dučić added letters from the Middle East to these European travelogues, i.e., from Egypt and Palestine, as the oldest nations and cultures that are embedded in the culture of Europe and its peoples, but also the whole world. In this way, he noticeably expanded his overall view of the world, so from a distinct Westerner, he became a writer who balances antithetical

strongholds that, within the western-eastern dialogue, face each other in the areas of Serbian culture. At the same time, it meant the final opening of Dučić towards Jesus Christ, Christianity and Orthodoxy, so he marked the end of his life and work with religious devotion. In his travelogues, he left clear, both explicit and implicit traces of not only a good knowledge of the European travelogue as a genre, such as (Herodotus, G. J. Caesar, Evliya Çelebi, J. Goethe, H. Heine, Madame de Stahl, A. S. Pushkin, J. de Nerval, T. Gautier, Lj. Nenadović, etc.) but also the knowledge of various streams of opinion about different peoples, their way of life, mental patterns, their culture, philosophy, art, science, etc. Thus, his pattern of erudite, cultural-historical travelogue reached values comprehensible not only within the framework of Serbian literature.

Essays

Dučić started writing philosophical, moralistic essays at the end of his studies; the first article of its kind, an article entitled "Thoughts and Paradoxes", was published in the Belgrade Daily newspaper in 1907, and the first book of that kind was published a quarter of a century later. In these collections "King Radovan's Treasure": a book on fate (1932) and Leutar Mornings: thoughts on man (1951) Dučić thinks and writes in the manner of a classic French and English essay, relying on the founders of the genre Michel Montaigne and Francis Bacon, the later writers of this genre around the world (R. Descartes, B. Pascal, F. Laroche-Foucault, J. Labriere, D. Diderot, Voltaire, Stendhal, S. Saint-Bev, T. Gauthier, S. Baudelaire, P. Valerie; T. Macaulay, T. Carlisle, J. Lobok, R. A. Emerson, T. S. Eliot; F. Nietzsche, T. Mann, etc.), to Serbian writers of this thematic and genre orientation (D. Obradović, L. Kostić, B. Knežević, B. Petronijević, B. Popović, Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, Ava Justin Popović), but also to distant predecessors such as Plato, Theophrastus, Cicero, Seneca, M. Aurelije et al., whom Dučić looked to with great attention. In the book King Radovan's Treasure, in full accordance with the subtitle "Book on Fate", Dučić deals with the central issues which, according to him, determine the course of human destiny, giving basic meaning to his life and representing an infatuated topic of his thoughts and delights. The essayist shows the discovery of such a meaning using the figure of hidden treasure left behind by King Radovan, a mythical-legendary figure from folk beliefs, and the very act of searching and digging symbolically shows the effort a person must make in the search for meaning. In such efforts, there is something rational that manifests itself in the forms of understanding the situation that needs to be overcome, but there is also something extremely irrational that is expressed through obsessions and fanatical search for hidden treasure.

In that respect, all people who seek are positive lunatics and free people, especially Poets, Heroes, Prophets and Kings. With his book, King Radovan's Treasure, the poet and essayist Jovan Dučić describes the search for the values left by King Radovan as "the King of lunatics, but also the King of all people of action and ideals."

In addition to the introductory essay "King Radovan's Treasure", Dučić published eight more essays in the book of the same name on various phenomena that fundamentally determine human destiny. And regardless of the fact that in the very genre commitment to the essay as a non-systemic genre, as a genre that explores the possibilities of unconstrained, free-thinking, in Dučić's choice of these phenomena of constitutive significance for human destiny we can clearly recognize the existence of a certain meaningful system. In the first two essays, the author concentrates on two primarily positive, essential experiential forms that testify to the realized human destiny, namely the essays "On Happiness" and "On Love". He then focuses on the two phenomena that reveal the two most important social relations without which a fulfilled human destiny cannot be realized, and that is the relationship with women and the relationship with friends ("About a Woman" and "About Friendship"). Then follows another essay that describes the ways and forms in which the passing of time leaves traces on human destiny, and it also discusses the problem of youth and old age in human development ("On Youth and Old Age"). And finally, the essayist considers three strong paradigms of human existence ("About the Poet", "About Heroes", "About Prophets"), i.e., three beings who embody special relationships according to the meaning of human existence, understood precisely as a form of searching for the King Radovan's buried treasure.

In the book Leutar Mornings, whose subtitle is "Words about man", Dučić continues to consider human nature and those aspects of personality that affect human destiny in an important way. Human character traits are considered in this regard ("On Calmness"; "On Vanity"; "On Character"; "On Politeness"), certain human emotions ("On Hate"; "On Jealousy"; "On Fear"; "On Disappointment"); collective feelings as a form of social attitude ("On Patriotism"), as well as a form of collective skill and bodily expression ("On Dance"). Thematically, therefore, Dučić's essays are related to the anthropological-moralistic sphere, with the focus on man, characteristics of human personality and nature, the appearance of individual and collective soul, and most of all human patterns of behaviour, value systems, ideological creations and the like. In the forms of mental processes that these essays manifest, religious insights, philosophically intoned morals, romantic philology, anthropogeography, psychology, characterology, even fragments of psychoanalysis

are disciplinedly refracted and above all it turns out to be a free, essayistically playful discourse that feels obliged neither to any method of the special sciences nor a philosophically grounded form of thinking. Dučić is inclined to forms of gnome, rhetorically very convincing shaping, which often offer strong, almost apodictic forms of reasoning, but in the further course of his presentation, the writer can easily move to attitudes that completely contradict previous postulates. The essay was founded as a form of non-systemic and non-methodical thinking that freely introduces personal, subjective cognitive perspectives intertwined with the knowledge of other, methodically firmly grounded kinds, so completely unexpected insights emerge from these crossings. In that sense, we can say that this special type of essay writing, somewhat comparable to what was created by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Nikolai Berdyaev, Simon Vale and others gave results that are visible on a wider international level.

Literary Criticism and Essays

Beginning in 1893, Dučić wrote literary critical texts, whereby the period of his most intensive and prolific activity was from 1908 to 1912, in which he was even a regular critic of the Politika newspaper. In the first phase of critical work (1893-1899), most often in the form of a critical review, Dučić wrote about poetry (Riza-beg Kapetanović Ljubušak, Radovan Košutić, Silvije Strahimir Kranjčević), narrative prose (Janko Veselinović, Ivo Ćipiko), drama (Prince Nikola Petrović, Đuro Špadijer), travelogues (Marko Car) and translations (Mikhail Lermontov, Adam Mickiewicz, Ignjat Potapenko). During the period of education in Geneva and strong poetic maturing, and then until the beginning of the Balkan Wars and the First World War, when he stopped dealing with criticism (1899-1912), above all, he wrote his most important program text "Monument to Vojislav" (1902) and began to write more comprehensive critical essays of certain importance and value (Svetozar Ćorović, Bora Stanković, Petar Kočić), as well as to spread his views to foreign, mostly French, as well as South Slavic writers close to him. Thus, in the form of a critical review, he wrote about poetry (Vladimir Vidrić, Dragutin Domjanić, Ante Anić, Osman Đikić), short stories and novels (Ivan Cankar, Josip Kozarac, Simo Matavulj, Mita Dimitrijević), plays (Vojislav Jovanović Marambo), satire (Sava Skarić), memoirs (Todor Stefanović Vilovski), critics (Jovan Skerlić), translations (Vojislav J. Ilić, Dušan Đokić, Ivan Turgenev, Charles Albert, Charles Seignobos, François Coppée, Sully Prudhomme, Edmond Rostand, Ivan Cankar, Oton Župančič, Petko Todorov, Pencho Slaveykov). After the First World War (1924-1943), he was much less involved in criticism and mostly wrote

on the occasion of some important anniversaries (Jovan Jovanović Zmaj) or the publication of books by his friends and writers to whom he nurtured strong affections (Aleksa Šantić, Gvido Tartalja).

In the post-war epoch, he mostly directed his literary-critical consciousness towards more comprehensive essayistic forms, writing about writers he especially appreciated, with whom he was on friendly terms, and he certainly considered them his literary companions. That is how he entitled the book *My Companions* (published posthumously in Chicago in 1951), which collected the essays "Borisav Stanković", "Ivo Vojnović", "Petar Kočić", "Aleksa Šantić", "Milorad J. Mitrovic", "Ivo Ćipiko" and "Mileta Jakšić". In later editions, starting with the *Collected Works* from 1969, the essays "Vladimir Vidrić", "Isidora Sekulić" and "Milan Rakić" were added to the book *My Companions*, and it is known that Dučić planned to write essays about Antun Gustav Matoš and Vladimir Nazor. In these texts, he presents valuable observations on the nature of the writer's talent, his way of life and the specific problems of his creative work, his ways of understanding the world, and the various cultural implications of his entire literary work. Traces of the positivist and cultural-historical approach can be recognized in Dučić's approach, but most of them have a very personal, subjective, essayistically shaped experience and interpretation that we find in the best representatives of the impressionist approach to literary work. Thanks to that, some of these essays (about Stanković, Kočić, Mitrović, Vojnović, for example) enter the circle of the best that Serbian literary critical thought has given.

Historiography

Dučić prepared a historiographical monograph on Count Sava Vladislavić, entitled *A Serbian Diplomat at the Court of Peter the Great and Catherine I, Count Sava Vladislavić* (Belgrade—Pittsburgh 1942), in the period 1933-1940, as indicated in the author's introductory text "Instead of Preface". Pointing out that Vladislavić "achieved a very respectable place in the history of Russia among its diplomats of the first third of the 18th century", that "for a quarter of a century he was involved in all important events of the Russian Empire", and that he was "unknown to our science so far", Dučić pointing out that he "as a poet, is far from his ordinary literary subject", but that he wrote this book "out of love for his Serbian people", "out of special love for the guslar region of his Herzegovina", and that Sava Vladislavić "is deeply interesting both as a diplomat, and as a Serb, and as a Herzegovinian." He speaks about the sources of his cognition, emphasizing written, archival data, as well as oral, traditional testimony: "And we researched the data

on Vladislavić, personally or by order, in the archives: in Dubrovnik, Venice, Moscow, Helsinki, Bucharest and Belgrade. We believe that after all this, there is really very little left unexplored. The folklore about the Vladislavićs also represents a document of its kind." The consequences of this historiographical endeavour are quite clear. If the first volume of the National Encyclopaedia of Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian (1924) under the leadership of Stanoje Stanojević there is no a determinant about Sava Vladislavić, Dučić's words from the preface prove to be perfectly obvious and accurate, so "after this book, Sava Vladislavić can never be suppressed again from the history of famous people of the Serbian race, nor should his name be forgotten in the broad strata of the Serbian people." Despite the fact that towards Dučić, and even his work, including the study of Count Vladislavić, during the reign of communist ideology, there were systematically nurtured serious reservations and doubts, it still turned out to be true what the poet said as a historian: after his book, the awareness of the significance of the life and work of this Serb who worked in Russian diplomacy has been most seriously established.

While determining his family relations with Sava Vladislavić, Dučić reconstructed the entire life of his ancestor in the monograph, and showed how he was through Dubrovnik (where he was initially educated, and where his father Luka moved), dealing with trade and confidential political business, through Constantinople, came to Moscow and St. Petersburg, and gradually became involved in the structures of Russian state power. Having become a man trusted by King Peter the Great himself, and even his court adviser, he travelled on various diplomatic missions. From Siberia, he writes detailed reports and makes geographical maps of those areas, and while staying in the Chinese Empire and Beijing, as an authorized minister, he used it to determine the border between Russia and China. For all his merits, he acquired the title of count, which was recognized by Empress Catherine I. Despite the fact that Dučić is not a historiographer, he did an exemplary scientific work that mainly relies on archival material, so his knowledge, thoroughly set, is acceptable according to scientific historiography. This clearly shows how well this poet coped with complex historical situations, how he properly understood their nature, and how he sought for various possibilities of their reconstruction and interpretation.

Political journalism

In the overall understanding of historical and political circumstances and troubles, Dučić was greatly helped by the knowledge he gained both in his studies and in the active reading of various literatures, and of

special importance were his diplomatic service and experience gained in working in different countries and political systems. During his life, he published a large number of texts in magazines, newspapers and special publications, and especially dealt with issues of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the influence of the Turkish and Habsburg empires on Balkan conditions, the nature of Serbian-Bulgarian relations, important figures in Serbian politics and history. Of special value are his *Diplomatic Writings* (ed. Miladin Milošević, Bg 1991), made as official reports from countries (Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, Switzerland, Egypt, Hungary, Romania, Spain) in which he performed various diplomatic functions.

Certainly, the most important of Dučić's political articles—with the note: "Political study from the pen of a competent person"—appeared in his American period, first in the magazine the *American Srbobran*, and then in 1942 in three book editions: *Vlatko Maček, DCL and Yugoslavia; Yugoslav Ideology: the Truth about "Yugoslavism"; Federalism or Centralism*. In these studies, Dučić criticized Croatian politicians, proving that Maček "never wanted Yugoslavia, nor did he recognize national unity, which he openly showed a hundred times, and which he finally sealed with his big black stamp." (*Vlatko Maček, DCL and Yugoslavia*, p. 20) Analyzing the behaviour of Croatian politicians, he shows that they were only interested in the national, Croatian idea and that they entered the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes insincerely, without wanting to truly and constructively participate in the complex Yugoslav community. Yugoslavism politically gave birth to a terrible misunderstanding between the Serbs and the Croats, and for the Serbs it meant only a period of wandering and regression because "the Serbs were frozen, paralyzed, in their historical and cultural development." (Federalism or Centralism, p. 80) The assessments which were made led Dučić to a concluding rhetorical question and a clearly implied answer to it: "If it weren't for the empty waste of time in the humiliating fight with the Croats, where today, after a quarter of a century, would be our progress in the village, our science in the Academy, the prestige of the university, the reorganization of our church administration, the modernization of the school, the formation of new Serbian society! ...Without Croats, dictators, unconstitutionality, corruption, the disintegration of Belgrade youth, the crisis in the family would never have come to Serbia." (Federalism or Centralism, p. 80) These discussions marked the sharpest and most fundamental form of Yugoslav politics and ideology, and he finds the basic reason for the collapse of this idea and practice in the nature of Serbo-Croatian relations. The topicality of Dučić's interpretations was restarted during the bloody disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia in the 1990s.

Reception

In everything he did, Dučić achieved high stylistic and genre standards, and lasting aesthetic values, but over time he matured as a creator preparing for the highest achievements. He translated from Russian, French, German, Slovenian, Bulgarian, Czech, but he achieved the most success by translating A. S. Pushkin (among others, Angelo, The Fountain of Bakhchisarai, Caucasian Capture, Gypsies, etc.). The critical reception of Dučić's poetic and literary work went through several phases. In the premodern period (1896-1901), the reviews are extremely rare, but there is a certain benevolence towards the promising young writer. In the second period of modernity (1901-1918), when the poet published his collections of poems in 1901, 1908 and 1911 and when he became a key bearer of innovations in poetry and literature of his time, his writings became quite frequent and dominated by high tones of praise, but without apology: praises are very often imbued with certain remarks (J. Skerlić, M. Car, M. Grol, S. Stefanović, P. Lagarić, V. Rosić, V. Gaćinović, I. Ivačković, R. Vesnić, D. Domjanić, B. Popović et al.), and sometimes there are attempts of serious disputes (A. G. Matoš). In the period of the avant-garde and its political actualization (1918-1945), when the poet began publishing his Collected Works (1929, 1930, 1932, 1942, 1943), Dučić's opus was already considered a classic of Serbian modern literature, so distinct attempts at dispute emerged (M. Krleža, V. Gligorić, K. Cicvarić, M. Ćurčin, M. Đilas, Đ. Jovanović, V. Ilić Mlađi, etc.), but they mostly remain at the level of strong rhetorical gestures deprived of more serious critical argumentation; on the other hand, the voices of those who consider Dučić one of the most important Serbian poets and writers, in general, were growing (B. Popović, M. Savić, A. Savić Rebac, I. Sekulić, V. Petrović, T. Manojlović, V. Ćorović, P. Slijepcevic, M. Bogdanovic, B. Jevtic, E. Finci, M. Maletin, Z. Milićević, M. Veljković, V. Živojinović Masuka, V. Vujić, M. Stajić, T. Đukić, N. Bartulović, J. Radulović , M. Ibrovac, K. Atanasijević, P. Lebl-Albala, A. Belić, N. Vulić, M. Delibašić, B. Kovačević, M. Devrnja, etc.); in that period, extremely serious, analytical forms of critical reasoning were conceived which remain a permanent value (P. Slijepčević, N. Mirković).

In the period of the communist and socialist political system (1945-1990), Dučić was treated as a class enemy, and even a national enemy for a long time, so that until the mid-1960s he was exposed to various forms of very sharp challenge (M. Ristić), but alongside such an approach, founded, analytical, reviews were also published (M. Selimović, P. Slijepčević, Ž. Stojković / B. Mihajlović Mihiz, D. Vitošević, Z. Gavrilović, M. Begić, P. Zorić, M. Maksimović, B. Bulatović, S.

Leovac, B. Petrović, I. V. Lalić). The key events took place in 1964 and immediately after: in the same year a critical text by Miodrag Pavlović was published, in which the poet's opus was seriously examined and his highest value was confirmed, and the Anthology of Serbian Poetry appeared, in which Dučić's poetic place was highlighted as the bearer of the highest values. After that, new, extremely important texts and studies by M. Kašanin, V. Filipović, V. Kalezić, P. Palavestra, R. Konstantinović, D. Vitošević, M. Danojlić, D. Alerić, Ž. Ružić, N. Petković, with the contributions of historiographical syntheses by Jovan Deretić, *History of Serbian Literature* (1983) and Predrag Palavestra *History of Modern Serbian Literature: Golden Age 1892-1918* (1986), the monograph by V. R. *Košutić Parnassians and Symbolists among the Serbs* (1967) and Slavko Leovac *Jovan Dučić: Literary Work* (1985), as well as a collection of works Serbian Symbolism—Typological Studies (1985) with a large number of articles on Dučić. In that period, from the mid-1960s until the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, the judgment on the highest value of Dučić's poetry, and partly of the rest of his oeuvre, especially travelogues and partly essays, was finally completely stabilized.

A new phase in the reception of Dučić's work arose with the collapse of the communist political system and the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia, i.e., from 1989/90. During that period, several books were published, of which Slobodan Vitanović's trilogy *Jovan Dučić in the Sign of Eros* (1990), *Jovan Dučić in the Sign of Apollo and Dionysus* (1994) and *Jovan Dučić in the Sign of Athens* (1997), studies by Vladimir Gvozden Jovan Dučić, Travel Writer (2003) and Ivan Negrišorac's Lyrical Aura of Jovan Dučić (2009). SASA published a ceremonial collection of papers On Jovan Dučić (1995) with the articles by P. Palavestra, M. Bećković, S. Leovac, M. Flašar, S. Vitanović, V. Krestić, Z. Bojović, G. Tešić, S. Tutnjević, M. Đorđević, V. Krnjević, B.M. Karapandžić, M. Stajić, R. Baturan, S. Rakitić, M. Stojnić, I. Tartalja, N.V. Petrović, A. Stefanović, LJ. Simović, D. Ognjanović, P. Zorić, V. Matović, D. Puvačić, T. Rosić, S. Peković, M. Magarašević. In a series of research and critical contributions, various aspects of Dučić's work have been very comprehensively discussed, and in this respect the texts by R. Vučković, S. Velmar Janković, A. Petrov, M. Šutić, P. Milosavljević, J. Delić, Đ. Vuković, L. Kojen, S. Raičković, B. Radović, R. P. Nogo, D. Brajković, M. Pantić, J. Zivlak, M. Tešić, B. Čolak and others are extremely important. During that period, the value of his poetry and travelogues was confirmed, and the high price of literary, philosophical and moralistic essays was added to it, as well as the importance of historiographical studies on Sava Vladislavić, and political journalism on the nature of Yugoslavia and Serbo-Croatian conflicts.

With all the spiritual-historical changes and critical re-examinations, and in that sense the obligatory ups and downs in the reception, Dučić's work over time has gained primarily in aesthetic persuasiveness, cognitive power and true respect from the broad readership.

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

THE "INFINITE BLUE CIRCLE" LITERARY AWARD

IN HONOR OF MILOŠ CRNJANSKI AND THE CONTEMPORARY SERBIAN NOVEL

Prefatory Note

In memory of Miloš Crnjanski and his work, and to encourage the development of our literature by rewarding works published in the Serbian literary space, the Matica srpska, in cooperation with the "Days of Miloš Crnjanski" event, founded a permanent annual award in 2019 named the "Infinite Blue Circle". Each year, on November 30, the anniversary of the author's death, the award is granted for a novel published between November 1 of the previous year and November 1 of the current year. The judging panel consists of five members appointed by the Board of Directors of the Matica srpska, at the recommendation of the Matica srpska Presidential Board (three members) and the Program Committee of the event "Days of Milos Crnjanski" (two members). Panel members are elected every four years, and the fact that they hail from Serbia, the Republika Srpska, and Montenegro is a symbolic sign of the integrity of our national and cultural space.

The judging panel consisting of Aleksandar Jovanović, Mladen Šukalo, Nebojša Lazić, Goran Radonjić, and Jelena Maričević Balać, decided to give the "Infinite Blue Circle" Award for 2020 at the session held on November 21, 2020, to Dragan Stojanović for the novel *Tamna pučina* (Dark Open Waters) (published by Dom kulture "Studentski grad" from Belgrade).

To present the book of this year's winner, in this issue we have included: an award rationale by Aleksandar Jovanović, Chair of the Judging Panel, a speech by Dragan Stojanović, as well as reviews by Goran Radonjić, Mladen Šukalo, and Jelena Marićević Balać. An interview with the winner was done for the "Conversation" section.

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

ALEKSANDAR JOVANOVIĆ

A STORY ABOUT MISFORTUNE, KINDNESS, AND CULTURE

The rationale for the 2020 "Infinite Blue Circle" Award

The Panel gave a brief rationale for selecting the novel *Tamna pučina* (Dark Open Waters) by Dragan Stojanović for the Award, pointing out some of the main reasons for the decision:

> The award-winning novel follows the fate of the main character Stojan V. Lazarević and his family from the fall of 1913 until the beginning of the war in 1941. The narrative flow is comprised of intersecting images of the social and political life in the Serbian capital, the characters, and destinies of women, and an analysis of the effects of good and evil in turbulent times in the form of a kind of internal monologue, and everything is strongly hued by an open or hidden literary and cultural background. The structure of Stojanović's book is complex, due also to leitmotifs that raise questions about history and suggest faith in art.

The intention of the rationale, even if only in three sentences, was to emphasize some of the important features of Stojanović's novel: appreciation of the story, its seductiveness, but also obscurity, a narrative in which time, space, and events are embedded in our historical and national fate, an image of the world imbued with numerous levels of meaning.

Dragan Stojanović, one of the most significant authors in contemporary Serbian literature, accomplished in a wide range of creative and academic disciplines (university professor, theoretician and interpreter of literature, essayist, poet, narrator, translator, and novelist), did not burden

the novel with his scholarship and theoretical experience, but subtly incorporated it into the narrative point of view of a calm and subtle expert, who examines his thoughts on various aspects of human life—the anticipation of future destructive historical events, the power and powerlessness of culture and art, and, in particular, contemplations familiar to the author on the anthropology of good, evil and misfortune—in the only place where it matters, in the fragile and precious peaks and valleys of human life. In the condensed and multi-layered text of *Dark Open Waters*, in one paragraph or even one sentence, psychological, ethical, police, and love motifs intersect and intertwine, obscured by seemingly secondary and insignificant details, achieving an extremely dynamic and multi-layered narrative. This is the reason why the novel is enjoyed by readers with different educational backgrounds and horizons of expectations—the author did not deprive any of them of what they (can) expect from a good novel.

Although the plot of *Dark Open Waters* covers a timespan of (only) twenty-seven years, with some liberty, it can be said that it is a novel about the twentieth century and even a kind of concise narrative summary of this period. We follow the protagonist beginning with his studies in Hegel's and Schiller's Jena, to the eve of the Great War, which marked the death of a world that may have been believed to be the best and stable, and leave it after the April 6 bombing of Belgrade, on a more than symbolic and tragic date of April 10 (more precisely, about its symbolism, *travanj*[1]).

The Romanesque story includes a portrayal of much of the last century: from the (pre)war German atmosphere, Stojan's short participation in the war and being wounded, Belgrade life under the first occupation, completion of studies, the seething atmosphere of Belgrade between wars, intertwined with various ambitions, our corrupt politicians and diplomats unmindful of their role, various intelligence services, and finally, the beginning of new world horror. Even this might be enough for the previous assessment. With its organization, clairvoyance and the precognitive traits of the characters, *back and forth* temporal movement, use of leitmotifs, strong inner connection with the book *Ćerka španskog borca* (The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter) (2018), the abrupt and open ending, *Dark Open Waters* reaches far beyond its ending: there was nothing that happened by the end of the century that its heroes had not already experienced or seen coming soon.

The nineteenth century disappeared in the First World War along with its values, gilts, waltz, and hypocrisy:

[1] April in Croatian (T/N).

> The nineteenth century is dead; a lot of explosives were spent to kill that happy time. [...] It is dead, killed by its grenades and machineguns, a century so famous for its balls, mazurkas, polonaises, and waltzes, killed together with the castles built (by the way) from the sweat of countless farmers, exhausted by hunger to the point of death, who might have danced their dances, or not; perhaps at a wedding or a holiday in autumn when the crops have already been harvested (18-19).

Its dark side is shown not only by the narrator's remarks about the sweat and starvation of many anonymous farmers but the hypocrisy, combined with heartlessness, was revealed to Stojan towards the end of his Jena period (the landlady's behavior after finding a dead bird and the flood, his visit to the pastor, messages in his dreams, after which he abruptly returns to Belgrade). What was more or less subdued and constrained by social and cultural gilding in the previous century seemed to have been unleashed in the twentieth century, and evil was no longer willing to be covered up. Many of Stojanović's characters, endowed with the already mentioned abilities or, simply, common sense, see this: from the old and cynical Jena professor, the cunning Forgač Gabor, father Vasilije, through Zinaida and Milanka, to Avram Kon and Nikifor Teodorović: "And you are yet to see... All this is nothing... The best is yet to come" (69), and "They'll come again, don't you worry, it's a matter of time... yes come, that's for certain, remember: they're coming, perhaps soon... they're probably already here... some sort of advance guard..." (82-83), or "Does he know, he asked Stojan, what is brewing?" (133).

And at the heart of all these fears is not, simply put, just the dark shadow of an approaching total war, but the all-around horror it brings with it: "A cataclysm, nothing but a cataclysm" (145), as one of the characters put it. The horror whose precise preparation made possible statements such as the one describing Gestapo Major Hans Helm, the police envoy for the Balkans: "He was trained in Serbia, a long time ago, where he was educated. They are counting on him." (169); or contemplating concentration camps, primarily as a technological issue to increase the efficacy of killing. A novel about the twentieth century cannot be significant if it does not deal with the topic of genocide, and Dragan Stojanović did that in the final chapters of Dark Open Waters, in a seemingly accidental mention ("She didn't have enough time to talk about everything she had heard. Concentration camps... Killings..."), and with the suicide of Avram Kon, and the almost certain fate of his daughter Sara.

What is left for the protagonist and his narrator in the face of evil at the beginning of the fifth decade of this *depraved* century? From *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter*, we know that the world could not exist if evil were absolute. And Stojanović's books, to emphasize once again,

are great praise to existence and duration, which do not give up on good, love, and art. In *Dark Open Waters*, this praise is also strengthened in three leitmotifs—one dream, one flower, and one waltz—which reach the main character (with perhaps a symbolic name, to ignore the enticing association with the author's surname) from different places to testify to the wholeness of his being.

The most complex images come to him from the second of his two great and extremely important dreams for the structure of the novel:

> The Great Agreement stipulates that we exist, in any case, that he, Stojan, exists; that that is how it should be. What he sees is accompanied by the feeling that it is good that things are the way they are. The greatest depths confirm and guarantee it. The greatest heights guarantee, illuminate, and support it. We have to wait for dawn. The boat. Darkness. Dawn. (117)

> The Great Agreement exists, he knows it; he can feel the paddle in his hand. He doesn't know what to do with it exactly. He knows he will not allow himself to be destroyed. He will try to save the one who needs to be saved. If he can. The one he should, of course, save for eternity. (186)

In addition to everything that the dream could mean, Stojan also understood the motif of the boat on the *dark open sea* and the deep-elevated whispering as a message about the obligation an individual has towards himself, but also towards others in dark times. The images sent to him by his unconscious were sent to him more directly and in completely different colors by one marginalized flower:

> Nothing new has been planted. Only by the fence and where there was enough moisture, a buttercup grew on its own. [...] silent, mute, uninvoked by words, strengthens a man with its presence, its appearance, encourages him to resist even when he no longer sees it. Thanks to it, something soft and gentle, bright and cheerful spread through Stojan. It doesn't ask for anything, no watering, no fertilization, no worries—it is simply there. Unbothered by rain or drought. (65)

The entire XII chapter, almost a poem in prose, is great praise to the buttercup, its existence, and its resilience, despite everything that surrounds it. It was comforting to watch it, there in its garden, to learn from it ("Don't complain, look around. The dawn will come; you just need to be ready for the dawning"). Its power to renew hope and move aside doubts and pains encouraged the protagonist:

> What would it take to be like it? How to achieve this? Seeing it, remembering it, brought a different kind of reassurance than that of the still unwritten waltz that pushed the previous century far from both Stojan and everyone else. (66)

> The waltz that uplifts a wounded man and protects him from pain has yet to be composed; he plays it, even though it is nowhere to be found on any sheet of music. It will take decades for someone, not hesitating to use the sounds of factory sirens if necessary, to write, in addition to fifteen symphonies and as many quartets, all dark musical pieces, what is now ringing in Stojan's head, burning like an irresistible bright flame, despite everything. A waltz as strong as the driving force of sunny skies. There are no sirens there. It is the laughter in the heart of everyone those sounds reach. (17-18)

Specifically, Stojanović's hero hears the *unwritten* miraculous Shostakovich's Waltz No. 2, written only a few years after the end of World War II. The waltz motif is extremely important in the structure of the novel because it dynamizes and enables the aforementioned crossfading of temporal perspectives, testifying at the same time to the never-ending human need for art and serenity, despite the circumstances in which one lives and works. Like the buttercup, wild and pressed against the wooden fence, here Shostakovich's waltz, rejecting the gilding and the (false) glimmer of *melodies from the beautiful blue Danube*, becomes a symbol of the possibility that, even after these hitherto unimaginable horrors, there will be beauty in the world, authentic and synchronous, and not anachronistic and close to kitsch, a copy of what it once was.

At the same time, in Stojanović's text (perhaps the most obvious example is the last excerpt), everything is given to the reader, and all he needs to do is carefully focus on following the writer's and one's branches of meaning. At the end of this rationale for the award established in the honour of Miloš Crnjanski, an author equally contemporary and devoted to one's culture, let me mention one more characteristic of Stojanović's writing, which could, in a broader sense, be called *leitmotivic*. His prose is never without female characters. In this novel, Stojan's destiny is shaped by five women: Frederika, Zinaida, Milanka, Sara, and sister Stojanka, who, with their existence and qualities, cover a wide emotional, moral, and intellectual range. Based on her role in the Romanesque events and the life of the main character, among the five women, the one that stands out is Stojanka, given as much as Stojanović gives to some, if not all of his characters: with miraculous healing powers that come from the depths of our tradition and folk beliefs, overflowing with sisterly love and devotion, in some ways similar to the buttercup that exists to make

others happy, without full awareness of herself and what is happening around her.

The novel ends with their dialogue. But embedded in this dialogue, in Stojanka's seemingly unreasonable enthusiasm over her blue headscarf found in the ruins of their bombed apartment—in addition to other possible literary and cultural associations—is the fundamental thing that *Dark Open Waters* gives us: praise for perseverance and the feeling of joy because we exist and are what we are, despite everything that breaks and nullifies us.

Dragan Stojanović's award-winning *Dark Open Waters* has become a part of an extremely important series of Serbian short novels, synchronous with the literary and cultural moment in which they were written.

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

DRAGAN STOJANOVIĆ

SERBIAN CULTURAL SPACE AND LOGOS

Award Acceptance Speech

Dear literature enthusiasts, respected admirers of the work of Miloš Crnjanski,

When we say "infinite blue circle", we inevitably think of Crnjanski. The one who gave this award such a beautiful name deserves praise and recognition.

When we say "the Matica srpska", then it is clear to everyone, especially to us who observe it from the southern and western regions, that it is a star in the circle of Serbian spirituality and logos, which is worldly and universal. This is how I have always seen and understood it, from a young age.

An award that connects the "endless blue circle" and the Matica srpska carries weight and has a special meaning. Concerning this award, there is also the third element of great, of the greatest importance. Namely, it is awarded to a novel published throughout the "Serbian literary space". This, therefore, contributes, in as much as possible, to the uniqueness of that space, and draws attention to its broadness and everything that it contains and encompasses.

In the last decades, for who knows how many times, work has been done, and a lot has been done, on crushing, not only the Serbian literary space but the Serbian space in every sense. All kinds of borders, all kinds of gaps, and all kinds of obstacles have been set, in the age of European and other "integrations". The reasons and causes for this lie mostly in ourselves, but much more in the external gusts and "whirlwinds", reducing us to a "straw among the whirlwinds" with which one can do whatever they want. This is not just about Drang, with which we have

already met, these are now Drängs of various kinds, under different, numerous names. Sometimes with silky and smooth rhetoric.

Any effort to overcome and remove these boundaries, muddy chasms, and meaningless obstacles, the spirit not being in the last place, with all the diversity that it brings by the nature of things, is of the utmost importance.

In this respect, and above all because of that, I am honored to receive this award.

The Serbian literary space must be strengthened, upgraded, kept open, and viewed as independent. In other words, our view of the tradition from which we grow and continue should be focused on the present moment and the spiritual challenges it imposes, as well as, no less, the future, the various opportunities we open for ourselves in the foreseeable and the yet unforeseeable coordinates that determine and will determine world literature, the course of literature and every other expression that will significantly shape the image of the world.

Within the creative spirit, the memory of what we have and what has shaped us as individuals, and the uncertainties that man faces with each new step in time, that is, in history, are encountered and intertwined.

If literary creation is an activity involving energies of the logos and in a sphere that it borders at any given moment, then we can ask ourselves, and such a question has already been asked, is there anything that limits us? The *Word, spirit*—would there be human existence, *as humanity*, without it? Isn't the spirit devoid of boundaries? Yes. The spirit knows no bounds. But let's keep something else in mind. We know where it says: "I have the right to do anything but not everything is beneficial; I have the right to do anything but I will not be mastered by anything." Or "I have the right to do anything but not everything is beneficial. I have the right to do anything but not everything is constructive." I take these statements out of context—a procedure, by the way, that is so reproached. Why am I doing this? I remember Professor Voja Đurić, the founder of the Department of World Literature, how in 1966 when I was starting my studies at the Department, he hit the table hard with his heavy hand and said: "I would like to see the one who will dare to parody the mother of the Jugovićes!" Decades later, writing about the semantics of irony and parody, that sentence came back to me. One could say the same for Antigone or Ophelia and some of our contemporary writers, who essentially determine the Serbian literary space. Yes, it is possible to parody, ridicule, and make fun of everyone. "I have the right to do anything." But is it beneficial to literature, writers, and readers as beings of logos? It is not. It is possible to parody the mother of the Jugovićes, vulgarize such contents of our "literary space", and even blaspheme but the one who does so, excludes himself from the sphere

of logos, from the realm of the spirit which must permeate a successful, therefore "witty" parody or joke. There is a point at which parody, as I wrote about twenty years ago, adjoins common affectation, now I could add profanity. That point will be different for different people, but it certainly exists.

When the spirit itself is absent in an attempt to parody, of course, there can be no talk of wit, and especially not of any kind of logos verticals. This, in fact, also annuls a cultural framework that would in any way make it possible to understand the semantic game of two configurations, that is, what is parodied and the parody itself. What would be the "spirit" of parodying the mother of the Jugovićes (or Antigone)? Perhaps one outside all culture, but then it wouldn't even be spirit, in other words, as far as man is concerned it would be nothing. There is always a moment of negation in parody, but that negation cannot be a negation of the very assumption of every configuration, that is to say, meaningfulness. The artist is free, but that means that he, in his freedom, must be able to govern himself. When that is achieved, then one freely enters the "literary space" of the whole world, and thus Serbian literature also becomes its part.

Crnjanski held the whole world before our eyes, everything in it that is beautiful, sometimes terrifying, sometimes comforting, sometimes inconsolable, and incomprehensible. There are also Jan Mayen, and "my Srem", and "cherries in China": the words of a true master. There is also the "sword", upright, despite everything. When we read *Migrations*, we see what it is like when one fights for others, but also what it is like when salvation and a "real life" are sought on the opposite side, where it can also be difficult to find. When we read the novel *Kod Hiperborejaca* (Among the Hyperboreans), we see what it looks like when one's homeland is about to be destroyed and devastated, and so one flees to remote, imaginary landscapes, or dreams, which does not make reality any better. When we read *A Novel of London*, we see what it is like to be with those who "say goodbye to their dog", and a foreigner who is trying to find refuge and a new life among them has to kill himself in the end.

In all this, "cherries in China" feeds the intuition, with some even the belief, that it is beautiful to be on this Earth and that it was worth it to be born.

Dark Open Waters is a continuation of sorts of my previous book, *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter*, which combines three novellas. Both of these books attempt to speak out—as I see and understand them—in a new narrative paradigm, about what marked the century behind us, fulfilled and sustained our lives, but also blemished, restrained, impoverished, and made it unhappy. An existence that was suppressed in different ways by different people more than it had to have or should

have been, faced with violence that should never happen anywhere, or especially, go unpunished when it does; and at the same time lives that refuse to give up on the pursuit of beauty, finding love, maintaining solidarity and friendship—humility, courage, but also all kinds of ambivalence, moral and psychological, in which man reluctantly finds himself: this is what it is about.

We are asked to "change our awareness", but not according to our standards, living in the historical present as is and navigating its modern trends, but mostly the standards in which there is more hypocrisy than genuine goodwill, and more misunderstanding and ignorance, and even arrogant negligence, than the goodwill that might be present to some extent. It turns out that it is not so easy, and that literature, even art in general, which is willing to please such requests or recommendations is usually not worth much, in fact, usually not worth anything, in anyone's view. The fact that we, as Crnjanski thought, have our own view, has not been completely forgotten, although we do not always represent it in the best way possible. Even if only as a "straw among whirlwinds", the words *do not give up* remain, like a motto, as one careful reader told me a short time ago, as she interpreted and commented on what is happening to us from her point of view.

Crnjanski has translated old Chinese and Japanese lyrics a long time ago. God only knows how "faithful" these poems are, how faithful they can be. The last haiku of Crnjanski's choice was written by the poet Issa, who was born in the eighteenth century and died in the nineteenth. It reads:

Thirsty frog,
do not give up!
Issa is here!

Do not give up, the poet is here—today, we read it differently than the Japanese artist, worried about the smallest living thing on earth, meant to say. And, probably differently than Crnjanski meant when he did the translation.

Do not give up!—what else is there to say.

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

GORAN RADONJIĆ

A WALTZ FOR THE WOUNDED

In Dragan Stojanović's novel *Tamna pučina* (Dark Open Waters), the big questions of the last century are viewed from the perspective of an "ordinary" man, and his search for love and meaning. At the very beginning, the fate of the hero is symbolically merged with the crucial events of the twentieth century. We read that in the fall of 1914, the hero Stojan Lazarević is going to turn twenty-one—an age when "you can easily be killed", and in the war, he is wounded in the head. The wound, and the scar he will have on his face, will have consequences for Stojan's life. It is a sign of trauma, which also creates a feeling of inferiority. He is a "damaged man", and he needs healing. At the same time, a girl will interpret his scar as a testament to what is best in him.

As a student in Jena, Stojan has a dream which is a premonition of war. He has the dream (the reader will notice) at the same time Jung had one of his dreams, in April 1914. Unlike Jung from real life, the hero of Stojanović's novel comprehends the dream as a warning and realizes that a great war is coming. It is also related to the events that the hero interprets as announcements of the apocalypse, and to unfulfilled love. He runs for his life back home to Belgrade.

In a sense, the wounding of the hero can be perceived as the symbolic destruction of values on which the previous society was founded. The nineteenth century, says the narrator, was killed by its grenades. In the novel, it is defined as the age of waltzes, balls, castles (built, it is noted, however, "from the sweat of countless farmers, exhausted by hunger to the point of death"). We also remember that this century can be viewed as "a fateful era striking awe for generations", which, as Pekić points out, is not Njegoš's praise but anathema, a cry. If in Stojanović's novel the nineteenth century is seen as a "happy century", it is because the contrast emphasizes the depth of the hero's misfortune, the

intensity of the trauma. Together with the former world, the values for the hero have disappeared, so the meaning of the world and his own existence are called into question. This could also be the reason why the novel does not show the hero's past, above all, his childhood, schooling and studies—a terrible experience erases what was previously known and felt, the hero has yet to find himself.

Broadly speaking, the theme of the novel would be the hero's search for meaning. This would also include themes of free will, predestination, progress, the meaning of history, guilt. Of course, the hero seeks answers in love. Unsuccessfully. History runs parallel to that plotline. It is presented in the novel concisely and indirectly, primarily through the hero, his reactions and predictions, which is a sign that in the novel the "ordinary" individual plays the primary role. The hero is dealing with Nazi spies (some of them are real historical figures), he foresees the onset of a new war. He works in a bank, but he realizes that what he is looking for is not in material things, nor in the acquisition, trade (his father was a merchant), but in the connectedness to the world. The office is where, while sitting at his desk, he experiences the crucial vision of the novel, a kind of epiphany. On another level, questions are asked about art, its role, and the effect that evil, suffering and pain have on art. Stojan will say that, in addition to free will, the waltz is what distinguishes us from animals.

Leitmotifs contribute to the structure of the novel and give the text a lyrical and musical quality, which connects Stojanović, among others, with Marcel Proust and Thomas Mann, or, say, with Aleksandar Gatalica. The waltz and buttercup leitmotifs stand out and become symbols based on which the hero tries to gain an understanding of himself and the world. Wounded, suffering and confused, the hero hears a new waltz, completely different from those of the previous century, which is supposed to uplift and save him. It has not yet been written—another precognition—and the narrator alludes to Waltz No. 2 by Dmitry Shostakovich. The buttercup that grew wild in his mother's garden, will be important for the hero, he sees it as something gentle and tender, capable of turning ugliness and horror into beauty.

Wounding the hero in the head may be, among other things, a suggestion that meaning can no longer be sought in the rational sphere, but, above all, in the intuitive and emotional. Thus, the answer to the question of his existence and the meaning of the world, the hero will find in a dream, which is the central episode in the novel, also highlighted by the title. In contact with the basic elements, the endless sea and the endless sky, the hero will feel something like the oceanic feeling that Freud is talking about. The hero does not fully understand the message, but he feels that the signs from the depths and heights meet and intertwine

and that at the core of everything is what he calls the Great Agreement, the Great Understanding. Then you need to understand the colors, and what they are for, and everything else will become clear.

The narrator is important in the novel *Dark Open Waters*, he comments on the characters and the world in general. The narrator views the world of his text through other texts, through the prism of culture, therefore postmodernistically. He speaks from the current perspective, putting the heroes in the context of some important ideas from philosophy and art, and above all literature. On the other hand, the novel may be viewed as a kind of verification of ideas that the author finds in some of the key texts of European tradition. The narrator comments and associates the hero with something that the hero himself does not know (Shostakovich's Waltz and Gottfried Benn's poem, which are yet to be written, a novel by Dostoevsky that he has not read). There are allusions, among other things, to the Bible, Hamlet, and Hegel.

The reasons for this might be found in the writer himself, who is versed in literature and art, a professor, and an interpreter. But the modern reader also observes the world in a similar way (not only the art world but the world in general), through constant intertextuality. Therefore, one of the possible aspects of understanding Stojanović's text is that the waltz, with its high artificiality, is seen as a symbol of a desire to build a new civilization on the ruins of an old one. While it contrasts the buttercup, a symbol of natural, wild, and self-sufficient beauty, they are also similar, keeping in mind the goal. The text also provides an opportunity to pursue further associations. For example, Waltz No. 2 is from Shostakovich's "Suite for Variety Stage Orchestra", which itself is eclectic, composed of parts of various earlier compositions, and with a variety of instruments. After all, Stanley Kubrick used the Waltz as the opening title music in his film *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999), which is an adaptation of Arthur Schnitzer's *A Dream Novel* (1926). This is, in short, the poetics of Stojanović's novel.

There is much typicality in the hero; he represents, in a sense, the man of his time. In this respect, too, Stojanović's novel possesses a renewed faith in art. The novel *Dark Open Waters* deals with the meaning of art in the modern world, in the world of mass crimes and adversities. The hero wonders if, after so much suffering in the Great War, the joy that the waltz implies is forbidden. It can be regarded as a reference to Adorno and the famous view on poetry after Auschwitz. Along with other motifs given in the form of precognition, it can also be a confirmation of the hero's key insight.

The worst moment for the hero is when, just before the beginning of the war in our country, he is left completely alone in the world, without anyone to talk to, to consult with. Then, in self-examination,

he comes to a new understanding of both himself and his neighbors. At the end of the novel, in his sister's headscarf, whose color evokes the message he sensed in his dream, the hero, one might say, finds the answer to his key question, as well as the way to act on it.

In contemporary Serbian literature, there is a tendency to re-examine, from the current perspective, the experience of the twentieth century, the universal aspect, as well as the experience of our community. Stojanović's novel *Dark Open Waters* is part of that tendency but also stands out with its many qualities.

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

MLADEN ŠUKALO

READING THE OBLIQUE DARKNESS ON THE OPEN WATERS

(Notes on the novel *Dark Open Waters* by Dragan Stojanović)

The encounter with Dragan Stojanović's (1945) latest work of prose raises many questions: as a long-time professor of general literature and literary theory and professor emeritus of the University of Belgrade, he has been present in our (Serbian) language space for half a century, as a poet, narrator, and essayist. Such a general typological description of Stojanović's various forms of expression can diminish the essence of each of these orientations but also each achievement, especially the scientific studies of literature. However, the intention of highlighting the general facts from his biography is to justify the initial emphasis on the questions that will serve as a basis for some notes on the novel *Tamna pučina* (Dark Open Waters) (2020), which won last year's "Infinite Blue Circle" Award.

How does one eliminate the "burden" arising from the above facts? True, one should not avoid any aspect of the opus when writing a (comprehensive) study of a newly published work, which would rely on the previous work of Dragan Stojanović, because it could shed light on some new or confirm previously observed qualities. I will list some of a series of such possibilities reduced to the following questions: How can we interpret the narrative strategy of the novel *Dark Open Waters*, which differs from the previous works of prose, without at the same time observing this approach in the context, even theoretically expressed orientations, of his recent studies *Svečani čas pripovesti* (A Momentous Moment of the Narrative) (2018) and *Umetnuti pripovedač* (The Inserted Narrator) (2019)? Or: To what extent is Stojanović's narrative defined by his essayistic and scientific discourse? Then...?

However, the nature and function of this (or such a) text must inevitably be different, because the printing ink in this book has not yet completely dried. The first impressions (this is not an impressionistic narrative) expressed about a text must be reduced to a general description of the elements of the artistic whole, which would open the way for later interpretations of prominent individual aspects indicated as important issues. In other words, every newly published literary (artistic) achievement should be accompanied by conventional, i.e., traditional critical reviews. They have long since disappeared from our literary life: as if no one needs "intermediaries", "initiators" who, with their textual framework of the act of reading, take on the function of recommending and offering a possible answer to the question of why something should be read. That is why the responsibility of critical reviews becomes more complicated, because today it is difficult to follow outdated forms of interpretive functionality, and new, more modern ones, seem to be nowhere in sight.

Dragan Stojanović's novel *Dark Open Waters* follows the life story of Stojan V. Lazarević between 1913 and 1941, divided into several life episodes marked by several women: on the one hand, there is his sister Stojanka and to some extent his mother Melanija, and on the other Frederika, his love from Jena, the enigmatic Zinaida, his not fated wife Sara and, finally, the mistress from high society Milanka T. What is especially interesting is how the timeline is structured, whereby individual extracted events (and each of them seems to have its double) translate into a kind of timelessness.

However, although the events of the story and how it develops revolves around these women, they are nothing more than supporting characters used to express something completely different, because each of them represents an attribute of femininity, and all of them, these attributes, seem to strive to merge into a single, almost general image of the *ideal woman*.

The unsuccessful marriage proposal in Jena ends with two mystical and fantastic scenes—one is when he finds a dead bird by his door and the other is the unparalleled storm that broke over the city, which culminates with an image of a linden tree split in half. They are summed up in a miraculous dream after which Stojan will flee in panic from this "city of Friedrich Schiller". An inexplicable (or difficult to explain) young man's premonition of an impending cataclysmic war will be rounded off by Stojan's brief participation in the war in which he will be severely wounded. The attained face scar will mark his further path through life: the constant wondering as to how a man can deal with indelible (even disfiguring) external wounds will lead to various answers, especially from women, that can be summed up by their view that such

things do not affect the way a person experiences someone's inner being: it is interesting how, narratively, the sisterly *experience* of that scar is compared to Zinaida's, Sara's or Milanka's *interpretation*.

That life cycle includes episodes dedicated to the visits of Hungarian Gabor Forgacs, an Austro-Hungarian spy and informant, and they indirectly portray the atmosphere of war, as will the characters of the German Franz Neuhausen, Kohl's "business associate", Friedrich Gens... Forgacs's gift to Stojan's father—an antique rifle—will be used in a kind of vengeful act of defending the family property and honor: at the same time, this rifle also assumes a dramaturgical quality that narratively opens up a series of hidden and undisguised literary allusions and reminiscences (this aspect could, though arguably, be attributed to the consequences of his academic career). One gets the impression that narratively Dragan Stojanović insists on such actions because it makes it easier to play with real facts.

While Frederika and Stojanka (the image of the sister both opens and closes the novelistic circle) mark the prewar and war period, Zinaida, Sara, and Milanka in various ways mark the postwar period, the time after graduation, and the period of employment at the National Bank. The first among them, Zinaida, whom he gets to know "slowly and in many dark places", depicts a kind of peacetime, but their entire relationship, covered with a veil of secrecy, will be rounded off by her arrival at Stojan's apartment, warning him that Franz Neuhausen is "dangerous company". This "representative of the Reich", a factual "historical" figure,[2] introduces us to the third circle, the circle before the beginning of World War II, where episodes with Sara Kon, a Jew, and Milanka T., a cousin of the bank governor, each illuminate Stojan's life differently but also the social groups to which they belong. Stories about the women are intertwined with stories about the murder of Friedrich Gens and the suicide of bank clerk Nikifor Teodorović. Thus, the socio-political context, which in the first part of the novel was not primary (it was marked by an indirect emphasis on some less important facts such as Stojan's recitation of all the titles of Francis Joseph, emperor of Austria-Hungary), comes to the fore differently, highlighting the impact they had on individual human destinies.

Although Dragan Stojanović's narration does not show any intention of depicting the first half of the twentieth century, it is extremely skillfully imprinted as a framework presented through allusions, just as strict observance of the point of view of certain heroes is used to indicate premonitions of future events: reflecting the historical perspective entails

[2] It would be interesting to compare Dragan Stojanović's portrayal of F. Neuhausen to the image of the same figure created almost at the same time in the novel *Bunker patka* by Mirjana Đurđević and Branko Mlađenović (Laguna, Belgrade 2019).

the "present" of the heroes, which practically identifies with the "present" of the readers, which indirectly provides a sense of timelessness of both human destinies and the space that determines those destinies.

These, relatively speaking, designated "general places" overlap each other in the process of playing with several leitmotifs. Among them, two stand out the most: the first contains half-dreamed fantasies about dancing the waltz that will gradually fade, perhaps even under the influence of Zinaida and her juxtaposition of the Charleston and tango with Stojan's new, not yet written or danced waltz. The second is related to variations on the theme of flowers, because "you can never, never despise flowers", regardless of how the comparison between the lobelia from Jena and the Belgrade buttercup, the buttercup from his mother's yard, takes on different connotations:

> Silent, mute, not called on in a word, strengthens a man with its presence, its appearance, encourages him to resist even when he no longer sees it. Something soft and gentle, bright and cheerful, spread through Stojan because of it. It doesn't ask for anything, no watering, no fertilization, no worries—it's just there. It's not bothered by rain or drought. You should be that modest, thought Stojan, and so full of confidence in your color, making your whole life seem beautiful, even if it's not; on the contrary, it's ugly, cruel, and horrible. Yes, everything can be beautiful if you establish a friendship with a buttercup there by a wooden fence. Lasting friendship.
>
> What would it mean to be like the buttercup? How to achieve this? Seeing it, remembering it, brought a different kind of reassurance than the still unwritten waltz that pushed the previous century away from Stojan and everyone else. Along with its melody, a beautiful woman would appear, whose lips, whose shoulders, breasts, fingers, whom you will never touch; someone will because she exists, but not you.

This quotation (which due to the nature of the text could not be longer, and therefore more complete) seems to indicate the essence of what Dragan Stojanović in his novel *Dark Open Waters* is trying to achieve even when he combines both the compatible and, relatively speaking, incompatible motivational lines in creating a general romanesque reality.

At the very beginning of the novel, the author writes how, after being wounded and demobilized, Stojan V. Lazarević's thoughts were "disconnected, befogged by headaches, and wandered in various directions". He concludes this image with the question: "A black circle—and how to get out of it?" Such a metaphorical determinant might have gone unnoticed only it turns into a formative factor of the narrative itself and,

in a way, it is executed through a wild mystical and Hermetic fixation that God is a circle whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere. One cannot get out of this and such a circle and Stojanović's hero is in it, not searching for a possible way out. Everyone moves around in this circle, both living and dead, which enables the intertwining of the comprehensible and the incomprehensible, the real and the unreal, the present and the past, like the dead bird from Jena and the barely noticeable missing sparrows from Kumodraž: "Was something that led to the frightening vision instilled in him from somewhere, from the dark heights or the dark depths of his being?" Just as the memory of the dancer from his dreams fades, other images also fade and disappear like the piano keys gathered from the ruins of his halved house. All that remains is his sister's blue headscarf, which she will only caress. However, not this nor any other color will be able to push out of sight the metaphorical symbol in the title of dark open waters in which everyone is immersed in various ways.

In addition to numerous other focal points in the various interpretations of Dragan Stojanović's novel *Dark Open Waters*, we might nevertheless be able to place the focal point in Chapter 19 (there are a total of thirty-two in the novel). It is a dream that follows Zinaida's visit, warning of the dangers that can arise from communication with F. Neuhausen. The image shows Stojan lying in a boat feeling "great depth beneath him" as different signs and symbols mix and intertwine, as part of some "Great Agreement":

> Now he knows that they [messages] exist, and that, before doing anything, anything you are thinking about, anything you must think about and decide, you should begin with the knowledge that such an Agreement does exist. That it is the basis of everything: the beginning and end. In other words, that there is no beginning or end once something has been created. Or at least after Earth was created. [...] What he sees is accompanied by a feeling that it is very good that things are as they are. The greatest depths confirm and guarantee it. The farthest heights guarantee, confirm, illuminate and support it. We have to wait for dawn. The boat. Dark. Dawn.
>
> And indeed. It's gradually getting light, the line that separates the open sea and the sky is becoming more and more visible. The sun is not there yet, but it's coming, all the signs, strong, very strong signs of its approach are there. The sea is still more black than blue, but it won't last long, it will be blue. How many shades of blue there are! "It's the color of lobelia at dawn." He saw a lobelia in Jena, in Frederika's garden. He, with his buttercup, almost forgot about her.

This is where the possible framework is set or implied for understanding the first *threshold* of interpretation (to use a Genettian expression)—the title of the novel. The *poetics of the title* of a work of art is sporadically discussed in our country, and even then, it is done out of a need to provide the widest possible metaphorical framework using interpretive "interventions". It seems that Stojanović's work can serve as a model of how we can deal with this phenomenon because my making a connection between the title of his novel and the image of Stojan's nightly reverie in a boat on the open seas can be correct and justified. The question remains, is it the only one? It might be worthwhile to look for a different reading and interpretive approach than the one offered, especially since here at the end, the book talks about the beginning, and one gets the impression that while telling the story the author is occasionally playing with the act of reading. There is a hint of a slight dose of mockery concerning this act, which at times eludes both the average reader and the reader behind whom the signer of this review is hiding.

S.

Translated from Serbian by
Persida Bošković

JELENA MARIĆEVIĆ BALAĆ

SANDBANKS OF SERBIAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Dragan Stojanović's novel *Dark Open Waters* is organized into thirty-two chapters marked with Roman numerals. The sequence of short chapters and well-thought-out sentences contributes to the narrative dynamics, so the novel can be read in one sitting. Stylistic refinement and careful selection of striking leitmotifs and italicized words stimulate the interpretive attention of the attentive reader. There are no superfluous places in the book, but each layer of the novel is organized in such a way as to form a harmonious whole. Consequently, certain aesthetic qualities can be determined, which, among other things, become a valuable factor that distinguishes *Dark Open Waters* as a literary success.

Following the collection of novellas, *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter* (2018), which was awarded the Andrić Prize, the novel *Dark Open Waters* was crowned with the award "Infinite Blue Circle". Although awards are usually not crucial for understanding a work of literature, there is a significant comparative potential, which connects the novellas and the novel of Dragan Stojanović with Andrić's narrative and Miloš Crnjanski's novelistic opus. The soul of Stojan Lazarević, the hero of *Dark Open Waters*, seems in many ways to be similar to Vuk and Pavle Isakovič. Stojan's dreams, apparitions, obscure predictions, the waltz that takes place in his head, and his attitude towards women correspond to Sumatraist visions, war events and misfortunes, and the lonely figures of the heroes of *Migrations* and the *Second Book of Migrations*.

Furthermore, perhaps the author chose Lazarević as the last name of his hero because the name of Vuk Isakovič's father was Lazar. Of course, the last name carries a strong symbolic aura that is largely associated with the prince (tsar) Lazar, "the fall of the Serbian Empire", and opting for the heavenly kingdom. His son, Despot Stefan Lazarević,

found himself in an unenviable position after his father's death, burdened by adversity and historical turmoil, just like Stojan Lazarević, whose life we follow from the start of the First World War until the bombing of Belgrade on April 6, 1941. With the hero Dragan Stojanović, we follow, therefore, not the downfall of the "Serbian Empire", but the Serbian civil society. Hence, Stojan, like Despot Stefan, has no descendants, because the Battle of Kosovo, as well as the act of bombing, symbolically and literally, erased both the imperial and civil order.

On this same track, the novel *Dark Open Waters* can be contextualized with the tradition of Serbian literature, which deals with the decline and disappearance of Serbian civil society after the Second World War. These are mostly novels by Borislav Pekić, Slobodan Selenić, Svetlana Velmar-Janković. Perhaps it would be worth mentioning, in line with the previous comparison, Selenić's novel *Fathers and Forefathers* (1985), since Stevan Medaković's lineage is interrupted by the death of his son Mihajlo, on April 13, 1945. The date of Mihajlo Medaković's death in the novel is the same as the date of birth of the writer Dragan Stojanović. Stevan is a variant of the name Stefan, the dynasty name of all the Nemanjićs, so that he is ironically connected with the royal-imperial sacred bloodline, just as his wife Elizabeta bears the name of the Queen of England. Along these lines would be the names of the heroes of the novel *Lagum* (1990) by Svetlana Velmar-Janković—Milica and Dušan Pavlović, who bear the names of a Serbian empress (princess) and our only secular emperor. Encoded by the fate of Serbian history, both Selenić's, Janković's and Stojanović's heroes seem to repeat, both in their personal and collective destiny, the inevitability of *dark open waters* as a source that is impossible to avoid.

Dragan Stojanović additionally imbues the historical whirlpool Serbian civil society is descending into with discrete allusions to Borisav Stanković's novel *Impure Blood*. Stanković's problem of decadence and degeneration is aestheticized by analogy, according to which Sofka is identified with the house. As Novica Petković analyzed step by step and concluded in his study *Two Serbian Novels*, the decline of the middle class and family that shadows Sofka's deterioration, is represented by Effendi Mita's greasy and torn shirt under an expensive suit and the symbolic and figurative collapse of the heroine's family home. In Stojanović's novel, Stojan's father Vasilije had as many as four houses and was the head of a family of four, which, apart from him and his son, consisted of his wife Melanija and daughter Stojanka. This information is not given randomly in the novel.

Before the First World War, Vasilije Lazarević was firmly established in space and time, but the war, Stojan's wound to the head and Stojanka's fate, significantly shook the fortitude of his home. The names

Stojan and Stojanka, which he gave to his children, have a magical meaning in the traditional culture of the Serbs. A brother and sister with similar names (Stojan and Stoja, Stanko and Stana, Stoja and Ostoja) would be built into the walls of a building to fortify it, or they were often the leading participants in ritual processions when an infectious disease or other pestilence befalls a community. Stojan and Stojanka are symbolic foundations of the Lazarević family (but indirectly also of Serbia), which somehow survived, even though four houses were destroyed or sold. They moved to a large apartment, but after the bombing, this new home was "vertically almost split in half".

Stojanka's ability to help her wounded brother, i.e., to heal him with her hands by following the advice of grandmother Stanija, can be interpreted as the apotropaic power that a brother and sister of similar names should have. Stojanka, a holy fool like Sofka, is directly linked to the house. When the owner of the inn and his brother come to guv'nor Vasilije to buy the houses that are "not for sale", he will refer to them as "ramshackle", but "what flashed through Stojan's mind was that the hound was thinking of Stojanka, not the house. Or both the house and Stojanka". Despite everything, Stojan and Stojanka survived the events of 1914 thanks to grandmother Stanija, and 1941 thanks to Stojadin, therefore, with the help of people with similar names. The four of them, through the strong symbolism of the names, suggest the dire need for the adversities to finally end.

Stojan fails to start a family, although he goes through four *houses* of love with: Frederika, Zinaida, Sara, and Milanka T. He loved Frederika who was from a Protestant family while studying in Jena, and in Belgrade, he loved Zinaida who was of mixed origin (Russian-Bulgarian-Greek-Jewish-Armenian), Sara who was Jewish, and the married Milanka. Although there were obstacles that kept him from becoming a husband and father, primarily due to differences in religion, nationality, and marital status, Stojan loved Sara and that love made his actions transcendent.

Unlike Stevan and Elizabeta Medaković, whose souls Selenić characterizes through enclosed spaces (a dark cave, fortress/citadel), Stojan Lazarević's inner world is characterized by nature, vast spaces, and open waters. His dreams and visions are very similar to works of art, whether it is music or painting: "I would paint a violin in flames. It burns, and you hear a sweet sound that uplifts you. A reddish flame. Just that." The relationship with Frederika was sketched with lobelia flowers from her garden, which he forgot because his affection in Belgrade was won by another flower—the buttercup. These yellow field flowers, and flowers in general, are linked to Stojanka. All in all, the love in Stojan Lazarević's soul is partly illustrated with flowers, whether it be love for a woman or his sister. The sounds of his soul, all life experiences, and

inner drama fit into the waltz. By destroying civil society, art is also erased; that is why the violin is on fire, "the flowers are trampled", and the hero finds a dead bird on his doorstep just before the start of the First World War.

The historical open waters are dark, but even though the Serbian civil society is collapsing, its soul, embodied in art, should be preserved. Art could represent a metaphorical *sandbank*, or the unexpected and necessary dry land, created by the sedimentation of "sunken" values, which, regardless of everything, must become visible over time. The waltz, "as strong as the driving force of a sunny sky", represents "some previously unknown sandbank of his (Stojan's) soul". That sandbank, the waltz, violin, flowers, and birds are the *star* of Stojan's *open waters* which should be gazed at as the *star* of Miloš Crnjanski's "endless blue circle".

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

DRAGAN STOJANOVIĆ

READING *CUM GRANO SALIS*

Interview by Jelena Marićević Balać

Dragan Stojanović (1945, Belgrade) is a professor emeritus at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, Department of Comparative Literature and Literary Theory, a Serbian writer and translator. In addition to the highest formal education in the field of philology, he also graduated from the Faculty of Law. He studied at the universities of Bochum, Hamburg, Berlin and Münster. He has made valuable contributions in the field of literary science with papers, essays and monographs, such as: *Fenomenologija i višeznačnost književnog dela—Ingardenova teorija opalizacije* (Phenomenology and Ambiguity in Works of Literature—Ingarden's Opalization Theory) (1977, 2011), *Čitanje Dostojevskog i Tomasa Mana* (Reading Dostoyevsky and Thomas Mann) (1982), *O idili i sreći—Heliotropno lutanje kroz slikarstvo Kloda Lorena* (On Idylls and Happiness—Heliotropic Wandering through the Works of Claude Lorrain (1991, 2013), *Rajski um Dostojevskog* (The Celestial Mind of Dostoyevsky) (1994, 2003, 2009), *Paradoksalni klasik Tomas Man* (Thomas Mann the Paradoxical Classic) (1997), *Lepa bića Ive Andrića* (The Wonderful Beings of Ivo Andrić) (2003, 2012), *Poverenje u Bogorodicu* (Trust in the Mother of God) (2007), *Energija sakralnog u umetnosti* (The Energy of the Sacral in Art) (2010, 2012), *Ironija i značenje* (Irony and Meaning) (1984, 2003), *Švejk hoće da pobedi* (Schweik Wants to Win) (2014), *Pismo o poeziji—o pet pesama Borislava Radovića* (A Letter about Poetry—about five poems by Borislav Radović) (2016), *Umetnuti pripovedač—Lopov Leonida Leonova* (The Inserted Narrator—Leonid Leonov's *The Thief*) (2018), *Svečani čas pripovesti—Josif i njegova braća* (A Momentous Moment of the Narrative—*Joseph and*

His Brothers)(2018). He prepared two anthologies (with Danilo Basta): *Rani Hajdeger—Recepcija i kritika Bivstva i vremena* (Early Heidegger—Reception and Review of *Being and Time*) (1979) and *Antologija nemačkog eseja* (An Anthology of the German Essay) (2009). He translated from German the novel *Doktor Faustus* by Thomas Mann (1980, 1989, 2009, 2019), followed by Friedrich Schlegel's *Ironie der Liebe* (1999), and *Dialektik der Säkularisierung* (2006) by Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger. He has published five poetry collections: *Olujno veče* (Stormy Evening) (1972), *SL.—Četiri pesme o Sl.* (Sl.—Four Poems about Sl.) (1992, 2001), *Godine* (Years) (2006), *Nije to sve* (That is Not All) (2007) and *Sito* (The Sieve) (2015); an essayistic parody *Svetska književnost* (World Literature) 1988); two short story collections: *Meseci* (Months) (2007) and *Ćerka španskog borca* (The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter) (2018, 2019); and finally, novels *Dvoježˇ* (1995, 2013), *Zločin i kazna* (Crime and Punishment) (1996), *Benzin* (Gasoline) (2000), *Okean* (The Ocean) (2005, under the title *Dvoježˇ* 2013), *Urednik od iskustva* (Editor of Experience) (2009) and *Tamna pučina* (Dark Open Waters) (2020). He was awarded first prize by the National Commission for UNESCO in 1968 for the text "Power and Powerlessness of Science" (published in the journal *Gledišta*, June – July 1968), first prize at the Student Cultural Center Competition in Belgrade in 1971 for the collection of poems *Stormy Evening*, the 1994 *Naša borba* Prize for his book *The Celestial Mind of Dostoyevsky*, the 2003 "Đorđe Jovanović" Award for *The Wonderful Beings of Ivo Andrić*, the "Veselin Lučić" Award for his collection of short stories *Months* (the best work of art created at the University of Belgrade), the "Nikola Milošević" Award for best book in the field of art and literary theory, aesthetics and philosophy published in 2010 for the book *The Energy of the Sacral in Art*, the "Andrić" Award for the collection of stories *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter* and the 2020 Matica srpska Award "Infinite Blue Circle" for the novel *Dark Open Waters*.

Jelena Maričević Balać: It has been noticed that your collection of short stories The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter (2018) not only corresponds to the novel Dark Open Waters (2020), which was awarded the "Infinite Blue Circle" Award but that the novel is its sequel. Moreover, Aleksandar Jovanović pointed out the possibility that The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter should be read "as a kind of three-part novel about the twentieth century". In that context, can we expect a fifth part, a sequel to Dark Open Waters?

Dragan Stojanović: The short stories that make up the book *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter* were written with the desire to—as much

as possible—for myself, and not only myself, render an account of what happened to us in the twentieth century, what was achieved and even more, what was missed or overlooked that should not have been missed or overlooked, as well as the consequences of this. Of course, such a "summary" is always, by nature of things, scanty and there are many things that go without saying, many things that we must assume the reader already knows as to what happened and what should be concluded about certain events or historical figures. The writer, therefore, faces multiple challenges: what can one offer through narration or, in a way that corresponds to the logic of the story, impose as the conclusion of what had been inflicted on all of us, wounding us, suppressing, making us unhappy, impoverished, constricting our souls, what had hurt us, blinded us, sometimes even killed us, and how, despite it all, life continued, giving us or least showing us its most beautiful and most desirable fruits even when they were denied us; where do we find the seed of goodness, which is indestructible, even when everything says that goodness is threatened or destroyed.

The best reader of these novellas is the one who knows and keeps in mind the "The Way of Love" from Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians (13:1-13), which doesn't mean that those who don't know the Epistles of Paul will not understand them. But if *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter* is read, that is, taken *cum grano salis*, I think certain parallelism will appear to the soul of the reader.

This need to "render an account", in other words: to look at the distance traveled by the previous two or three generations, arises when a person comes to a certain age and wonders how and down which paths and gorges they got here, where they are, where we are, and perhaps—what awaits us? Thus, man gives himself the impossible task of obtaining clear and firm answers to these questions. He can't find such answers; in this regard, we are condemned to vagueness, but also the uncertainty of the answers found, which are full of gaps or ambiguities, however, in some way, this also determines or co-determines the meaning that is believed to have been reached. That meaning, that truth in relation to which a person would like to observe himself and everything around him, is conditioned by a multitude of perspectives; the first thing a narrator must think about is that he mustn't neglect the variety of images that arise from that multitude. I could also put it like this: all three novellas were written with the full awareness that the task is impossible to solve and that, regardless of this, it must be solved. This can't be done without consequences; some readers would like to read a clearer and more definitive explanation of "what really happened". And as it is, more was said here than should have. The reader who is satisfied with what written words bring and what they allude to gains

the most. I have already said: one should read *cum grano salis*; we know what that means.

There is another big problem: how to present real historical figures (in my case they are mostly various villains, domestic and foreign) as literary characters, who must correspond to the parameters and coordinates of fictional wholes in which they exist as presented and nowhere else. A writer is not a historian, which doesn't mean that he can say anything just because it occurred to him (we've seen the achievements of so-called Postmodernism). Think of Tolstoy as he was writing *War and Peace* (where we meet emperors, military leaders or politicians we are already familiar with or have at least some vague idea about), or Thomas Mann as he was writing *Doctor Faustus* (where we come across musicians by name, and we all know who was at war with whom). As characters in the novel, they have a new, differently established existence.

In our literature, this problem has been solved in various ways, not always the best. I undoubtedly missed a lot of things in contemporary production. Nobody reads everything, so they overlook something that perhaps they shouldn't have. At any rate, in this case, I tried to find a new narrative paradigm, a method consistent with the described goal. Move quickly without causing the reader to gasp for air; give a clear as possible drawing with as few strokes as possible; and broaden the view of the more knowledgeable reader concerning works in world literature that are allusive, not too obviously invoked as a possible interpretive context. Another important thing is not to be "engaged"—I never liked the so-called "engaged" art. This means not rushing towards some ideology or, even less, politics, because this obscures the historical truth more than it clarifies some important aspect of it and besides, artistic truth cannot be established on such a basis. Nor is historiography exact in the same way natural sciences are, and literature, in particular, has its own specific truth or, if you will, its own truths. The reader will, in any case, make up his own mind based on his previous spiritual education and his past experiences and inclinations. That will not change, but still, literature worthy of that name will help him to be critical of everything that is thrown at him and forced into his head as "information"; or at least help him to keep his sanity in an environment ruled by "media" manipulation, all kinds of electronic "aids", and where he is daily bombarded with lies, the hypocrisy, and violence of politics, advertisements, pornography... Among other things, this is also why one must remain faithful to literature; one must read.

I could say the exact same thing for *Dark Open Waters*. The difference is in the length of the text, although in both books the plot material is such that each of these four narrative units could be made into very

long novels. That's exactly what I wanted to avoid. However, *Dark Open Waters* is as long as all the three previous novellas put together, it's already a shorter novel, not a novella, and that is why it couldn't be in the same book. The "Ivo Andrić" Award and the second edition of *The Daughter of a Spanish Fighter* postponed the publication of *Dark Open Waters* for about a year. The plot material is similar, in fact, the same, the technique is related or, you could say, the same, but of course, the heroes are different, the problems or certain aspects of the problems that have already been dealt with are different, but, all in all, these two books form a whole even though they can be read individually and without each other. The ideological-philosophical-religious framework, visible and recognizable to some, to others not, is the same in both books.

Covid-19 in the spring of 2020 and the "self-isolation" (which I took literally) contributed to me writing another short novel (for now, the title is *A Conversation with a Maple Tree*; given to me by a friend and careful reader). It's not finished yet, but some of the important issues, which have already been thematized, will be supplemented or enhanced, again with new heroes. I think it will be the "twentieth century" again, in a new way, but along the same lines as the previous two books.

I am sorry that *The Daughter of the Spanish Fighter* and *Dark Open Waters* did not appear a little earlier so they could not be analyzed in Katarina Roringer Vešović's extensive book *Zemaljsko i sveto u ljubavi: o delu Dragana Stojanovića* (The Earthly and Holy in Love: about the work of Dragan Stojanović), dedicated to everything I did in the previous decades. That book is written in such a way that when it talks about the novels or short stories, it also talks about poetry or my theoretical writings. I wouldn't be able to do something like that myself. This requires much skill. It's a pity that this book, not counting the excellent review by Zorica Bečanović Nikolić, has not been discussed. It would be useful to anyone who wants to write about literature regardless of whose opus is the subject of analysis because of the writing style. It proves that synthetic studies, branching in various directions, can possess not only cognitive but also special aesthetic value. The work and its analysis merge into the same logos circle.

When it comes to wars, in the preface to the book *Schweik Wants to Win* (published in Novi Sad in 2014), as well as in the extensive interview I gave to *Književni magazine* on that occasion, something was said from a unique perspective that could shed light on prose works written after 2014. I'm glad that Katarina Vešović was still able to consider this book. It's as if, unknowingly, I wrote that preface and references to corresponding historical sources (especially German and Austrian) just for her.

All in all, part five has not been ruled out.

In the book On Idylls and Happiness—Heliotropic Wandering through the Works of Claude Lorrain, you write that people like Nietzsche or Dostoevsky "predicted" some important future issues because they had a deeper understanding of the logic and inevitability of the currents that constituted their present. It seems that your novel Dark Open Waters implies the possibility of sensing and to some extent discerning the spirit of an upcoming time, although the plot of the novel covers the period between two world wars. Is the seed of those "inevitable currents" that create, shape and condition our national and global present, and thus the future found in this indeed important and crucial historical fragment of time?

They say that Prince Metternich used to say that maybe, while he was the chancellor, he did not always rule the Habsburg Monarchy, but that he certainly did rule the Europe of his time. He had to leave the political scene in the 1848 revolution; he died in 1859. With his inherent cynicism, and even contempt, he did not foresee a bright future for the Balkan peoples, including the Greeks, should they be liberated from Ottoman rule at some point. He didn't care much about how these peoples, especially the Slavs, lived under Ottoman rule. A gradual break from the Ottoman Empire was inevitable, and Austria, that is, Austria-Hungary, had its own expiration date. However, as far as the Balkan peoples and their "happy future" are concerned, to a great extent, Metternich was right. The Slavic peoples, who, some earlier, some later, had yet to be constituted as separate nations, could not agree and, as soon as it became possible in the twentieth century, fought amongst themselves and on behalf of the empires they so wanted to break away from, even more violently than they did against those same empires. That there will be no harmony or friendship between them in freedom or the process of independence, Metternich saw well some hundred and more years before the great bloodshed and mass war crimes. At least we have had this very painful experience many times. In the twentieth century, Serbs were also exposed to attacks by external great powers and some of their loyal followers. They organized their lives as best they could. There would be much to say about this. "I am a rock, but bloody," sang Đura Jakšić. "They threw shackles on me, oh shame," Milan Rakić sang later. And a little later, one could also hear: "Comrade Tito is riding at the head of the marching column." Those who were able to perceive the existing world constellations, some of which change slowly and scarcely while others don't seem to change at all; those who were able to estimate the force and direction of currents that determined or will determine the fate of the people, could have predicted or at least discerned many things.

Literature, however, is primarily interested in the fate of individuals and families. These fates are realized in a certain historical framework, but they are not entirely and finally conditioned by them, or completely and exclusively subject to some inexorable laws. This is possible because a person is an individual, therefore, he can develop and change, "mature", and even when he suffers in a collision with circumstances and "higher forces", there is always something on his life path that is free, which doesn't mean that this potential will also be realized. But man fights not only with deeds but also with fantasy and even dreams. Bloody rock, shackles, "columns", yes, but that's not all.

In everything I did, even in prose writings, I tried to work on "that's not all". In addition to frustration, misery, injustice, madness and death, a person can be given joy, some crumb of joy. What is the role of love in all this, beauty, art, and even sublimity, which you mention? I not only thought about this, but I also tried to shape certain meaningful corpora based on these matters. Listen to Vivaldi; listen to Shostakovich's Waltz No. 2. What more do you need?

Don't let the title *On Idylls and Happiness* deceive you. This is not a textbook or manual on how to be happy. The coordinates set by Aristotle, Descartes, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Bloch, the Holy Scripture, and so on, as well as writers and painters whom I've had a chance to get to know well, talk equally, if not more about misfortune, fear, guilt, than about happiness and libidinous aspects of human existence. The tragedy of existence and the madness of history are not necessarily the last words; one should also keep in mind the vivacity that stands in opposition to them. The other thing is that we often waste the measure of vivacity given to us in vain without even knowing what we are actually doing. Drunken ecstasy, stupidity, narrow-mindedness, cruelty and selfishness are mixed with laughter, unfettered surges of the soul, tenderness and the blueness of the sky, which sometimes we also have the opportunity to gaze at. "With a bright kiss on the lips."

I don't know what the future will be like. I think that a lot will depend on the development of science and technology, what Heidegger called "Gestell". Abuses in this area of life are often greater than benefits.

Works in verse and prose have a different status than theoretical or essayistic reflections. This should be respected and understood and interpreted in a different way, suitable for them.

Perhaps it would be well to repeat: that's not all.

Your scientific and artistic views cluster around a core that consists of words such as: idyll, happiness, beauty, love, laughter, which can be characterized as quite unusual, given that art today is dominated by the aesthetics of the ugly, and that writers prefer to shock or appall

readers. In her afterword to the novel Dvoježˇ (2013), Katarina Roringer Vešović, analyzing black and blue, suggested that they represent "bridges between two sides of life that would harden the soul". Can the title of the award-winning novel Dark Open Waters be seen as a metaphorical, almost artistic manifestation of the soul, within which the tone values of black and blue mix? Is your attention to the issues of beauty and happiness a kind of need to defend and/or preserve the sublimity that art potentially conveys?

I have already answered that question in part. I came up with the title *Dark Open Waters* as I quietly approached the question that has been with us since Parmenides and I believe people have wondered about it even before: why does anything exist. "Why Something, rather than Nothing?" But the mere fact that you're wondering about it or anything else is already "Something". The "Great Agreement" in question is one of the indirect ways to at least address this issue. Translated into religious terms, a person can believe that the world was created, but then there must also be a Creator. Or that it wasn't created, but it's, who knows how, just there, but then we are just turning our heads away from the issue. I'm not a philosopher and I don't know how to deal with certain issues, such as pantheism, Spinoza. We lack a real teacher who would explain Spinoza or Leo the Hebrew whose *Dialogues of Love*, fortunately, have been translated, and who influenced Spinoza and inspired him.

While working on Dostoevsky, I talked a lot (and wrote a little less) about theodicy. If the world was created by God, who must be both absolutely good and omnipotent, then where does the evil in the world come from? He didn't want to or couldn't stop him? Read the later Ivan L. Lalić, *Four Canons* and so on. Theologians have several strategies to get out of these difficulties; the question is with how much success. After all, this issue cannot be solved by logic and "evidence". It's a matter of faith. Everything has a higher meaning, except that man is not able to understand it. Tell that to someone from Jasenovac, Jadovno or Buchenwald. Staretz Silouan never condemned anyone for anything. After all, Silouan is a saint, to whom Christ himself allegedly said: "Keep your mind in hell and do not despair". A profound message that a person can think about all his life. Only, Silouan spent his life on Athos. What would have happened, and it could have happened, if he had to fight, say, at Stalingrad? Would he then condemn someone who came to destroy his entire nation, including himself? And not everyone is a saint. Not everyone was allowed to talk, literally or figuratively, with Christ. There is also Job, to whom Yahweh appeared "out of a whirlwind". It would be inappropriate to interpret myself, but I think it is permissible

to say: when it comes to these things, read (again) the *Book of Job*. (Which, by the way, should be translated again, into modern Serbian. What are so many theologians doing?)

In the book On Idylls and Happiness, you point out the importance of the heavenly spaces in Claude Laurent's painting, the openness of his scenes, and nature as a "wonderful festivity". You say that "Claude's pastorals" show that it is nice to be 'here', precisely because our view reaches what is 'there', and with foreboding, longing, dreaming, the whole being that thereby expands, both can be seen, embraced, seized, experienced". Can this notion of Loren's paintings be connected with etherism, Sumatraism, and even a "pure form of ecstasy", within which Miloš Crnjanski built his poetics of the "spaces of happiness" (Petar Džadžić)?

Crnjanski is closest to me in the book *Kod Hiperborejaca* (With the Hyperboreans) and the *Lament over Belgrade*. There are not many of our writers whose *entire works* should be read. Crnjanski belongs to this small group. "To Embrace Earth" is one of the points in my essay *On Idylls and Happiness*. That corresponds to Crnjanski concerning something important. One could add: despite everything. As I've already mentioned, that's not all. Crnjanski has had much experience with misfortune, both personal and collective. Not like Nietzsche, differently. And yet you will often find sentences in which he says, for example, that the beauty of a woman is *extraordinary*; that adjective will also appear when he writes about her dress and her thighs. In a letter to Oelze, with whom he was open and honest, Gottfried Benn said that happiness is measured in hours. We can guess what hours he meant. I don't know how many hours Crnjanski would allow. But there certainly would be some.

And when talking about the "otherworldly", Crnjanski was mostly disagreeable. Wonderful Mediterranean scenes or the glow of an icy desert, the tenderness of a flower, the power of Michelangelo, Her beautiful hair—yes! And the Other, "over there", did not interest him.

In the inspiring book The Wonderful Beings of Ivo Andrić, you wrote how salutary it is "that there is always beauty somewhere". Can beauty be a counterbalance to evil, but also, in a wider sense, a metaphor for art? In this regard, can even the character in the short story "Trup" (The Corpse), Čelebi Hafiz, as someone whose name includes the title of a learned noble man and great Persian poet Shamsuddin Mohammad Hafiz, be in some aspect a "beautiful being"?

Čelebi Hafiz can by no means be a "beautiful being", and we see, indeed, through multiple narrative mediations, that a Syrian woman,

whose beauty is undoubted, carries a vengeful potential that can hardly be reconciled with the beauty of someone's existence. Beauty is one thing but the beauty of existence is something else, unlike morality, kindness or nobleness. It would take many pages to give somewhat of an explanation of the difference for this occasion. Besides, the fascination with beauty, which is fleeting and repetitive, is not the same as love. Interestingly, these two things are so often confused.

In my opinion, the fact that there is always beauty somewhere is of the utmost importance. Beauty itself, provoking fascination with oneself, cannot be a counterbalance to evil, and Andrić says that it is always surrounded either with the darkness of human fate or the splendor of human blood, if I remember correctly. The erotic core in man is both a source of love, but also of aggression, hence, as Freud says, "the uneasiness in civilization". Either we have to suppress ourselves in something, say with a moral code, or we are threatened by unrestraint, with all the negative, often unbearable and self-destructive consequences. Dostoevsky speaks of the "infernal slopes" of Grushenka's hips. Read *Legends of Anika*, compare Anika with Nastasya Filippovna from *The Idiot*. Beauty is dangerous.

Judging by the books you have written, it can be said that you were influenced by the classics of world and Serbian literature. Given the abundance of literature that needs to be mastered to sovereignly write about the works of great writers, this kind of dedication is worthy of respect. The great challenge of today's literary science and literature as art is precisely the question of how one writes and relates to the canon. How did you decide to devote yourself to writers such as, for example, Thomas Mann, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, Friedrich Hölderlin, Ivo Andrić, and Borislav Radović?

Very briefly: despite all the difficulties that accompany the process of forming a "canon", and there are many of them, I think it is necessary, not to say essential, to get acquainted with it, at least with the major works. I hear the question: who still reads the *Iliad* in times of mobile phones? People who think that way are foreign to me and completely uninteresting.

When someone today says that they will "go to the woods" for something related to the government, he would do well to read Shakespeare's *Macbeth* beforehand. The woods will come for him; it is convincingly described there. And it wouldn't hurt to also read Ionesco's *Macbett*. That jokester tells us that each following government is worse than the previous one, and its members speak the same as all the previous ones, word for word. One laughs as they read this, though they know they shouldn't.

One of the poetic characteristics of your novelistic works is a text interweaved text with striking and meaningfully rich leitmotifs. In the study The Paradoxical Classic, Thomas Mann, you devoted your attention to Mann's leitmotifs, which "offer a unique 'musical' and lyrical character". Is it possible to talk about the same or similar function of the leitmotif on the example of your work? Do you play an instrument or are you a fan of classical music? What role does music play for you in the area of literature?

There is "music" in poetry, not to mention everything else, but it plays a crucial role, as far as I am concerned. It is not so much a question of versification, but of distant rhymes, echoes of one vocal in another, an influence on the formation of a poetic image... That is why the most successful lyrics are, in fact, untranslatable; too much is lost in the "transfer" to another sound.

In prose, this, let's call it the sound layer, can, if the writer is skilled, essentially influence the meaning of what is said. Is there a better example than Crnjanski?

Mann adopted the leitmotif from Wagner. Not always as successfully. In any case, the reader needs to pay special attention to notice the presence of leitmotifs in larger prose units and what meaningful and aesthetic effects they have. It's not the same whether you're reading *Tonio Kröger* or *The Magic Mountain*. The procedure is similar, but it is incomparably more difficult to follow the leitmotifs in *The Magic Mountain*.

It's obvious that music and, especially, painting play a big role in my works. It is up to the reader to assess how important this is and why it is so.

In the mentioned study on Thomas Mann, you wrote that the question of humanism is not just "a problem or an epochal challenge that concerns only the Renaissance or the nineteenth century". What would be your answer to the question of 21st-century humanism?

There is talk of the end of this and the end of that, and even of the "end of man." It's not enough for a person to be born as before, but now we need to "make" an artificial person, a humanoid robot, etc. It's hard for me to think of the catastrophe this can lead to. But if necessary, we will face that as well—in an effort to defend man, even with all his flaws.

Translated from the Serbian by
Persida Bošković

ABOUT THE POET OF PASSION, PAIN AND PRIDE

Jovan Delić*, Milutin Bojić, a Poet of the Modern and Herald of Avant-garde Poetry: on the Poetry and Poetics of Milutin Bojić*, Andrić Institute, Andrićgrad—Višegrad, 2020

Following the reception of Milutin Bojić's poetry, we could discover some important characteristics of the Serbian literature and culture in certain periods of the past century. In the years before the First World War, appreciated as a great talent and hope, then mourned as a great victim and celebrated as a poet whose verses spoke about the quakes of history, Bojić was pushed into oblivion, or at least into the background, for half a century. Just modernist poets and essayists who were seeking a poetic stronghold in tradition—Miodrag Pavlović, Jovan Hristić and Ivan V. Lalić, started bringing him back to the literary-historical consciousness. Finally, the celebration of the centenary of the Great War reactualized the poet of "pain and pride" and contributed to the new interpretation and evaluation of his opus. In that sense, Jovan Delić's monograph completes the previous readings of Bojić's poetry and, more importantly, opens new possibilities for its understanding, especially in the context of poetic tendencies of the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Delić's book consists of three large segments ("General Overview", "Fragments on the Poetics of Milutin Bojić" and the "Blue Tomb") which are divided into a number of smaller chapters which gradually discuss both the poetry of this author and, using it as a springboard, the currents of modern Serbian poetry and critical thought. Jovan Delić has already written extensively about Bojić. Let us mention the essay "Poet of Passion, Doubt, Pain and Pride", published in the book *On Poetry and Poetics of Serbian Modern* (2008), as well as a comparative study of two poems of the same title, "Blue Tomb", by Milutin Bojić and Ivan V. Lalić, published in the Banja Luka proceedings *Science and our Social Reality* (2002). However, these texts are not repeated in this book, it is the result of the author's new research, insights and analyses.

In the first segment, "General Overview", Delić first examines the level of research of this poet and concludes that it is "both high and insufficient" at

the same time. Exceptional studies have certainly been written about Bojić, but it seems that many more questions are waiting to be answered, primarily those concerning the influence of Bojić's poetry on the development of the Serbian poetry. One of the motives for the creation of this book was Delić's need to re-examine and overcome the stereotypes that exist about Bojić's poetry in the history of literature, then to point out how at certain moments of his poetics this writer represents the herald of the avant-garde, and finally to expand and enrich the context of understanding of Bojić's poems, primarily the "Blue Tomb". An important question that is open at the beginning of the research is how Bojić's opus has been published so far because the degree of research of the work of a certain writer, as well as his status in the national history of literature, significantly depends on how his work has been presented. Jovan Delić rightly points out that Bojić's Collected Works, in four volumes, published in 1978, are quite unreliable and that some material, such as his correspondence, has not yet been published in its entirety and critically presented.

A detailed and inspired description of the poet's study, left by his brother Radivoje, is the occasion for Delić to discuss Milutin Bojić's interests in Byzantium, the Bible and French dramatic and lyrical literature. Probably none of our poets in their twenties had such a sophisticated view of history and even reached a kind of philosophy of history. He was especially interested in Byzantium and had a more nuanced attitude towards it than any Serbian poet of that time. Delić points out that it should not be forgotten that Milutin Bojić studied philosophy and that he knew the German language solidly. He even tried his hand with the fragmentary translation of Nietzsche, whose trace is evident in the author's poetry. Few Serbian poets have managed to universalize their vision of history in that way. According to such an experience of the past, as well as according to the combination of history with myth and legend, Bojić, although too young, reminds us, notes Delić, of Ivo Andrić.

An important topic of this book is the relationship between poetry and the Bible. Bojić used biblical motifs even in his early poems. In the beginning, he took biblical heroes as the themes of his poems, and whole passages from the Holy Scriptures as the motto of many of his poems. Later, that dialogue will be more discreet, more suggestive, and more artistically successful. Bojić's "poetry of passion" cannot be described without two poems with a biblical theme: "David in Love" and "Salome". Delić's interpretations show that over time, feelings of transience, melancholy, and, especially, doubts penetrate Bojić's poetry. As a poet of great longing for life he also had an authentic feeling of the fast passing of youth, perhaps a premonition of an end coming too quickly. It is possible that wars and numerous deaths that he witnessed with his eyes and soul of a sensitive twenty-year-old contributed to that.

Delić pays great attention to Bojić's attitude towards contemporary poets. His poetry tends to reach Rakić's perfection and the elegance of verse, stanza and rhyme. Delic's filigree interpretations prove that Rakić's "Kondir"

is in the subtext of Bojić's "Midnight Song". "Blue Tomb" is an anthological poem, but it is preceded by a great work by Vojislav Ilić on pseudohexameter, as well as Dučić's sonnet "Village" (1901), which is in the subtext of the "Blue Tomb". Analyzing Bojić's strophic repertoire, Delić concludes that Bojić's most common stanza is a quatrain, usually written in a symmetrical trochee duodenum, and much less often in an iambic hendecasyllable, fixed and connected by a correct rhyme. This poet made an undoubted contribution to the development of the quint, the hexameter quatrain, the tercet and the sonnet. The results of Delić's analyses of Bojić's repertoire of stanzas, verses and poetic forms show that this poet made a significant contribution to verse, stanza and poetic form among Serbs, despite his short life and early death. Furthermore, Delić opens the question of how much the verse of dramatic poetry, as well as the entire experience of Milutin Bojić as a playwright, influenced the verse of his lyrics, finding that this influence is greatest in poems directed at another, at someone else's voice, where the focus is on a lyrical hero, distant from the poetic subject, such as "David in Love", "Salome", "Magdalene" or "Judas' Weeping".

An important topic of this book is the relationship of Jovan Skerlić and Stanislav Vinaver towards Bojić. Skerlić recognized the gifted poet in Bojić and in a nuanced manner evaluated his Poems. In that sense, Skerlić's judgements lasted for a whole century. Vinaver's essay "Skerlić and Bojić" should be understood as a polemical attitude of an influential avant-garde author both towards the last and youngest important poet of Serbian modern and towards the leading Serbian critic and literary historian before the First World War. In Bojić's poetry, Jovan Bolić finds in Bojić's poetry much more in common with modern Serbian poetry of the twentieth century than Vinaver admitted. As a poet of passion, Bojić announces a powerful current in Serbian poetry that is in the sign of instinctive and erotic, from Rastko Petrović and Oskar Davičo to Branko V. Radičević and Branislav Petrović. Delić also pays attention to the author's "programme" or autopoetic poems, although they are unequal in value and do not belong to Bojić's best achievements.

Delić's analyzes prove Bojić's rhythmic and stylistic harmony with Vojislav Ilić, Milan Rakić and Jovan Dučić, as well as their thematic affinity with Rakić and Veljko Petrović in terms of patriotic poetry. Bojić is, without a doubt, a dominant Parnassus-symbolist. In patriotic poetry, he is at the top of this line of poetry, which, however, he surpasses many times with his "Blue Tomb". Interpreting Bojić's sonnets, Jovan Delić concludes that they are distinctly different from the rest of his love poetry: the tone is softer, closer, more intimate, the passions are quieter and stylized, especially corporeality. In them, this poet reaches perhaps the most subtle lyrical vibrations, and even anthropological discoveries when it comes to man's complex and contradictory emotions. These analyses show that with his sonnets, Milutin Bojić is not only a representative lyricist of Serbian modern but also that with this part of his

opus he hints at the arrival of the avant-garde, showing in some ideas and images closeness to Miloš Crnjanski and Rastko Petrović. To this context also belongs a poem written in the form of the sonnet, Bojić's "Hymn", a poem that can be seen on the line Dis—Bojić—Crnjanski. Finally, Delić pays attention to Bojić's verse dramas, proving that the poet's dramatic fourteener, lyrical decasyllable and alexandrine is a natural and understandable path of Bojić's poetic and literary development.

The third and the final part of the book is dedicated to the echoes of Bojić's best poem, "Blue Tomb", in modern Serbian poetry. In the "Blue Tomb", Bojić condensed the tragic and historical experience of the exiled people and their army and expanded the experience of the homeland to unprecedented proportions. According to that deep, complex and intense sense of history, as well as the feeling and understanding of Byzantium as a spiritual homeland, Milutin Bojić is very close to Ivan V. Lalić. That is why the connections between Bojić's and Lalić's "Blue Tomb" have been first meticulously analyzed. Delić sees that as a dialogue between two Serbian poets from the beginning and the end of the century, from two turning points in national and world history. Lalić "tailored" his poem according to Bojić's, it could even be said that Lalic's poem is a "rhythmic quote" of Bojić's. Both have fourteen stanzas each, of which four (the first, the sixth, the tenth and the fourteenth) are in the form of the pseudohexameter, and the other ten are written in symmetrical dodecasyllables alexandrines—in one of the favourite verses of modern literature in Serbia. Delić's analyses indicate that Bojić's alexandrines are more regular and that Lalić's "Blue Tomb" is at the same time a counter-poem to Bojić's true anthem and requiem. However, Lalić's poem is a requiem of history. Delić also dwells in detail on Lalić's essay on Bojić, which additionally sheds light on the relationship between the two great poems. A separate chapter is dedicated to the poem "Serbia" by Miloš Crnjanski and its relation to Bojić's verses. For Crnjanski, staying in Corfu is a double reflection in the waves of the sea-tomb. It is also facing not only history but one's own past, childhood, youth and war as well. It is also facing not only history but one's own past, childhood, youth and war as well. Delić points out that this is the time when the poet already started settling accounts and life results, so "Serbia" turns into a double lament—a lament over the poet and a lament over Serbia. "Serbia" is thus a bigger and more inconsolable lament than "Lament over Belgrade", because Belgrade in the final poem of Crnjanski shines as the embodiment of the highest values as opposed to nothingness. The lament over the Blue Tomb, over the sunken and unburied army, becomes a lament over Serbia, and over himself over his past, future and destiny.

Bojić's "Blue Tomb" is a cult song of Serbian poetry and poetic memory. Not only did it last for a whole century and was confirmed by its duration, but it provoked and evoked a whole range of Serbian poets of different generations and sensibilities. Among them are some of the greatest (Miloš Crnjanski, Ivan

V. Lalić, Milosav Tešić) who started writing about the First World War and the great national suffering thanking to Bojić's poem. The victims at Vido and in the Blue Tomb are undoubtedly part of the Serbian tragic destiny, but their martyrdom and suffering are not meaningless-neither historically, nor metaphysically, nor theologically. Those victims, as Jovan Delić inspirationally says

> they radiate from God's ark and preserve our connection with history, and with the Heavenly Messages. Meaning does not have to be sought or found only in historical optimism or political accounting. And tragedy can have, and has, its own deep and deeply binding everlasting meaning.

Delić's interpretations are valuable, which show that Milutin Bojić is a great anticipator of what will come in Serbian poetry only after the poet's untimely end. This unequivocally speaks of the value of his poetry and its "productivity" as well as being future-oriented. According to the poetry of passion, dynamization of space and strong energy, he announced the lyricism of Rastko Petrović and Oskar Davičo. According to the thematization of history, according to the attitude towards the Bible, especially according to the discreet introduction of biblical myths into the subtext of his later poetry, according to the attitude towards Byzantium and the combination of poem and prayer, Bojić is the great predecessor of Ivan V. Lalić as well as Milosav Tešić. With the poem "Lakes", he made an exceptional contribution to our love lyricism, and two "Autumn Walks", with a feeling of loneliness and an intense experience of nature and a minor melancholic tone, anticipate the poetry of Stevan Raičković. With his patriotic poetry, that is, with his war poems, Bojić reached timeless artistic values, "as long as the words of the homeland and the nation make sense," Delić points out.

Jovan Delić's scientific monograph convincingly proves that even after a hundred years, Milutin Bojić is a "living poet" whose poetic throbs pulsate in the more recent Serbian poetry, still obsessed with the tragic and magnificent quake of the centuries.

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Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

THE BRILLIANCE OF NJEGOŠ'S POETRY

Milo Lompar, *Njegoš—Biography of His Poetry*, "Orthodox Word", Novi Sad, 2019

We will all easily agree: Njegoš is a great Serbian poet of the Montenegrin space, and of all-Serbian spirit. Already during his life, Njegoš reached the greatness and splendour of the recognition of the national poet; the fate that several other important Serbian poets eluded in the people's unanimity during the 19th and 20th centuries. Unlike them, Njegoš's poetic fame grew equally during his life and posthumously, and even more so posthumously. The glory of Njegoš's verse grew in public speeches, in morals, it rose in the temptations of war, it flourished in the waters of peace, it bore fruit for life and has always been the root of the Serbian national spirit. One is Njegoš: was and still is. Unrepeatable: lyricist and metaphysician in alternating measure. About everything here, according to the cultural experience, the most complete to this day—in the elite top edition of the house "Orthodox Word"—Professor Milo Lompar's latest monographic study testifies with a layered and inspired analysis, renewing the path through the metaphysical opacity, gloom and splendour of Njegoš's lyrics, epics and God-seeking metaphysics.

Thanks to Lompar's very multicentric approach and the analysis of cross directions through the greatness and significance of Njegoš's—lyrically inspired, metaphysical, epic and tragic—feeling of the world, we got a unique opportunity to see not only the splendour of poetic profile but also Njegoš's overall poetic and spiritual horizon. This is all the more significant because Professor Milo Lompar's study—complemented in relation to the first edition (SKZ, 2007)—now appears at a time when—after all (still silent) communist harmfulnesses that in the form of pogroms in the civil war and after 1945 arrived *not only* in Montenegro through ideologically murderous actions [countless dogs cemeteries / fatal "left turns" (Kolašin grove, karst pits: in the village of Griže near Berane and Šavnička, Kotorska, pit near Rijeka Crnojevića, Šahotička jama...) for what were and remained responsible: Milovan Đilas, Blažo Jovanović, Vladan Mićić, Petar Drapšin...], and a culturally destructive ideological "replacement"—with an ignorant colonial idea: Meštrović's "Mausoleum to Njegoš" *instead* of the demolished Njegoš's chapel in Lovćen, 1971—pursuing a futile policy (CPY) and now through new (DPS) ideological manipulation: unreasonable denial of Njegoš, both the Serbian language and all the Serbianhood, and *today*, *even of* the Orthodox faith, in the attempt of "state" grabbing centuries-old Orthodox monasteries and ancient sanctuaries throughout Montenegro,

Lompar's initial exposition on the notion of *absolute poetry* signifies a high theoretical position in a very demanding interpretation of the poetics of the universal, not only when—here so sovereignly proven—"only" we talk

about Negoš: “absolute poetry arises from poetic experience originating in linguistic invention and in the awareness of tradition, but it is somewhere behind them where “when the contents fade away... as their rhythms disappear... the mysterious effect of the poetic experience remains” whose traces “break through the veil of accumulated misunderstanding, appealing to the reader” and moving his spirit, and as such “penetration into the reading experience is a moment of absolute poetry.”

Lompar’s—alternately focal and comparative—analysis (Njegoš—Sterija) on the greatness of “two poles of Serbian poetic experience” follows, which is not only epochally revealing in realizing the division of directions and significance of antipodal poetics, but is very exciting, both psychologically and cognitively; because, while “Njegoš understood the soul as an imperishable individual substance”, while Sterija’s—for many reasons—disappointedly rational, high scepticism brings us “another way to achieve poetic universality” which strongly aspires to the already proven directions of “non-pathetic modern poetry”. Therefore, Professor Lompar concludes that “if Njegoš’s long verse is correlated with Sterija’s, then it means that Njegoš poetically authentically moved through the areas wider than those belonging to the folk and epic tradition”, which goes beyond Andrić’s ideas about Njegoš, and later Hristić’s, muted doubts. The analogy and differences in the thought and poetic tones and relations of Sterija—Njegoš, Lompar will successfully present—to this day unique and perfect—parallel analyses of several poems, starting with Sterija’s Man and Njegoš’s poem Thought, which “also obliges the man/ that the light fades into the abyss of miracles” which speaks “about the similarity of the poem Thought and the ‘The Ray of the Microcosm’” and with Sterija that will be an ability of a man that “seeks the sky with a spark of sharp-witted mind ‘because’ human thought is a correlate of the immortality of the human soul”. So, parallelism is “in related poetic topos”. Lompar concludes excellently that “Sterija’s self is proclaimed from the end of human destiny, which is eternally repeated; while Njegoš’s self travels through poetic experience: the image of that journey is the inner image of thought which is an existential action”, so “that thought is an event of existence, as a sudden self-movement of freedom in man, and not just a melancholic trace of experience”. At the same time, Lompar points out the important correlates of the anthropological axis: “thought is either a witness to immortality or the thought of death” and “in that antinomy thought remains the guarantor of man’s uniqueness”, so “in Njegoš’s poem [...] thought is related to what is called God”. And while Sterija’s melancholy and resignation—although “open to modern experience”—are without hope, Njegoš’s metaphysics “in fear and trembling facing the time, appeals to hope”. Lompar’s comparative analysis of the two poles of the Serbian poetry (Sterija—Njegoš) continues through a layered interpretation of the correlation of several of their poems (Sterija’s *Remembrance of Vidovdan* and Njegoš’s *The Sword of the Immortal Leader*, Njegoš’s *Departure of Pompey* and Sterija’s *Remem-*

brance of the Journey through the Lower Areas of the Danube or his *To the Death of one who has Lost his Mind* and Njegoš's *Funeral to the Dust of S. Milutinović*) all the way to the question: what are the differences between Sterija and Njegoš in the accents at the end of their poems? While Sterija's "imply a final aphoristic or conclusive judgment", Njegoš "has a weak effect of ending: it is the effect of *infinity*, fluidity and openness of poetic expectation and experience", which indicates a "connection with romanticism", which, Lompar believes, is an advantage shown in the ending (59–64) in the poem *The Night more Precious than Living*: by grouping poetic images around the axis of the events: "Their mouths joined in a kiss—all night long!" Lompar puts this example on the scales of the conclusion: "As Sterija's poetry authentically manifests resignation in response to pessimism, so Njegoš's poetry is not authentically exhausted in the field of resignation", whereby the author points out the essence of the difference between the tragic (Njegoš) and the pessimistic poet (Sterija). Nevertheless, both Sterija's and Njegoš's poetry remains close to pessimism "as a state of mind and as a philosophical orientation, a reflection on historical experience" in the understanding of time. Such a multifaceted poetic comparison of Njegoš—Sterija, experientially and cognitively, has been very deeply researched—and hence all metaphysical driving excitement boils, grows—not only through the individual segments of this polyvalent monograph—but directly radiates to readers from the Lompar's *entire* study of Njegoš.

The leading culmination of Lompar's accomplishment is reflected in the interpretation of the meaning and significance of Njegoš's poem Night more Precious than Living, which anthologically "escaped" even to the very experienced Miodrag Pavlović (1964) as misunderstood metaphysical, but to me as well (2016) as essentially erotic because it bears the trace of truth that "the path to happiness leads through the body [...] and from happiness to immortality". Lompar reveals that although "the vertical movement of poetic motifs in that poem is not necessarily harmonious", it has "three types of horizontal motivations—sexual, realistic, and sublime." The spirit of that poem bears "an experience derived from the night itself", because "it occurs in a night that is more valuable than time", so being immeasurable "belongs to the erotic-mystical experience", which is dramatically indicated by the tension of diction to the "deeply ambiguous poetic contemplation of mystical experience and tragic rhythm" which in the poem simultaneously celebrates divinity and illuminates the abyss not only of sexual beauty in itself but also of "fear of abundance, of divinity." And that is why "the mystical collusion of paradise and the abyss within hope represents the foundation of human expectations" in the poem *Night more Precious than Living*, which—Lompar successfully explains why—points to Kostić's *Santa Maria della Salute* and proves—through poetic contacts with the *Song of Songs*—how and why in the entire Serbian poetry, these "two very different and very similar poems"

announce *hieros gamos*: "an idyllic scene as the background of a *sacred union*" in a metaphysical and equally erotic sense. In the tint of the erotic, the "mystical and spiritual tonality of the *Night more Precious than Living*" responds "in the layers of the Christian experience." Revealing such a complex intertwining of the inner directions of Njegoš's *Night more Precious than Living*, Lompar sheds light on something wider: how much and "in what way the sexual union is the experience of unity in the body" and how crucial it is for (our) "consciousness of sexual and sacred union" through the ecstasy that constantly sparks and "It stems from the constant search for receptive matter in which life should be awakened." And how much ecstasy implies an idyll "in the flourishing and repetition of beings" and how much "an idyllic experience is a privileged spiritual area", Lompar revealed in Njegoš's poem *Summer Bathing on Perčanj*, which is "a very special poetic shaping of an idyllic motif", in which all "suggestion of the principle of sufficiency and respect for measure in all things", which is achieved only by the poet who is predestined: Njegoš.

In the analysis of each of Njegoš's poems and longer [epic] forms—where this dimension is more pronounced—Lompar showed, in detail, what the types of "crossroads of lyrical reflection and epic culture" are; he realised many paths and traces of Njegoš's "stylistic network characterized by the tense and antagonistic permeation of stylistic characteristics" of his poetic diction.

Opening the analysis of Njegoš's *False Emperor Šćepan Mali* as an impostor *without a clear identity*, the writer of this study astonishingly illuminates the "forces that invoke him" as a "hyalistic idea into which man's dream of happiness and bliss is embedded", which is like a historical background: treachery. Wondering "where this *False Emperor Šćepan Mali* came from", the interpreter—through Njegoš's testamentary historical imagination—warns us, by the way, and in fact irresistibly, of the imposter J. B. T., whose "signposts and deceptions and false traces"—as well as in the character of the *False Emperor*—indicate the *hiding* of an identity that "does not originate from tradition" because he "changed his own name a dozen times". At the same time, interpreting the very enigmatic (Njegoš's), on the cover of the book written inscription "from Yugoslavia" (on the manuscript about the *False Emperor*), Lompar particularly points out that this is a unique work that "meets more what the poet's present inherits than what comes from the past". In both active directions—Lompar reveals to us—the great poet "in what is a poetic manuscript" opened a "well of memory" in order to "put it into action" of the future! Thus, Njegoš's experience—like Schiller's and Pushkin's—about the old "share of the historical background" unexpectedly indicates the horror of experience in the new. Hence the "unusual duality of perspective" which is confirmed "in the poet's spirit—critical realizations of a dangerous and irresponsible charlatan: the mystery became a compliant treachery, so the imposter became the fruit of this mingling": the phenomenon is true only in a lie! What Lompar reveals is that "the parody in Šćepan is originally

spooky", therefore "distinctly differs from the epic tradition in which it is situated". The spookiness of the appealing truth about the buffoon is wicked "because neither idiots nor fools gather the forces of the spookiness." Hence the buffoon impresses, first of all fools, "he is the initiator of external and visible action" even though "he is not from the heroic metaphysics!" The relocation of the personal magic of the imposter is done "in favour of the magical fascination of the people, which turns into a ghostly fantasy that rules the masses." With such a mechanism, "the effects of the government (false emperor) are moved close to the area of mysterious, incomprehensible... and it becomes inexplicable how Šćepan rules, so we [inevitably] wonder about the buffoon's magic", which raises the question: what is the essence of Njegoš's *False Emperor* ? Lompar's analysis shows and warns—as much poetically as historically—to the universal: the Jungian archetype of the imposter always hides a deceiver, a charlatan who is a symbol of all the forces of "pure nothingness". Therefore, the essence is to "recognize Njegoš's testamentary work as a parable about the demonism of a buffoon". And a step further, the author sheds light on the moment when the abbot's consciousness (as a Fool) and the false emperor Šćepan "suddenly become close as an ironist and a liar, because they both speak differently from what they [really] think". This unusually dense dynamics of showing and establishing multiple intertwined semantic parallels in Lompar's analysis is astonishing: the light (of the intuition and reason) is not lost for a moment, with which the author fascinatingly illuminates the multiplicity of origin, appearance, place and role of Njegoš's *False Emperor* which destroys the heroic community as a real and "metaphysical ghost"; and, unfortunately, "ghosts have the unpleasant property of not dying", which is why they "survive, there among us, getting by and roaring in history, rolling in time, so many fools: indomitable, violent, hypocritical...".

In the poetic horizon of the *Ray of the Microcosm*, Lompar perfectly illuminates all of Njegoš's thoughtful and poetic layers in which "the soul is the connection between pre-existence and post-existence", showing how much in it [the soul] is "the power of memory that exceeds the ability of the mind", which in correlation with cosmology. Theology and Gnosticism—is not the only one, but it is crucial in this study of the visionary poetic ascend when through the borderline self "the notion of the self merges with the image of the heavenly struggle": it is known with whom. The spiritual density of the poem is better understood by "the discovery of Christ in the soul, which represents the discovery of immortality" because "the movement of the soul towards Christ... reveals its own divinity", whereby "the soul calls existence into goodness [...] which does not belong to anyone, for then it would be accessible to evil as well, which is not even cosmically possible. New and particularly interesting is Lompar's discovery of how exciting and comparatively "the aspect of question about God" is "thematized by the *Ray of the Microcosm* and the *Night more Precious than Living*", which earlier researchers

missed: they did not notice the importance of the "mystical God in the inner experience of the self", as in *The Mountain Wreath* and the *False Emperor Šćepan Mali*, "the relationship between the God of the self and the God of history" is important. Coming to the poetological-theological differences—Milton–Njegoš—the author sees some advantages of the *Ray of the Microcosm* compared to the *Lost Paradise*, "because [*the Ray*] marks the shift of self-freedom to freedom-for-goodness or freedom for Christ": a higher order in which the soul and its destiny are measured. And the whole chapter "Christ" (328–340) with a great density of interweaving of meanings tells us, spiritually equally, just as much as the unforgettable canvas: Ivan Kramskoy—*Christ in the Desert* (331).

Finally, the author's emphasis is "that [Njegoš's] poetic existence, as a totality of experience in which man, work and time are reflected, shapes the classical poet", just like Dante, Shakespeare or Cervantes. Lompar comprehensively shows that in Njegoš's poetic sensibility and his thinking echoes the entire European cultural horizon in which Njegoš, in fact, was, and now—thanks to Milo Lompar, became more fully perceived as a European poet among his great European contemporaries (Blake, Schiller, Goethe, Byron, Pushkin, Wordsworth), which undoubtedly means that such "Njegoš resonates in modern experience"!

With the highest personal argumentation about Njegoš, Sterija, Sima Milutinović and Laza Kostić, Professor Lompar did not overlook the most accomplished attitudes towards Serbian theory and criticism (Isidora Sekulić, B. Petronijević, Crnjanski, Anica Savić Rebac, M. Pavlović, J. Hristić, M. Flašar , M. Selimović, D. Živković, J. Deretić, N. Milošević, D. Stojanović, S. Radojčić, D. Babić and Slavist A. Schmaus). The same principle was applied by the author to the role and place of foreign sources in the original or translation (E. Rode, Abrams, W. Johnston, V. Empson, A. Versluis, RH Mounce, WR Inge, H. Jonas, R. Martin, JF Dienstag, Gadamer, Zafranski, E. Weeks, BH Smith, Bahofen, E. Bloomberg, as well as the classics: Plato, Lucretius, Pliny the Younger, Plotinus, Eckhart, Pascal, Milton, Silesius, Schiller, Goethe, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Berdjaev, Croce, Unamuno, Baslar J. Heidenreich, and more recently: Jaspers, Auerbach, Heidegger, Hannah Arendt, Wittgenstein, Emil Steiger, L. Morris, Steiner. P. Sloterdijk ...), which clearly shows that Lompar's research horizon is not set in the ego direction, nor it is reduced, nor partial, but—and on this occasion, he proved how and to what extent—he is creatively inclusive, spiritually comprehensive. The very well-chosen artistic contributions of Lompar's monograph contain everything that had and could have influenced (or later referred to) Njegoš's poetics; there are: well-known and lesser-known portraits of Njegoš signed by: Tominc, Biazoleto, Johan Bes, Pirnchofer; then the works of art of various eras (Rublev, Dürer, Raphael, Correggio, Tintoretto, Rothmeyer, Claude Lauren, Hamilton, Tishbain, Cunego, Louis David, Canova, Kugelgen, Leibold, Becker, Phillips,

James Barry, Brulio, Sanquirico, Blake, Stiller, Kaspar David, Clint, Haydon, Bugro, Dora, Kramska, Kipreski, Zizilenko, Ajvazovski, Polenov, Makovski) and our painters (Uroš Knežević, Katarina Ivanović, Đura Jakšić, Predić, Paja Jovanović, Pero Poček, Lubarda). Professor Lompar's opinion is consistent with Isidora Sekulić's that Njegoš is "a whole world in his spirit", that "he encircled by himself as much as the poetic power of the entire Serbian people gave". If Isidora Sekulić's book *To Njegoš, a Book of Deep Devotion* is the work of the greatest spiritual affection and spiritual intimacy with him, a man and a poet, then the study of Njegoš by Milo Lompar is the work of, till today, the most far-reaching poetic insight, recognition and incomparable scientific argumentation: concept, and a model for any future attempt to determine how and why the great national poet is also European. Sometimes, at least in the cultural diagonals of one's own modernity, or, perhaps, more than that?

With his extensive study *Njegoš—Biography of his Poetry*, professor of the University of Belgrade Milo Lompar—in the already proven European quality of top art and graphic equipment editions of the house "Orthodox Word"—exhaustively and tirelessly methodically, and amazingly inspiringly—showed and proved how and to what extent the genius of Njegoš's poetic talent—in all its diversity within the Serbian tradition towards the Hellenic and Christian ones—is at the same time a classical and leading Serbian poet in its European foundation. From one chapter to another, an analytical range of miraculous persuasiveness was realized—the perceptibility of all the far-reaching poetic peaks of timeless action is illuminated—through the epochal poetic experience of all time: Njegoš as an epic writer, and Njegoš as a metaphysical lyricist, has been drawn closer to readers from every side, without a shred of omission and without limitation in the perspectives of understanding.

Raising our public and cultural awareness of the significance and greatness of the lyric poetry, epic poetry and metaphysics of Njegoš's poetry, Professor Milo Lompar—in today's particularly difficult times—made an epoch effort to support and elevate our awareness of the unity of the two Serbian people in a homogeneous spiritual a root whose denial—from whichever side it came from—is not sustainable, because it is not possible.

Mirko MAGARAŠEVIĆ

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

SPIRIT, EXPERIENCES AND VALUES OF SERBIAN CULTURE OF THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES

Petar Pijanović, *Serbian Culture in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, Matica srpska, Novi Sad, 2020

A new book by the erudite and esteemed researcher of the Serbian culture, Professor Petar Pijanović, PhD (Nebriževac near Imotski, 1949), published by the Matica srpska and entitled *Serbian Culture in the 18th and 19th centuries*, presents with great success the completed, and so far missing part of the author's years and years of dedicated work on a multi-volume whole on the cultural history of the Serbs. For this book, at this year's Book Fair in Novi Sad, which was held in pandemic conditions in virtual form, the Matica srpska as the publisher, and Petar Pijanović as the author, was awarded by the Publishing Endeavour of the Year Award, which, from the highest place, confirmed its significance and the position which, right after its appearance, it rightly occupied? After the books *Serbian Cultural Circle 1900-1918* (Institute for Literature and Art, Belgrade, 2012), *Serbian Culture 1900-1950* (Official Gazette, Belgrade, 2014) and *Angels and Warriors*, *Old Serbian Culture* (Institute for Textbooks, Belgrade, 2018), which thematically represent the old Serbian culture, from its beginnings to the first decades of the 18th century, i.e., the first half of the turbulent 20th century, Pijanović added to his research oeuvre a study of our people and society of the 18th and the 19th centuries, forming at the same time a lexicon and a textbook of the Serbian culture, based on the highest scientific standards, and intended for everyone who, professionally or amateurishly, deals with and is interested in the past of our nation. Thoroughly and clearly, systematically next to concatenating by repeating the biggest thoughts and conclusions, through five separate thematic units of this book, its author takes us through space and time, bygone age and their protagonists. Proud of the most prominent representatives of our nation and culture, discovering the importance in the hitherto neglected aspects of their work, Pijanović writes an extensive cultural and folk history, in which there is room for Bryson's interesting history of private life, from which we learn not only facts and figures but also the core of people's existence and survival at the turn of the centuries and the border of opposing empires. Going through the chapters of this work, we pass through the social history from the Middle Ages to the New Age, exploring the culture over time. We look at the 18th and 19th centuries through cultural maps, and through the history of everyday life, paying equal attention to the public and the private aspects of life. Pijanović evokes the types of culture through elaborations on languages and scripts, literature and theatre, music and art culture, architecture and construction, but also the new genres and media. Through the culture of public speech, we revise the material about newspapers and magazines, i.e., books and readers, in order to reach

the church and spiritual life through a detailed chronological overview of the development of education and science, i.e., new thinkers and early measurers of our philosophical and aesthetic thought. Having got acquainted with all the above, we establish patterns of culture and visit cultural institutions, so that all the presented knowledge about the two great epochs, their culture and styles can be understood by seeing them positioned next to each other, and deciphering the significance of both culture in history and history in culture. Having searched in detail all relevant material and available sources—there are 177 mentioned works in the Selected Literature alone—the author of this book, with an appropriate approach and a readable style, leads us through the gallery of events and characters—as many as 884 different personalities are mentioned in the book—who, testifying about the past, leave us clear signposts of old times, but also links for the new research.

Although he writes about the revolutionary era, i.e., the period from the end of the 17th, and the entire 18th and 19th centuries, which brought which brought the Serbs "a lot of trouble and history, but in the end the state as well", Petar Pijanović contributes to breaking the stereotypes about the Serbs as a nation that cannot accomplish anything without the rebellion, epics and the *gusle* (*traditional single-stringed musical instrument*). Writing about our migrations and wanderings, about the Danube vertical and cultural topography on the north-south vertical, from the Pannonian areas of Central Europe all the way to the Adriatic, the author evokes the spiritual foundations for creating a great culture, and explains how the Serbs were much more and longer subjects, and only by necessity a rebellious people, and that, through several centuries and until the Serbian Revolution, "they suffered their fate much more often than they could have influenced it and changed it by rebellion". It was not until the 19th century, "that in order to reach the developed world, Serbs had to move faster than history through that century."

Also, vividly depicting the Serbs with one foot in the East, in the Ottoman Empire, and the other in the West and in the Habsburg Empire, Pijanović presents our identity and cultural imbalance, due to which, among the still nationally conscious Serbs in Central Europe, Baroque and Enlightenment appear during the 18th century, and pre-romanticism and romanticism, along with the Realism that appears later, lasted throughout the 19th century". Respecting "different civilizational radiations", Pijanović convincingly proves that the seemingly fateful question of whether the Serbs belong to the East or the West is an artificial dilemma because surviving for more than a millennium on both sides, "with their statehouse built at the crossroads of the civilizations, the Serbs are the border and the junction of both worlds".

Writing about the history of the private and public life of the Serbs, through descriptions of housing, clothing, decoration, celebrations and funerals, the author describes Serbian public persons, individuals and families in all climates that we then inhabited highlighting and with excellently selected

examples clearly showing all the best and the worst in our society at the time. From the major topics and descriptions of the planned and centuries-old obstruction of ours, and the imposition of someone else's identity, through the importance of the church for spiritual life, Pijanović also comes to the tavern, inserting in his work and our culture the Russian proverb that is so close to us, "The church is close, but the road is frozen. The tavern is far away, but we will walk carefully". Occupying the third place in the life of a Serbian man—the first is the family, the second is the field, i.e., the post—the tavern is best portrayed as a special socio-cultural phenomenon, an unofficial school of thinking, "almost a people's university without studies, schools and exams".

However, our literature has a privileged status in the history of the Serbian culture, as "a lot less the history of events and phenomena, and much more the history and truth of the creative spirit of an epoch." We get acquainted with literary creators at its source, in oral literature as a form of culture, but also in the Diaspora, through cultural and literary enclaves on the outskirts of the Serbian culture. The developmental arc of our new literature and the "rose of poetic and linguistic winds at the crossroads of the epochs", in this work Pijanović vaults and locates over the centuries he describes, emphasizing the foundations and limits of our new literature, as well as its beginnings in Baroque, Classicism and Pre-Romanticism, that is, the mature age in Romanticism and Realism, and the announcement of the Symbolism, on the threshold of Modernity. Listed and described, recontextualized and re-actualized authors and their works, represent a book in a book and certainly a valuable history of Serbian literature, and remain in this part a central theme and lasting contribution, which students of Serbian literature can use as a textbook full of relevant data, as well as valuable conclusions and guidelines for further research of our literary history.

Like literature, chapters on the other art forms rounded wholes that bring detailed explanations of the evolutionary paths, values and achievements of Serbian culture. Adding to them wholes about education and science, with a historical overview of the origin and development of the umbrella of academic institutions in our nation, from *Prečanski* (*Prečani is the name used at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century for Serbs who lived across the Drina, Sava and Danube)* Latin Schools and Grammar Schools, Tekelianum and the Matica srpska, to the institutions in the resurrected Serbian state, such as the Great School, Lyceum, Society of Serbian Letters, Serbian Learned Society and the Serbian Royal Academy, the inventory of a brilliant past has been completed. According to the dimensions of their own achievements and the scope of personal competencies, Serbian culture was ruled at that time by great men whose personalities had significance equal to the mentioned institutions. From the church rulers, through Zaharija Orfelin, Dositej Obradović, Vuk Karadžić, Petar II Petrović Njegoš, Prota (Archpriest) Mateja Nenadović, Dimitrije Davidović, Dimitrije Isailović, Vladimir and Slobodan

Jovanović, Uroš Predić, Paja Jovanović, Simo Lozanić, Vladan Đorđević, Čedomil Mijato Milovanović, Jovan Skerlić, Jovan Cvijić and many others, the author of this book through individual contributions to Serbian culture tells the story of a nation that, in a certain period of time, had the privilege of being honoured by the outstanding great men, who would be and remain strongholds of any culture and the greatest pride.

From the physical transition of a more vital part of the Serbian people to Central Europe, completely different from the despotic and oriental culture imposed from the outside happening under the Turks, through a skillfully led story, a long way to the Serbian revival, encouraged by the actions of young Serbs educated in the West has been presented. From the paradox that our people and culture were brought to Europe by the actions of the defrocked monk Dositej, illiterate Karađorđe, semi-literate Miloš and self-taught Vuk, who simultaneously, as Arnold Toynbee observed, introduced Western civilization into the Balkan world and built a modern Serbian state, we came to the point that our state was then built according to the most modern world patterns and because of that it served as an example and guide not only to the surrounding enslaved Slavic nations but also to the more developed countries of the world. Impulses coming from the Kiev Theological Academy to the Karlovci Metropolitanate, the help of the rich Serbs from Trieste, academic circles in Vienna and Pest, national consciousness was preserved through migrations and wars, and built from the Kosovo vow were the foundation of culture that was gradually developed in the last quarter of the 19th century giving its greatest works and great men. Our Parisians and Germans, supported by the developed educational system and the established cultural pattern, in the independent Serbian state enabled our, albeit belated, still welcomed and desired cultural renaissance, enabling us to "meet the modern with less imitation and more original achievements" culture and catch up with Europe that was not caused by our internal, but external and multi-imposed factors. Having managed, with difficulty and in spite of everything, to fight for the independence in their work and activities, Serbian creators from various parts of our country bequeathed us a legacy of pride, which is detected and analyzed by Petar Pijanović in his work, sometimes rightly being sincerely and unhiddenly happy to belong to the descendants of such spiritual giants.

The book *Serbian Culture in the 18th and 19th Centuries* brought us, with its content and elaboration, a synthesis through a prismatic, colourful and dazzling image of the spirit, experiences and values, different achievements and styles, which form the core of the Serbian culture in the 18th and 19th centuries. Revaluing and putting the whole series of facts into a new context, its author explained convincingly and compellingly how we received "a new civilizational experience without suppressing old-time values". Periodically and problematically encompassing our culture in continuity from the earliest traces to the middle of the last century, Petar Pijanović completed a grandiose

work with great success with this book and, in four volumes and over two thousand pages of text, united and preserved for the future elaborated in detail the testimonies of our origin and survival at the crossroads through the whirlwinds of centuries.

Srđan ORSIĆ

Translated from Serbian by
Ljubica Jankov

SOMEONE MUST HAVE SLANDERED SERBIAN L.

Boris Bulatović, *Slandered Literature*, Scientific Association for the Development of the Serbian Studies, Novi Sad 2017

Probably no literature in the entire history of recent times has suffered a similar fate as Serbian literature. From epic poetry, which Vuk Karadžić paved the way to the greatest representatives of European romanticism, among which it was enthusiastically received, through the highest recognition for the literary work of Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić, to the planetary fame of Milorad Pavić's novel, are only the most striking points of its far richer foreign reception, Serbian literature has been brought to trial with an unprecedented accusation of the initial incitement to the disaster that befell the former Yugoslavia at the time of its disintegration. The list of literature written with such prejudice in different languages today covers an entire library, and what all these texts have in common is an eminently ideological interpretation, which bypasses all possible aesthetic problems of the work I speak about, or simply *a priori* declassifies them as perfidious mimicry of their authors' true intentions. Such a concept, based on fundamental neglect for the basic theoretical assumptions of the interpretation of a literary-artistic text, whose deepest essence, in the case of the first-class literature, is simply incompatible with any kind of negative, even positive "propaganda", and which favours the "image of the other" in the interpretive horizon and tendentiously "detects" and describes it as "hatred" manifested and encouraged in continuity for almost several centuries. It is not, therefore, a matter of literary criticism, but of an ideologically unified judgment of one literature, which counts on its metonymic representativeness for the entire associated culture, understood in these texts as a kind of anti-civilization phenomenon.

To acknowledge the artistic value of a certain work, and deny its ethical dignity, is a paradox that signals a fundamental misunderstanding of the true nature of the subject of its examination. All assumptions based on these premises disqualify themselves in advance: if, in an imaginary gesture of consistency, the methodological focus shifts to the work from the same value register written in another language, would a knowledgeable diagnosis of "malignancy" attributed to Serbian folk epics or Andrić's novels have the courage to claim that, say, Homer hated the Trojans and Tolstoy the French? It would be the most painless to leave such questions without reference to the theorists lost in the problems of literature and its meanings in the artistic system, even in practical life, if in many cases it was not a matter of consciously and persistently compromising the highest reach of national culture to create a tendentious ideological construct about some of its inherent and endemic evil. What, then, is the ultimate meaning of such analysis: to present Serbian literature as the core of the emanation of negative impulses that spread

in concentric circles to culture, politics and other aspects of the activities of the community to which that literature belongs. Thus, in a simple albeit intelligently produced play, generations of writers are portrayed as gifted artists by chance, who, guided by inhumane reasons, write "poisonous" books for the readers of the same psychological motifs. What would a typical representative of this, it should be noted, paradoxically cultural community look like? He would be a bloodthirsty erudite, who would remain an exemplary citizen only if, by any chance, he was not so much in love with fine literature. The most obvious thing, characteristic of the nature of the psychological mechanism of projection, easily escapes one's attention: don't we deal here with, speaking in the vocabulary of fashionably exploited theory in the discourse we are talking about, the tendencies towards absolutely negative imagological *hetero-images* of a nation? Isn't it a stereotype according to which almost every literate Serb is a wise hidalgo, and the literature written in Serbian is a chivalrous novel in sequels, so the historical destiny of the whole community, driven by the unhealthy obsessions, is a quixotic (auto) destructive path between kitsch and madness? Who is ready to see any other national culture in that way, without at least encountering the suspicion of the civilized world, which still knows something about literature? This kind of pseudo-literary criticism takes on escalating ambitions, engaging more and more incredible forms, encouraging resistance the most, obtaining ever-widening resonance.

Boris Bulatović's study *Slandered Literature* is dedicated to this type of discourse, which is precisely named and timed in its subtitle: "Ideological Aspects in a Critical Perception of Serbian Literature and Culture at the End of the 20th and the Beginning of the 21st Century". In the introductory chapter "Basic Features and Ideological Assumptions of the Political Evaluation of Serbian Literature from the End of the 20th Century", the author pointed out the central characteristic of critical endeavours that are the subject of his examination, embodied in the fact that "this critique—in most examples—is not about reprimanding for the very presence of the ideological component in the Serbian literature, rather than criticizing a specific, certain ideological or political attitude" (15). Such a critique, therefore, does not assess the ideological aspect of certain canonical works of Serbian literature, which would be a legitimate subject of critique of an artistic text, if it is burdened with any ideological aspect for non-artistic purposes, but their politicalness as it interpretively wishes to present itself. Postcolonial studies, whose various misconceptions in our theoretical thought have already been pointed out by professors Darko Tanasković and Zoran Milutinović, are still inadequately applied in the texts that Bulatović's study considers, are highlighted in their simulator edition. An outstandingly, even radically negative image of the Serbian culture, for which the bearers of the indicated discourse apply independently, is hidden behind defensiveness simulated by superficially adopted terminology from the postcolonial repertoire: orientalism, imperial and colonial aspirations,

stereotypes about otherness and the like. The attempt to reduce the entire century of literary creation in a certain language to a few phrases of a rather abused and compromised theoretical concept has necessarily led to a reductionism fatal to any opinion with humanistic ambitions. "Serbian Literature in Ideological Criticism from the End of the 20th and the Beginning of the 21st century", as the author concludes his introductory considerations, "stands, therefore, exclusively as political literature, binary stratified according to the measure of political and ideological suitability" (25) and that eligibility is without exception arbitrated from these or those ideological positions depending on the globally current ideological disposition.

Such an approach is clearly seen in the main subject of such observations—literary work of the most important Serbian writer of the twentieth century. Ivo Andrić's prose, which is becoming more and more well-known outside the guild circles, has been disputed for almost sixty years as an Islamophobic projection of Bosnia, obscured by the writer's literary imagination. The most comprehensive review of such efforts so far, their unsustainability and ultimately jocularity—especially initial ideas that any potential antagonism of the great artist may precede his deepest creative need—was made in the book *Battle for the Past* by Zoran Milutinović. The first chapter of Bulatović's study, published a few months before Milutinović's book, entitled "Andrić's Literary Work as an Expression of the Writer's 'Anti-Muslim Tendency' and 'Great Serbian Ideology'" is indispensable for understanding the appointed problem, especially because it provides competent metacritical insight into several texts remained on the margins or out of Milutinović's attention. This expanded the insight into the birth of the anti-Andrić mood during the early sixties, with the subsequently discovered text of Mustafa Mulalić "Nobel laureate Ivo Andrić and his Awarded Work the Bridge on the Drina". Mulalić's remarks on the "external literary embellishment" with which Andrić impressed the "gullible and naive Nobel Foundation" (60) illustrate the level of literary theory and the measure of intellectual dignity in the arrogant appropriation of the right to discuss delicate issues of literary evaluation. They are characteristic for the development of that type of opinion among all its representatives, from Šukrija Kurtović, Adil Zulfikarpašić, Muhamed Filipović, Muhsin Rizvić, Rusmir Mahmutćehajić and their less prominent companions. Bulatović notices very well the cardinal contradictions in the opinion of the mentioned authors and extracts those elements of their explications which by themselves testify to the literary-theoretical unfoundedness of a purely ideological critique. Perhaps the best example is the separate observation of one of the mentioned thinkers that Andrić is "according to his demonic descriptions... Marquis de Sade of Yugoslav literature" (36), which in the defence of those literary characters in whose name the creator of this original idea stood before Andrić's evil intent, would be, in sports jargon, a golden own goal.

The author of *Slandered Literature* also showed an enviable degree of meticulousness in collecting and processing relevant material for his study, especially insofar as new knowledge and insights do not only relate to the classification and analysis of studied texts but connect facts important for illuminating behind-the-scenes work in the international promotion of the idea contained in the works. Rusmir Mahmutćehajić's text "Andricism: An Aesthetics for Genocide" appeared on the world stage of the anti-Andrić campaign, published in the reference American scientific journal *Eastern European Politics and Societies*, whose way in the world Bulatović reliably detects:

> That in this case, it is not a matter of the usual use of the fully legitimate right of the editorial board of each journal to publish scientific papers, regardless of whether it is in accordance with the scientific results presented in it or not, but that it is a matter of direct scientific support testifies the fact that Ivo Banac, along with another Croatian university professor (Slobodan Prosperov Novak) who worked at Yale University for most of the first decade of the 21st century, appears as a reviewer of the aforementioned extensive Mahmutćehajić's book *Andricism: Against the Ethics of Remembrance,* published in 2015 by the Serbian publisher Klio (154)

Such examples testify that the continuous effort to devalue Andrić's work has long ceased to be a spontaneous expression of enthusiasm for the pseudo-scientific margin and is slowly becoming a more organized endeavour, systematically supported by a heterogeneous editorial publishing structure, which takes advantage of similar works with benefits at different levels. And that is a "completely legitimate right", as the author concludes, just as it is an equally legitimate right, and perhaps, a step further, a duty not to remain neutral to similar phenomena, as Bulatović does.

So, Bulatović can be criticised for devoting relatively little space to Mahmut Ćehajić's immense endeavour of over six hundred pages in immanent metacritical analysis in relation to some other texts, thus depriving the reader of a more thorough insight into the philosophical-methodological discursive disorientation and a drastic discrepancy between the ambition and scope of the author's major work entitled Andricism. The objection to Bulatović's study can be, first of all, related to the composition and discrepancies in the amount of dedicated space for more important and less important topics from the same register, for which it is obvious that the author approached them more spontaneously than this type of research should perform. Praiseworthy meticulousness sometimes turns into endless paraphrases of newly found literature in the notes, which makes it difficult to pass through the otherwise voluminous text of the book. Some of the notes or the whole block of footnotes could justifiably have received their own chapter, or at least an appendix, as is the case with the inserted discussion on the issues related to Dubrovnik literature at the

very end of the section on Andrić. The author's otherwise plausible effort to form a complete picture of the ideologically based reception of Andrić's work, embodied in the attention paid to the Serbian authors who "misinterpreted" Andrić's prose from opposite ideological positions, is subjected to criticism. Giving an overview and adequate commentary on the reading of Andrić's artistic texts with unequivocal political ambitions among some Serbian intellectuals, Bulatović is too "impartial" when Andrić's "warnings" to Europe, as Predrag Palavestra sees them, put on the same level with the interpretations of Mirjana Stojisavljević, who sees Andrić's work as literature "in the service of Roman Catholic Croatian expansionism" (177). On a stylistic level, stray words such as "psychopathology", "paranoia" and the like, with which Bulatović interprets the motives of certain authors, actually diminish the desired effect already achieved by calm analyses. The biggest deficiencies of the book, however, are related to its technical part and refers to the absence of a bibliography of used sources, which simply should not be omitted in such a monograph.

An unavoidable issue of ideological critique of Serbian literature that Bulatović deals with is the work of the Montenegrin bishop which is discussed in the next chapter of *Slandered Literature* entitled *"Mountain Wreath* by Peter II Petrović Njegoš*"* as a direct "call for genocide" and "permanent scheme of ethnic cleansing". Summarizing in the title phrases the conceptual horizon of one of the courses of the reception of the *Mountain Wreath*, Bulatović gave a thorough overview of its local as well as foreign bearers. One of the endpoints of such an opinion was reached by the idea of Alexander Greenwalt "that Njegoš in the *Mountain Wreath* shaped the character of Miloš Obilić as a revengeful 'genocidal Christ', which is also the best example of abuse of (archetypal) criticism, as one of the most inventive literary concepts of the twentieth century for the ideological and political purposes. Apparently well-acquainted with the literature on this problem, Bulatović opposes such interpretations with more thoughtful analyses of Obilić's cult in Njegoš's poetry, implicitly addressing their remark for not knowing these analyses as the main stimulus and encouragement for the presented type of hermeneutic extravagance. This is, among other things, about the analysis of Miodrag Popović, who stated that Njegoš "did not fully accept the folk tale about Miloš Obilić, but significantly changed Obilić's character in his work." By creating Obilić's cult of light in the *Mountain Wreath*, he hid his knife from future generations (295). The most far-reaching scope of Bulatović's meta criticism is the again substantiated evidence of insufficient information of the promoters of an ideological concept, not only in the field of relevant literature related to the subject but also in the primary sources themselves.The reader's superficiality, which consequently leads to simplified conclusions, is convincingly shown on the example of Njegoš's play *False Emperor Šćepan the Little*, so it is surprising why the author diminished his conclusion in a footnote:

> In their own indolence, instead of becoming interested in the writer they criticize insofar as to read his opus in detail (they rather convey previously formed negative judgments by inertia), ideological interpreters of Serbian literature and culture as chauvinistic and genocidal have missed their knowledge of Njegoš's work), the play *False Emperor Šćepan the Little*. In this play by Njegoš, Abbot Teodosija Mrkojević (cautiously paying homage to Russian Prince Dolgoruky on his call, on behalf of Empress Catherine II, for the Montenegrins to go to the war against the Turks and fearing that the small Montenegrin army would remain unprotected and exposed to Turkish retaliation if the Russian-Turkish conflict ended), gives ethnopsychological portraits of Bosniaks and Arnauts (along with Greeks and Bulgarians) who—from the perspective of an interpreter whose malicious, propagandistic pursuit of Serbian literature we present and analyze—could serve as another "proof" of Njegoš's malicious national and religious chauvinism (299).

In the continuation of the quotations, the excerpts from Mrkojević's monologue are given as untouched treats for a critique of postcolonial taste, which pathetically testifies to the effort invested in getting acquainted with the matter, whose strength is proportional to the scope and foundation of produced knowledge.

The third chapter, "Serbian Writers and the Responsibility for the Literary Destruction of Yugoslavia", is dedicated to Serbian literature of recent times, which in the indicated horizon is understood as a logical outgrowth of Njegoš's and Andrić's paradigm, and its influence as the most immediate impetus to the war epilogue of the Yugoslav crisis in the 1990s. The central figure in this stage of literary "unmasking" is Milorad Pavić with his bestseller *Khazar Dictionary*, a novel that Andrew Baruch Wachtel described in his book *Creating a Nation, Destroying the Nation* estimated as an "allegorical attack on the foundations of Yugoslav society", which, by its very essence, contributed "to encourage people to shoot their neighbours" (374). The reader's intelligence is less offended by the author's underestimating attitude—he will be preferably more amused by the fiction of a Bosnian-Herzegovinian peasant who attacks his neighbour only after breaking through the labyrinth of postmodernist narrative and (misunderstood) the long-hidden truth with which Pavić enlightened him—that the Green Book is an inauthentic interpretation of Khazar destiny as a powerful artistic metaphor of the endangerment of his people. However, the thing ceases to be amusing when such ideas become part of the generally accepted "truths", so in David Damros's book *What is World Literature*, the entire chapter entitled "Poison Book" is dedicated to accusing the *Khazar Dictionary* writer to "falsely spread nationalist propaganda as international postmodernism" (403). In this case, too, Bulatović convincingly draws the path of a gloomy idea and shows an uncritical takeover of ready-made stereotypes, tabloid consciousness with scientific aspirations, which without real interest and verification of facts conveys semi-knowledge of certain literary phenomena, with the irresponsible tendency towards sensationalism.

The author of Slandered Literature demonstrates the characteristic inconsistency and application of double standards on the examples of two strikingly different writers such as Danilo Kiš and Dobrica Ćosić, the first of whom will appear in the view of ideological criticism as an acceptable chronicler of Jewish suffering during the Second World War, unlike his colleagues who in their works thematized the victims of Serbian compatriots, while the dissidence of the other, again unlike other Eastern bloc rebels, will get a sign of "nationalist" rebellion instead of a label of high moral engagement and intellectual resistance. Any kind of literalization of tragic moments of Serbian history is presented in this ideological light as a premeditated justification of future, real or constructed crimes, so it is not surprising that Bulatović shared his sincere confusion with the reader at one point: "It is truly astonishing that any literary work on Serbian suffering is viewed in the context of the possible consequences of instrumentalizing this topic" (369).

Attaching at the end of his study "Appendix" on the reception of political ideas of Jovan Skerlić in the "anthropological and historiographical discourse of the other Serbia", Bulatović gave a look at another distorting reflection, this time of exemplary figures and leading representatives of democratic tradition in Serbian literature and culture from the beginning of the twentieth century, which gave the image of their deep misunderstanding the last, inner dimension. An overview of Skerlić's reception in the part of the other Serbian ideological interpretation contributed to the completion of the author's "anatomy" of any *a priori* opinion on literary questions, which consciously simplifies things and derives its own benefit from the cultural damage it nominally advocates. Metaphorically speaking, ideological criticism with the musk of a public literary prosecutor received a new extensive list of evidence in Slandered Literature, which it had scornfully rejected until then, believing that it would be able to end its long-established staged trial without much effort.

Vladan BAJČETA

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ISSUES OF SERBIAN CULTURAL UNITY

Serbian Cultural Space: Structure, Problems, Values: conference proceedings, Matica srpska, Novi Sad 2020

The conference proceedings on the structure, problems and values of Serbian cultural space, published by such an important national cultural centre as the Matica srpska, is an exceptional contribution to the study of issues that are of the greatest importance for protecting the identity of the Serbian national and spiritual being. Three welcome speeches and fifty-one presentations were published on more than five hundred and twenty pages. The works are divided into five parts and, if it would be possible to determine the main focuses of critical elaborations in the proceeding, then it would certainly be the problem of endangerment and preservation of Serbian cultural space. The organizing committee of the two-day scientific meeting held on May 17-18, 2019, consisted of Professor Dragan Stanić, PhD, corresponding member of SASA Jovan Delić, Professor Slobodan Vladušić, PhD, Professor Srđan Šljukić and Dragan Hamović, PhD. As indicated in the invitation to the gathering, there was no intention to draw the attention of the participants to the necessity of presenting completely new scientific knowledge, but to try, above all, to see the current situation in Serbian cultural space from different perspectives—literary, linguistic, sociological, historical, cultural and philosophical.

Welcoming speeches by Professor Dragan Stanić, PhD, President of the Matica srpska, Vladan Vukosavljević, Minister of Culture and Information in the Government of the Republic of Serbia, and Bishop Jovan Purić, emphasized the need for the results of the scientific meeting not only to remain within the institution but also to achieve practical consequences. Stanić emphasized the importance of the act of adopting the Strategy for the Development of Culture of the Republic of Serbia from 2017 to 2027, which has taken "unbearably long", while Minister Vukosavljević reminded all of the extremely important Charter on Serbian Cultural Space, signed in Sremski Karlovci with the Ministry of Culture and Education of the Republika Srpska. The first part of the papers starts with Vasilije Krestić's reflections on the essential issues of Serbian spiritual unity. As a proof of the absence of homogeneous national standards and the existence of disturbed value criteria, he notes unpatriotic behaviour when it comes to the Cyrillic alphabet and warns that it is the last minute to take measures to preserve the Cyrillic alphabet. He emphasizes the Yugoslav idea, politics and state as an appropriate "instrument for tearing Serbia apart". The opinion on the Yugoslav idea as a powerful disintegrating factor is predominantly repeated in the proceedings, as well as the attempt to define Serbian cultural space.

Dušan Ivanić believes that the term spaces of the Serbian culture are more adequately determined by the historical and contemporary state of culture

of the Serbian people. The Serbian cultural space is a compact space with the cultural factors of the Serbian people (language, customs, institutions, tradition, identity), while the spaces of Serbian culture are incomparably more widespread. Ivanić also gives the answers to the question of what should be done: practical work is needed at schools, in the textbooks, in regulating the rights of our people as a national minority in foreign environments, while on the other hand, we should learn from the United Serbian Youth and its ideas, which are cultural unity despite the boundaries and despite the differences. On the other hand, Slavko Gordić believes that space is more volatile and more movable than the corpus and the pattern, and defines the Serbian cultural pattern as a combination of the dominant vertical of the *Svetosavlje* (an Orthodox Christianity of Serbian style and experience based on the character and work of Saint Sava), the Kosovo Cult and contact with Islam, the Mediterranean and the European Enlightenment. He also believes that the job of the participants in the gathering is of a practical nature and proposes a series of measures, among which the most urgent are saving the Cyrillic alphabet, revising the decision on recognizing the Bosnian language, and more decisive defence of Njegoš from the official Montenegro. In accordance with that, Bogoljub Šijaković believes that education and culture are among the essential issues for Serbian society today, and he writes about the landmarks and constants of the Serbian culture. We find similar ideas in the text of Petar Pijanović, who points out that the cultural space of the Serbs throughout history, and even in the new age, was not only guarded by the authority but for a long time only by culture. It is significant that he drew attention to the great insight of Jovan Skerlić, who writes that our culture and our literature began in the 18th century.[1]

Časlav Koprivica gave a philosophical-historical analysis and provided programme clarifications related to the issue of shaping the Serbian spiritual and cultural space. In his conceptual analysis, he emphasizes that the Serbian cultural space is not givenness, not an already available entity, but something that needs to be worked on, and whose integration might be uncertain even if the entire Serbian people lived in a homogeneous state space. In accordance with that, he further deals with the problems of founding, understanding and operationalizing of the Serbian spiritual and cultural space, while the unification of Serbia and Serbian and the "cultural struggle" (*Kulturkampf*), together with the struggle for the Serbian language, stands out as a permanent national goal. Bojan Jovanović also believes that the Serbian language is the basis of the Serbian culture, and that the definition of the Serbian cultural space depends on its adequate determination. On that occasion, he refers to scientific divergence and the theft of the past in the older and more recent history.

[1] Jovan Pejčić also wrote about the perniciousness of this myth of discontinuity in Serbian culture and literature in recent times in the work *Paths of Serbian Science on Literature*, SKZ, Belgrade 2020.

The second part of the proceeding began with the work of Ljubiša Mitrović on the importance of cultural policy for the preservation of Serbian identity and the unity of cultural space seen through the developing geocultural paradigm. Mitrović emphasizes the need to build a National Strategy in the field of demographic renewal and cultural policy in order to preserve national identity. On that occasion, he emphasizes the existing radical paradigm shift: from geopolitics and geoeconomics to geoculture (cultural and educational capital), as a result of which a redefinition of policy towards our Diaspora is necessary, as well as greater cooperation between the Matica srpska and the Diaspora. In his text, Zoran Avramović emphasizes three aspects of the relationship between the Serbian state and the Serbian cultural space, examining the Serbian cultural space within the Republic of Serbia (Serbian culture and minority cultures), in the region (Balkans, former SFRY), and in the world (Diaspora). In all three dimensions, the Serbian cultural space was disputable in two ways: with neighbouring cultures and with itself. Avramović focuses on the role of state institutions in preserving the Serbian cultural space, concluding that the choice of the person who will lead such institutions is of the utmost importance. On the other hand, Srđan Šljukić warns of the dangers of centralization, which is one of the first social consequences of entering the conflict in which the Serbian culture evidently is at the moment, reminding, like Časlav Koprivica, of the necessity of joint struggle and "cultural war".

Ljubiša Despotović takes Ilija Garašanin's *Dragan* as the starting point of his work, emphasizing that giving priority to an exclusive confessional criterion instead of a secular one shows a deep misunderstanding of the true needs of the national unification of the Serbs. Opting for the geopolitics of Serbian unity, Despotović concludes that it is "unprincipled [and] wrong to reduce the Serbs only to the Orthodox." In considering the cultural—scientific foundations of the Serbian national identity, Mladen Šukalo as a starting point chooses Isidora Sekulić and Miloš N. Đurić's contemplations on small and large cultures. Culturally, concludes Šukalo, small nations differ from the large ones only in the aspect of their own self-consciousness, which is based on a true, scientifically provable, and not imaginary idea of themselves and their own culture. In building cultural self-awareness, Vladimir Kolarić considers the values of culture as the crucial ones, emphasizing that the specificity of cultural policy in this domain must be directed towards the values of the specific social, historical and cultural community to which it is addressed and within which it operates. Warning of the reduced Serbian cultural space and value disorder, Dragoljub Petrović gives in the form of sketch a little of how the Western world and the Serbian science—with its own support, mock both the Serbs and the Serbian people, and gives insights into how the Serbian cultural space is "used to be narrowed" in Greece, Bulgaria and Romania. Writing about the future, Petrović sees regionalization as the main challenge for the Serbian cultural space. From a slightly different perspective, Aleksandar

Gajić views the internal and external challenges to the unity of the Serbian cultural space. As a consequence of various types of mental occupation and the actions of the autochauvinist anti-elite, Gajić sees strong social stratification and Serbian regionalism, which results in the creation of "synthetic nations". Instead of a conclusion, Gajić warns that the systemic crisis has deeply affected the structure of Western culture in all spheres and that it is necessary to return to the Saint Sava pattern of culture. In response to the devastating effects of the systemic crisis in the Serbian cultural space, Ivan Negrišorac sees Njegoš resistance movement, which is deeply following Saint Sava's character. As a form of public activity and metapolitics, Njegoš's resistance movement "does not agree with this globalist order of figures in which the elite should be separated from the people from which it originated", stating that a member of such a movement should, above all, be a Creator, Poet, Thinker, Man of God, Ruler, Man of Synthesis and Man of Convocation. Starting the third part of the collection, Jovan Delić reminds of the destructive forces of Yugoslavia and draws attention to the historical paradox according to which everything that was the Serbian cultural space, has remained, and our tasks together with it. In giving possible solutions to the existing tasks, Delić relies on the text of Vuk Stefanovic Karadžić "Serbs Everywhere" and supports Vuk's openness towards Serbs dissenters. On the occasion of the hundredth book in the Anthological Edition *Ten Centuries of Serbian Literature*, Miro Vuksanović offers a text about Serbian cultural networking. In order to show the depth of civilization of the Serbian people, Vuksanović believes that we need to thoroughly study how our spiritual life was based and how our learning came about. It seems that Ljubomirka Krkljuš's paper picks up on that idea. While writing about Pavle Ars. Popović, she reminds us of a famous worker in the Serbian cultural space and an important person on the margins of our cultural memory. The next set of papers is dedicated to the Serbian language issues. Slobodan Remetić deals with the problems in the creating the Serbian Dialectological Atlas, as well as the controversial recognition of the Montenegrin and Bosnian languages. Veljko Brborić gave several educational and cultural priorities, considering the number of classes, textbooks and the quality of teaching in primary and secondary schools, as well as at the universities. He emphasized that it is necessary to increase the number of mother tongue classes, and reduce the number of textbooks, i.e., to separate textbooks for grammar schools and for secondary vocational schools, while the problem of university teaching is the inequality of teaching content at faculties and a small number of Serbian language lectureships. Aleksandar Milanović examines the Serbian cultural and linguistic space in the 18th and 19th centuries. He believes that at the beginning of the 19th century the idea of the Orthodox cultural circle of *Slavia Orthodoxa* was still alive in the Serbian cultural consciousness even among nationally enlightened pre-romanticism and that this linguistic, spiritual and cultural concept, strengthened by the new wave

of Pan-Slavism, should not be forgotten when describing our cultural space in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Miloš Kovačević researches the relationship between the Serbian as the majority and minority language in Serbia and it turns out that, by definition, Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin are not minority languages in Serbia. In contrast, the subordinate status of the Serbian as majority language stands out as a problem. In order to overcome that unnatural situation, Kovačević points out the adoption of the Amendments to the Law on Language and Scripts as a "condition of all conditions". Jelica Stojanović deals with the Serbian cultural and literary-linguistic heritage of today's Montenegro, stating as problems: the falsification of that heritage, violence against science and historical continuity, and the process of *deserbization* (or disintegration or denationalization) and discrimination against the Serbs. Lidija Tomić deals with similar problems, focusing primarily on the study programme for the Serbian language and South Slavic literatures at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Montenegro and its renaming into the Montenegrin language. On the other side of these cultural breakdowns and fundamental disorientation is the question posed by Dragan Hamović: what was cultural nationalism? He warns of the impersonal notion of regional literature, which does not allow so-called nationalists, especially not the Serbian ones. In accordance with that, writing a text about the ideological stigmatization of the main currents of the Serbian culture and literary space, Boris Bulatović points out that Serbian suffering is becoming an illegitimate literary topic. Bulatović reflects on the radicalization and revaluation of five key elements of the Serbian cultural pattern singled out by Milo Lompar, including Saint Sava and Kosovo traditions, which are being prescribed as direct inspirers of genocidal policy. Jana Aleksić discusses the currents of Serbian culture through one of the key elements of the Serbian cultural pattern—transculturalism. In cultural history, the Hilandar monastery and the city of Szentendre become synecdoches of transculturalism, while Saints Cyril, Methodius and Sava are confirmations of transculture as a pattern of thinking and behaviour of the individual. Transculture becomes a draft plan for overcoming the consequences of globalization on the one hand and any horizontal or vertical particularism on the other.

The fourth part of the papers is mostly focused on examining our cultural heritage. Đorđe Trifunović says that a huge number of manuscripts were destroyed in the 18th and 19th centuries, and especially in the first half of the 19th century. Especially important is his appeal that the Fund for the Restitution of Old Serbian Monuments is a great shame for the Serbian culture, science, spirituality and the state. Viktor Savić deals with Serbian cultural heritage from a philological perspective. He warns that the recent presence of the Cyrillic alphabet is no longer an obstacle for determining the Croatian origin of some monuments, including Miroslav's Gospel. The same problems that we have with the Croatian scientists we also have with the Bulgarian ones

for the old Serbian literary monuments. Savić believes that it is necessary to open a logistical base that will enable dedicated and undisturbed work for our researchers, as well as those Serbian dialectological surveys which should contain an overview of all Shtokavian speeches with a correct citing of today's national declaration of their speakers. Milovan Danojlić's record of the domestic cultural space provides a reasonably optimistic view of our cultural heritage, bearing in mind that he finds it comforting that a considerable number of our books have been translated into major world languages, thus creating the so-called critical mass. On the other hand, Gojko Đogo found comforting "the only benefit from Yugoutopia": an expanded space for understanding the Serbian language. Following the example of other countries with similar ethnic problems, he believes that we should open small cultural centres wherever there are Serbs, and above all in all major Yugocities, concluding that Serbia must set aside more money for culture.

Vesna Đukić explores the connection between the Yugoslav identity and the Serbian cultural space from the point of view of the cultural policy pursued by the state, concluding that the Serbian national identity in the Serbian cultural space during the 20th century, as well as the Orthodox culture, was treated as a legacy that has no utility function in everyday life. She added that the Serbian Orthodox Church is not only a religious institution but also the oldest national and cultural institution of the Serbian people in the entire Serbian cultural space. Svetlana Šeatović also believes that the Serbian identity should be reconstituted but in accordance with the Mediterranean culture. She says that in the history of Serbian literature, the Mediterranean orientation has been neglected so far as a constitutive element of our culture, stating that the Mediterranean has always been a disputed place that was threatened by various borders of civilizations and nations. As another extremely important part of our cultural identity, Valentina Pitulić recognized the tangible and intangible culture of Kosovo and Metohija. Her suggestions for presentation are especially important, in the first place for young people, i.e., at schools, where a series of shows, launched on national televisions, dedicated to the tangible and intangible heritage of Kosovo and Metohija, i.e., fresco-painting, architecture, ethnomusicology, language, literature, and theology would play a significant role.

With a report on the position and perspectives of the Serbian people in Montenegro, Momčilo Vuksanović warned of a very unfavourable situation in which our people are assimilated and discriminated. The data of the last state research, which Vuksanović presented in the form of a chart and which shows a very small percentage of employed citizens of Serbian nationality in the most important Montenegrin institutions, are worrying. As a warning, Vuksanović states that the Serbian people cannot survive in Montenegro without the influence and support of the Republic of Serbia, except with a change of identity. Budimir Dubak also writes about autochauvinism in Mon-

tenegro, which is especially focused on the field of history and culture. He believes that the genesis of Montenegrin chauvinism is directly related to the issue of breaking up European culture as a whole. On the other hand, Đorđe Nešić drew attention to similar disintegration factors for the Serbian culture in Croatia. He believes that publishing is the best and most valuable segment of the cultural autonomy of the Serbs in Croatia, but that the big problem is that new publications do not arrive systematically from the home country. In accordance with Dragoslav Bokan's attitude, who points out that the most important thing in setting a precise map of our cultural space is to determine the fulcrums and crossroads of great reforms of the Serbian glossary, Slavomir Gvozdenović recognizes Arad and Timisoara as part of our unique cultural space. Nikola Marinković also reactualized the heritage, this time through poetic travelogues about Hilandar in the second half of the twentieth century. By analyzing the poetic travelogues of Stevan Raičković, Miodrag Pavlović, Slobodan Marković and Slobodan Zubanović, Marinković proved that Hilandar is configured as a place of self-constitution, at a level of existence much deeper than high culture. Exploring the pre-Islamic traditions of our Muslims in the space of Stara Raška, Salih Selimović claimed that our Muslims, despite centuries of Ottoman domination, have never rejected and forgotten their native Serbian language and many local and national traditions, such as Christmas, Savindan (or *St. Sava's Day*), Easter, Mladenac (*Newlyweds*), Đurđevdan (*St George's Day*), Petrovdan (*Feast of Saints Peter and Paul*), Prokopije (*Procopius of Scythopolis*) and Ilindan-Aliđun (*Holy Prophet Elijah-Alijun*).

The fifth part in terms of the number of papers is identical to the first one, so the collection is symbolically rounded off in the light of research on the development of the Serbian cultural space. Vladimir Simić as a model of the dynamics of cultural space in the 18th century is given by the church in Srpski Kovin in Hungary. The example of the church in Srpski Kovin perfectly demonstrates the theses presented at the beginning of the article on how cultural spaces intertwine, entering into each other or connecting with each other, creating hybrids. Igor Borozan goes a little further into the future and explores the inscribing and defining of the Serbian cultural space in the middle of the 19th century. He believes that the work of painter and theorist Dimitrije Avramović represents a turning point in changing the values of the Serbian people south of the Sava and the Danube and that this process will initiate the Europeanization of the Serbian culture in the principality as the beginning of the unification of the artistic model in the wider range of Serbian cultural space. Studying the visual culture in the Serbian cultural space from another perspective, Saša Radojčić and Igor Gardinovački gave an extremely interesting presentation of the newer monumental sculpture in the open public space from 1991 until today in Pančevo and Sombor. Along with photographs of the monument to Duke Stevan Šupljikac, wall plaques to Srđan Aleksić and Zoran Đinđić, as well as monuments to Laza Kostić and Veljko Petrović,

Radojčić and Gardinovački provide a thorough analysis which sometimes disputes the artistic value of the sculptures but provides insight into how the monuments which were erected through unofficial channels, an expression of the authentic need of the environment for exactly that kind of monuments. Boško Suvajdžić wrote about the role of Vuk's Endowment in shaping the Serbian cultural space, emphasizing that the activities of the endowment in recent years, especially around the celebration of great anniversaries, at the initiative of Assembly President Miodrag Maticki, PhD were aimed at reviving Vuk's European circle. He also pointed out that taking care of the Serbian language and Cyrillic alphabet is the basis of the Programmes and the Statute of Vuk's Endowment.

An important starting point of Slobodan Reljić's paper is that our main obstacle is the elite reoriented to global priorities and separated from fundamental Christian values, proposing "archetypal solutions": to replace the "democratic" elite with a "populist" or sovereignist one. Marko Tošović believes that the fate of the Serbian cultural space, as well as the appearance of the world in which we will live, depends exclusively on how we shape the consciousness of our children, and he proposed to increase the number of mother tongue classes at schools. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of commenting on secondary educational processes in classes while fighting against neoliberal tendencies and the artificial separation of cosmopolitanism and nationalism. The paper of Nemanja Rajak emphasized the importance of social networks in the struggle for supremacy in the cultural space. He gave an example of network occupation (NGO) and listed several factors of network-centric strategy that would be able to resist it: creative-active minority, strategic network code and self-synchronization, and mimetic wars, i.e., humour.

Finally, it is necessary to emphasize once again that the value of the presented proceedings primarily lies in deepening the understanding of the need for a precisely developed strategy for the preservation of the Serbian cultural space. Both the past and present state of the Serbian cultural space has been examined, and the possibilities of its shaping in the future have been foreseen, with the necessary paying attention to many disintegration factors that occur in the process. In addition, the proceeding opened new chapters in examining the unity of national identity and the possibility of protecting our cultural heritage, and as such represents a stimulating basis for further research on the development of Serbian cultural space as a whole and the strengthening of its separate parts.

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VOJA ČOLANOVIĆ (Bosanski Brod, BiH, 1922 – Belgrade, 2014). He wrote prose, essays and translated from English. Books of short stories: *To Saddle the Blizzard*, 1958; *Legends on Ancient Japanese Heroes*, 1967; *The Smell of Failure*, 1983; *Smile from the Black Box*, 1992; *The Principle of Uncertainty* (selection), 2003. Novels: The *Second Half of Heaven*, 1963; *Tailor-made Adventures*, 1969; *Bodyguard*, 1971; *Left Palm, Right Palm*, 1981; *Unfolding Shiver*, 1987; *Pocket Augury*, 1996; *The Lion's Piece of Nothing*, 2002*; Ode to the Minor Evil*, 2011; Books of essays and studies*: Legends on Ancient Japanese Heroes*, 2016; *Whispers Under the Hanged Ones: From My Diaries during the German Occupation*, 2019. *Selected Works,* 2012.

JOVAN DELIĆ (b. Borkovići near Plužine, Montenegro, 1949) writes literary criticism and essays. Books: *Kritičarevi paradoksi* [*The Paradoxes of a Critic*, 1980]; *Srpski nadrealizam i roman* [*The Serbian Surrealism and Novel*, 1980]; *Pjesnik „Patetike uma" (o pjesništvu Pavla Popovića)* [*The Poet of "The Pathos of the Mind" (on the poetry of Pavle Popović)*, 1983]; *Tradicija i Vuk Stefanović Karadžić* [*Tradition and Vuk Stefanović Karadžić*, 1990]; *Hazarska prizma—tumačenje proze Milorada Pavića* [*The Khazarian Prism: An Interpretation of the Fiction by Milorad Pavić*, 1991]; *Književni pogledi Danila Kiša* [*The Literary Views of Danilo Kiš*, 1995]; *Kroz prozu Danila Kiša* [*Across the Prose by Danilo Kiš*, 1997]; *O poeziji i poetici srpske moderne* [*On the Poetry and Poetic Practices of the Serbian Modernism*, 2008]; *Ivo Andrić—Most i žrtva* [*Ivo Andrić: The Bridge and Sacrifice*, 2011]; *Ivan V. Lalić i njemačka lirika—jedno intertekstualno istraživanje* [*Ivan V. Lalić and German Lyric Poetry: An Intertextual Research*, 2011]; *Milutin Bojić, pjesnik moderne i vjesnik avangarde: o poeziji i poetici Milutina Bojića* [*Milutin Bojić, a poet of modernity and a herald of the avant-garde: on the poetry and poetics of Milutin Bojić*, 2020]. Delić has edited a number of books by and on Serbian authors.

ALEKSANDAR JOVANOVIĆ (Ratari near Smederevska Palanka, 1949—Belgrade, 2021) was an author of studies, essays and literary reviews. Books published: *Kako predavati književnost—teorijske osnove nastave* [*How to Lecture on Literature: Theoretical Basics of Teaching*, 1984]; *Oblaci u duši—pesništvo Dušana Vasiljeva* [*Clouds in the Soul: The Poetry of Dušan Vasiljev*, 1986]; *Pesnici i preci: motivi jezika, tradicije i kulture u posleratnoj srpskoj poeziji* [*Poets and Their Ancestry: The Motifs of Language, Tradition and Culture in the Serbian Postwar Poetry*, 1993]; *Poezija srpskog neosimbolizma: istorija jedne pesničke osećajnosti* [*The Poetry of the Serbian Neo-Symbolism: The History of a Poetic Sensibility*, 1994]; *Poreklo pesme—devet razgovora o poeziji* [*The Origin of the Poem: Nine Talks about Poetry*, 1995]; *Stvaraoci i stvoritelj* [*Creators and The Creator*, three prayer-cantos, 2003]; *Čitanka* (za drugi razred gimnazije i srednjih škola) [*Reader* (for the second

grade of grammar school and other secondary schools), 2005]; *Stih i pamćenje: o poeziji i poetici Milosava Tešića* [*Verse and Memory: About the Poetry and Poetics of Milosav Tešić*, 2018]; *O istoriji, sećanjima i samoći: eseji i kritike o srpskoj prozi XX veka* [*On History, Remembrances and Loneliness: Essays and Reviews on 20th Century Serbian Fiction*, 2019]; *O svetlosti starijoj od nesreće: eseji o srpskoj poeziji i kulturi* [*On the light older than misfortune: essays on Serbian poetry and culture*, 2020]. A. Jovanović was edited a number of books and collections/proceedings of studies.

ZORAN KONSTANTINOVIĆ (Belgrade, 1920 – Belgrade, 2007). He was a Germanist, an academician, wrote essays and scientific papers, translated from German, and was a professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. Published books: *Deutsche Reisebeschreibungen über Serbien und Montenegro*, 1960; *Expressionism*, 1967; *Phenomenological Approach to Literary Work*, 1969; *Weltliteratur. Strukturen und Modelle*, 1972; *Phänomenologie und Literaturwissenschaft*, 1974; *German Literature I, II*, 1979, 1987; *Introduction to the Comparative Study of Literature*, 1984; *Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft, Bestandsaufnahme und Ausblick*, 1989; *Comparative View of Serbian Literature*, 1993; *Deutsch-serbische Begegnungen – Überlegungen zur Geschichte der gegenseitigen Beziehlungen zweier Völker*, 1997; *Starting Points* (selection from the works of Zoran Konstantinović), 2000; *Grundlagentexte der Vergleichenden Literaturwissenschaft aus drei Jahrzehnten*, 2000; *Intertextual Comparative Studies*, 2002; *Eine Literaturgeschichte Mitteleuropas*, 2003; *Literary Work and National Mentality – On an Interdisciplinary Approach to the History of Serbian Literature*, 2006.

LAZA KOSTIĆ (Kovilj, Novi Sad, 1841 – Vienna, Austria, 1910). He was a writer, a journalist and a politician. He wrote poetry, prose, plays, studies, essays, theatre and literary criticism, and was also engaged in translation (for example, he translated the first singing and parts of the sixth singing of Homer's Iliad, as well as parts of Shakespeare's tragedy Romeo and Juliet). With the poet Đuro Jakšić, he is considered the founder of the Serbian romantic tragedy, whose basic characteristic is the connection between the folk song and the romantic myth. Dramas: *Maksim Crnojević*, 1866; *Pera Segedinac*, 1882; *Uskok's Love, Play in Four Acts*, 1890; *Occupation Lustspiel in 4 Ackten (Occupation, comedy in 4 acts*), translated by J. Mladenović, 1977. Books of poems: *Poems I-II*, 1873/84, 1909. Studies: *The Basis of Beauty in the World with Special Regard to Serbian Folk Songs*, 1880; *Basic Principle (Critical Introduction to General Philosophy)*, 1884; *About Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (Dragons), His Singing, Thinking and Writing and his Epoch*, 1902; *Supplements to Vuk's Dictionary,* 1913; *Collected Works: Poems*, 1989; *Stories,* 1989*; On Theatre and Art, 1989; About Zmaj*, 1989; *Tragedies*, 1989; *Comedies*, 1989*; On Literature and Language*, 1990; *On Politics, on Art, I-IV*, 1990; *On Literature; Memoirs, I-II*, 1991; *Correspondence*, I-2005, II-2017, III-2020.

MIRKO MAGARAŠEVIĆ, born in 1946 in Belgrade. A poet, an essayist, a literary critic, a travel writer, a translator and an ophthalmologist. In cooperation with a group of critics (P. Zorić, P. Protić, Đ. Janić, S. Peković, M. Radulović ...), in 1995 he started the Association "Isidora Sekulić", the annual scientific conference "Isidora's Days" and the magazine *Isidoriana*. The books of poems: *Shots for Wolf's and Other Eyes*, 1969; *Triangle Processions* 1999, 1971; *Shadows of Immortality*, 1975; *The Glory of Babylon*, 1980; *Riddles of Eternity,* 1984; *Varvaria,* 1988; *Voices of Kosovo*, 1990; *Eros' Arrows*, 1995; *Dante in Hell*, 1999; *Petitioner of Saint Sava*, 1999*; Our Brave Old World*, 2006; *Svetosavski Spool*, 2007; *Glitter of Babylon and Comments*, 2009*; Dositej's Walk – 67 Poems Dedicated to Dositej Obradović*, 2015; *Odes and Anti-Odes*, 2016; *Mermaids' Song*, 2018; *Boonies*, 2021. Travelogues: *Turkish Letters*, 2012; *And New Turkish Letters*, 2014. Essays and literary criticism: *Signs of the Spirit of the Region*, 1979; *Hadrian by Marguerite Yourcenar*, 1988; *Rays of Literature*, 1991; *Dositej a Poet*, 1992; *Poetic Memory*, 1993; *European Poets*, 2010; *Jovan Hristić, close-up*, 2010; *Serbian Critical Poetry*, 2013; *In the Footsteps of Crnjanski*, 2014; *Whose is the Truth?,* 2017; *Poetic World of Ezra Pound*, 2019; *Critique and Interpretation of Prose Forms*, 2021. He has prepared several poetry anthologies and several books of poetry and prose by foreign and Serbian writers (E. Pound, T. S. Eliot, W. B. Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, W. H. Auden, K. Middleton, T. Hughes, A. P. Chekhov, D. Maksimović, Đ. Natošević, J. Dučić and others).

MIROSLAV MAKSIMOVIĆ, born in 1946 in Njegoševo near Bačka Topola. He writes poetry, essays and literary criticism and translates from English. Books of poetry: *Sleeper under the Absorber*, 1971, 1997; *Game-Changers*, 1972; *Poems*, 1978; *Memoirs of an Employee*, 1983; *Sonnets on the Joys and Difficulties of Life*, 1986; *55 Sonnets on the Joys and Difficulties of Life*, 1991; *Animal World*, 1992; *Heaven*, 1996; *Selected Poems*, 2000; *Belgrade Poems*, 2002; *Petrified*, 2005; *77 Sonnets on the Joys and Difficulties of Life*, 2008; *The Whisper of the Rain on Freedom* (selection), 2009; *Drawing Reality*, 2012; *Hidden Business*, 2014; *Pain*, 2016; *Loving Serbia*, 2018. Books of essays: *Nearby*, 1995; *On Books and Life*, 2001; *Poetry, Market, State* (co-author B. Mijatović), 2009; *The Great Space of Freedom – Essays, Records, Conversations*, 2017; *Manger, Pane*, 2017. Prepared several books.

IVAN NEGRIŠORAC (b. Trstenik, Serbia, 1956). Author of poetry, fiction, plays and literary reviews. From 2005 to 2012, he was the Editor-in-Chief of *Letopis Matice srpske*; in 2012, elected President of the Matica srpska. Books of poetry: *Trula jabuka* [*Rotting Apple*, 1981]; *Rakljar. Želudac* [*Dowser. Stomach*, 1983]; *Zemljopis* [*Soil-Survey*, 1986]; *Abrakadabra* [*Abracadabra*, 1990]; *Toplo, hladno* [*Hot, Cold*, 1990]; *Hop* [*Hop-Skipping*, 1993]; *Veznici* [*Conjunctions*, 1995]; *Prilozi* [Adverbs/*Contributions*, 2002]; *Potajnik*

[*The Mole*, 2007]; *Svetilnik* [*The Torchbearer*, 2010]; *Kamena čtenija* [*Petrographic Readings*, 2013]; *Čtenija* [*Readings*, selected verse, 2015]; *Matični mleč* [*Bee Bread*, 2016]; *Izložba oblaka (izbor i nove)* [*Cloud Exhibition (Choice and New)*, 2017]; *Ogledala Oka Nedremana* [*Mirrors of the Eye of Sleapless*, 2019]. Novel: *Andjeli umiru*[*Angels Are Dying*, 1998]. Plays: *Fredi umire* [*Freddy's Dying*, 1987]; *Kuc-kuc* [*Knock-Knock*, 1989]; *Istraga je u toku, zar ne?* [*The Investigation's 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 – The Temptations of Collective and Individual Survival*, 2018]; Njegoševski pokret otpora [*The Resistance of Njegos's movement*, 2020]. Negrišorac chairs the Editorial Board of *Srpska Enciklopedija* (*A Serbian Encyclopedia*) Book 1, Vols. 1-2 (2010-11); Book 2 (2013); Book 3, Vol. 1 (2018).

SRĐAN ORSIĆ, born in 1987 in Vukovar, Croatia. He graduated from the Department of Serbian Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, where in 2015 he defended his doctoral dissertation *"The Character of a Stranger in a Serbian Novel of the 19th Century"*. He writes poetry, prose, essays, studies and literary criticism. Books of poems: *Sleepwalker*, 2008; *Brightdarkness*, 2011. Studies: *Squabble and Gaiters – Essays on the Work of Slobodan Selenić*, 2014; *Jaša's Smile – Laughter in the Short Stories of Jakov Ignjatović*, 2015; *The Character of a Stranger in the Serbian Novel of the 19th century*, 2018; *Milutin Milanković's Street,* 2019. Prepared several books.

SANJA PERIĆ, born in 1994 in Bijeljina, BiH. She is a doctoral student at the Department of Serbian Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. She deals with contemporary Serbian writers, above all the poetic and essayistic works of Borislav Radović. She writes essays, scientific papers and literary criticism. Published book: *Literature and its Origins – Essays and Reviews on Works of Serbian Literature*, 2020.

PREDRAG PETROVIĆ, born in 1975 in Užice. He works as a professor at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. He deals with Serbian literature of the 20th and 21st century, writes studies, essays, reviews and literary criticism. Published books: *Avant-garde Novel without a Novel*, 2008; *Discovering Totality: Novels by Rastko Petrović*, 2013; *Between Music and Death: Essays on the Modernist Poetry*, 2016; *The Horizons of the Modernist Novel*, 2021; *Encyclopaedism and Theory of Novel*, 2021.

RASTKO PETROVIĆ (Belgrade, 1898 – Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 1949) was a jurist, author, literary and art critic, and diplomat. His diplomatic

service included the posts of a clerk at the Embassy of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia to the Holy See (1926), attaché in Rome (1926–8), vice-consul in Chicago (1935–6), secretary of the Embassy to Washington, D.C., Deputy Consul General in New York City (1937) and Consul of Group Five in Chicago (from 1937). Books of verse: *Otkrovenje* [*Revelation*, 1922]; *Ponoćni Delija* [*Midnight Hero*, 1970]; *Pesme* [*Poems*, enlarged edition, 2012]; *Veliki drug* [*A Great Friend*, 2018]. Novels: *Burleska gospodina Peruna Boga Groma* [*A Burlesque of Lord Perun, God of Thunderbolt*, 1921]; *Ljudi govore* [*People Talk*, 1931]; *Dan šesti* [*The Sixth Day*, 1955]; *Sa silama nemerljivim* [*Formidable Forces*, 2005]. Prose: *Najlepše pripovetke Rastka Petrovića* [*The Most Appealing Short Stories by Rastko Petrović*, 2002]. Travelogues: *Afrika* [*Africa*, 1930]; *Sicilija i drugi putopisi: iz neobjavljenih putopisa* [*Sicily and Other Travel Essays: From Unpublished Travel Literature*, 1988]. Books of essays, correspondence, studies and critiques: *Mladićstvo narodnog genija* [*The Early Days of the Popular Genius*, 1999]; *Zverstva: o trenju između duše i tela* [*Bestial Acts: About the Frictions between Soul and Body*, 2001]; *Prepiska* [*Correspondence*, 2003]; *Narodna reč i genije hrišćanstva* [*The Word of the People and the Genius of Christianity*, 2008]; *Izložbe* [*Exhibitions*, 2014]. Collected works: *Izbor I–II* [*A Selection I–II*, 1958–1962]; *Dela Rastka Petrovića III–V* [*Works by Rastko Petrović III–V*, 1961–1966]; *Izabrana dela I–II* [*Selected Works I–II*, 1964]; *Rastko Petrović* [*Rastko Petrović*, selection, 1967]; *Otkrovenje—poezija, proza, eseji* [*Revelation: Poetry, Prose, Essays*, 1972]; *Dela Rastka Petrovića I–VI* [*Works by Rastko Petrović I–VI*, 1974–1977]; *Izabrana dela I–II* [*Selected Works I–II*, 2008]. The works by Rastko Petrović have been translated into numerous languages, and his verse and prose can be found in many anthologies.

GORAN RADONJIĆ, born in 1971 in Podgorica, Montenegro. He defended his doctoral dissertation "Models of Narrative in the Serbian and American Novels of the 1960s and 1970s" at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. He spent one year (2003/2004) in training in the USA, at the University of Tennessee, as a scholarship holder of the Junior Faculty Development Programme. He works as an assistant professor at the Faculty of Philology in Nikšić. He deals with the theory of literature, narratology, twentieth-century literature and film. Published books: *Wreath of Stories – Border Genre in Serbian Literature of the 1950s and 1970s*, 2003; *Fiction, Metafiction, Non-Fiction: Models of Storytelling in Serbian and American Novel of the 1960s and 1970s,* 2016.

SELIMIR RADULOVIĆ, born in 1953 in Cetinje, Montenegro. He writes poetry, essays and literary criticism. Since 2014, he has been the manager of the Matica Srpska Library. Books of criticism and essays: *Infancy and Articles*, 1987; *Light from my Father's Hut – on Spirituality and Culture*, 2015;

That Little Bit of Salt, 2020*; See, the Lamb of God! On Poetic opus of Novica Tadić*, 2020. The books of poems: *The Last Days*, 1986; *The Dream on Emptiness*, 1993; *The Shadow I Enter, Father*, 1995; *On the Face of Night* (selection), 1996; *From the Sunny, Terrible Height* (selected and new poems), 1999; *The Book of the Fathers*(selection), 2004; *About the Treasurer's Secret of all Tears*, 2005; *Where I Hoped for God* (selection), 2006; *Like a Tranquil and Luminous Herald* (selected and new poems), 2008; *Report from the Land of the Living* (selection), 2009; *Dreams of a Holy Traveller*, 2009; *A Poem from the Orphan Island* (selected and new poems), 2010*; Light from the Father's Hut* (selection), 2011; *Under the Rain of Tears from Patmos*, 2012; *On the Shepherd and the Stone with Seven Eyes*, 2015; *Shadow of the Eighth Eon*, 2016; *Breath of a Little Prayer* (selected and new poems), 2017; *Twelve*, 2018; *Confession of the Interpreter of the Emperor's Dream* (selected and new poems), 2019; *About a Ducat with the Image of an Old Man*, 2020. In 2013, his *Selected Works*, I—V, were published. He prepared several books and anthologies.

DRAGAN STOJANOVIĆ, born in 1945 in Belgrade. He writes poetry, prose, reviews, essays, studies and monographs, deals with literary theory and translates from German. Books of poems*: Stormy Evening,* 1972; *Sl. – Four poems on Sl*., 1992; Years, 2006; *That's Not All*, 2007; *Sieve*, 2015. Books of Short Stories: *Months*, 2007; *Daughter of a Spanish Warrior*, 2018. Novels: *Twofold Horripilation*, 1995; *Crime and Punishment*, 1996; *Petrol*, 2000; *Ocean*, 2005; *Editor of Experience*, 2009; *Dark Open Sea*, 2020. Book of essays: *World Literature – Scientifically Verified Stories in which the Truth about Various Issues, and Especially about Love, is Presented, Classified into Four Books*, 1988. Reviews, studies and monographs: *Phenomenology and Ambiguity of Literary Work. Ingarden's Theory of Opalization*, 1977; *Reading of Dostoevsky and Thomas Mann*, 1982; *Irony and Meaning*, 1984; *About Idyll and Happiness. Heliotrope Wandering through Claude Laurent's Painting*, 1991; *Dostoevsky's Paradise Mind*, 1994; *The Paradoxical Classic by Thomas Mann*, 1997; *Beautiful Creatures of Ivo Andrić*, 2003; *Trust in the Mother of God*, 2007; *The Energy of the Sacred in Art*, 2010; *Schweik Wants to Win*, 2014; *Letter on Poetry: about Five poems by Borislav Radović*, 2016; *Inserted Narrator. Leonid Leonov's "Thief",* 2018; *Solemn Moment of Narration. "Joseph and his Brothers"*, 2018. Prepared several anthologies.

MLADEN ŠUKALO, born in 1952 in Banja Luka, BiH. A literary theorist, a professor at the Faculty of Philology in Banja Luka. He writes prose, studies, literary criticism and essays and translates from French. Published books: *National Theatre of the Bosnian Krajina 1930–1980* (co-authors P. Lazarević, J. Lešić), 1980; *Frames and Mirrors*, 1990; *Purple Halo of Danilo Kiš*, 1999; *Unfreezing the Language – The Poetics of Strangeness in the Work of Miodrag Bulatović*, 2002; *The Crack of the Real – Unfreezing the Language,*

Zero, 2003; *Devil's Ducat – about Ivo Andrić*, 2006; *Forms and Statements, Essays, 2007; Portraits – from Serbian literature in BiH*, 2015; *Debris and Other Stories*, 2016; *Cultural Identity of Kočić's Heroes*, 2018; *Great Illusions* (*Playfulness, Theatricality, Strangeness*), 2020

SLOBODAN VLADUŠIĆ (b. Subotica, 1973) writes fiction, studies, essays and literary reviews. From 2013 to 2016, he was Editor-in-Chief of *Letopis Matice srpske* (*The Annals of the Matica srpska*). Books published: *Degustacija strasti* [*Tasting Passion*, 1998]; *Na promaji* [*In a Draught*, 2007]; *Portret hermeneutičara u tranziciji* [*The Portrait of a Hermeneutics Practitioner in Transition*, 2007]; *Ko je ubio mrtvu dragu?—istorija motiva mrtve drage u srpskom pesništvu* [*Who Has Killed the Dead Darling?: A History of the Dead Darling Motif in the Serbian Poetry*, 2009]; *Forward—krimikomedija* [*Forward: A Crime Comedy*, novel, 2009]; *Crnjanski, Megalopolis* [2011]; *Mi, izbrisani—video-igra* [*We, the Deleted Ones—A Video Game*, novel, 2013]; *Košarka to je Partizan – mit o Košarkaškom klubu Partizan* [*Basketball Means 'Partizan': The Myth of the Basketball Club 'Partizan'*, 2016]; *Književnost i komentari—uputstvo za oružanu pobunu* [*Literature and Commentaries: A Handbook for an Armed Rebellion*, 2017]; *Veliki juriš* [*The All-Out Storm Attack*, novel, 2018]; *Orfej i zapušač* [*Orpheus and an Earplug*, essays, 2018]; *Miloš Crnjanski: prijatelj u prošlosti* [*Miloš Crnjanski: a friend in the past,* 2021]; *Omama*: *Berlinska tajna Miloša Crnjanskog* [*The Stun*: *the Berlin secret of Miloš Crnjanski*, novel, 2021].

NIKOLA VUJČIĆ, born in 1956 in Velika Gradusa near Sisak, Croatia. He writes poetry and translates from Russian. Books of poems: *Mysterious Shooter*, 1980; *New Supplements for the Autobiography*, 1983; *Breathing*, 1988; *Purgatory*, 1994; *When I was Little*, 1995; *Recognition*, 2002; *The Sound of Silence* (selection), 2008; *Bulk Sound*, 2009; *As Far as the Eye Can See*, 2010; *As Far as the Eye Can See and New Poems*, 2012; *Testimony*, 2014; *Hidden*, 2017; *Room: Selected Poems*, 2019. Book of documentary literature: *Deep Voyage*, 2016. Prepared several books and anthologies.

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