Dušan Puvačić

BALKAN THEMES

Tradition and change in Serbian and Croatian literature

Éditions Ésopie
41, rue Olivier Métra, 75020 Paris

For my grandchildren, Oliver, Luka and Carla.

Contents

Introduction

1.

The Genesis of the Myth of Kosovo

The Struggle with Love: The Theme of Sevdah in Bosnian Folk Songs

East is East and West is West: Travels of an Englishwoman in Bosnia and Hercegovina

The Theme of Bosnia and Hercegovina in the Works of Jovan Dučić

2.

Jovan Skerlić and Serbian Modernism

Tin Ujević and the Yugoslav Idea

Ivo Andrić and the Jews

The Echoes of the Second World War in Ivo Andrić's Prose

The Exile and Loneliness in A Novel about London by Miloš Crnjanski

Miloš Crnjanski's Links with England

3.

Populism and Socialism: The movement for social literature in Yugoslavia, 1928-1941

Tradition and Change in Serbian and Croatian Prose (1945-1966)

Literature and Politics in Yugoslavia

Satire under the Yugoslav socialism

INTRODUCTION

This book is a collection of essays and treatises written by Dušan Puvačić in England, during the time he was lecturing on Yugoslav language and litrature at several Universities (Lancaster, London and Cambridge). He made his name in literary criticism in the Belgrade publication “Književne novine”, where he worked as a prominent young translator of Anglo-Saxon critical theory. Dušan Puvačić was one of the first of the new generation of Serbian critics who, in their daily critical work and without boastful philosophising and decorative scholarliness, managed to outgrow impressionism, rhetorical ambiguity, fluffy equilibrium, dogmatic classification, committee obstinacy and loud media pomp. Instead of impression they offered certainty. They were unafraid of clear and resolute judgement, heavy words and brittle tone. They made use of logical conclusions in logical sentences, where, in the Anglo-Saxon style “you call a spade, a spade”. Critical freedom is not the freedom of anarchy but the freedom of deserved rights. “The right to criticism”, Puvačić says,”is not a gift bestowed to anyone to use as they see fit, for purposes that lie beyond the boundaries of literature and outside the true extent of criticism. The right to criticism is something that is achieved and which is, through continued achievement, defended, secured and expanded.”

It is from these foundations that Dušan Puvačić’s most prolific critical years evolved. As well as daily critiques, he occasionally wrote essays and papers. He gave initial direction to the interpretation of the posthumously published Kuća na osami by Ivo Andrić and linked Andrić’s observations about the Jews and about the roles of Jews as mediators between the Balkan and Levantine cultures. He directly contributed to the literary return of Branko Lazarević, after many years of imposed isolation. He analysed the distrustful and bitter attitude of Miloš Crnjanski towards the English, not just set out on the pages of Roman o Londonu but also in his scattered notes from England, where he spent a considerable part of his life as a British citizen. Puvačić wrote his daily criticism in clear and measured sentences; his style clear, his thoughts concise, his taste assured. He was able to find themes and to read from a particular corner, in a way that others did not normally manage.

In the book Balkan Themes, as in his interpretation of the main characteristics of Serbian prose from the 1960s and 1970s, Dušan Puvačić has noticed certain details which had escaped many others – that, with the spread of a more realistic literary style and the transformation of the legacy of realism, those very same themes that were attracting Serbian authors were also dominant throughout the rest of the world. These are: the confrontation of an individual with the destructive force of historical reality, “the lack of confidence in the moral and psychic stability of the world, an active doubtfulness of reality which provides no protection from the feelings of dread and helplessness; a general infection of evil, hatred and uncertainty/instability; an attempt to over-ride personal destiny with either contemplation or

force". The resistance to history, says Dušan Puvačić, "the energy of negativism, the dark force of resistance and obstinacy" and "the cult of the victim" give strong support to Serbian modern prose, in which resides "a lonely, alienated man, broken inside and wounded on the outside, repressed by feelings of weakness, smallness and nothingness, chased by hate, guilt and the feelings of absurdity". He looks for a common denominator to the Serbian prose of that time and notices the effort by which literature has distorted and demystified historical and social reality. He greets the sharpening of critical consciousness through which writers "rudely enter into dialogue with direct forms of existence, discover new areas of evil and force, question the echoes of internal emptiness or bring back to life wounded memories." He found the material for that poetry of sacrifice and negation in the majority of writers of prose about whom he wrote as a literary chronicler. For the ten or so years during which he wrote daily criticisms, Dušan Puvačić has left an original testimony of the evolution of Serbian prose within the process of escaping from dogmatism. He has clearly marked the literary co-ordinates of this new poetry, which undermined the existing aesthetic norm and gave character to the Serbian prose of that time.

Speaking about the trade of criticism as a "pact with the Devil", about the thankless position of critics in the era of a softening party line, Dušan Puvačić has performed a concise and correct cultural, stylistical and morphological analysis of criticism. He has given some kind of moral and expert opinion of the nature of daily criticism and his findings have with time achieved documentary value. That is why this book, Balkan Themes, as well as having theoretical and comparative-literary value, also has moral value for the understanding of the Balkan, Yugoslav and Serbian culture and literature of today.

Predrag Palavestra

The Genesis of the Myth of Kosovo

At the beginning of the fourteenth century the 'humble Serb', through his archbishop Danilo II, turned to the heavenly powers, praying to be saved "from the onslaught of the pagans and from every evil and internecine strife." This appeal speaks eloquently of two elements that threatened the foundations of the Serbian medieval state from without and undermined it from within. 'The pagan onslaught' refers to the Tartar invasion which preceded that of the Turks. 'Internecine strife' points to the quarrels and disunities in the Njemanjić dynasty which took the form of conflicts and wars of brother against brother (Stefan the First-Crowned against Vukan; Dragutin against Milutin), or of father against son (Milutin against Stefan Dečanski or Stefan Dečanski against Stefan Dušan). Already during the reign of Dušan (1308-1355), when the Serbian state attained its peak, the Serbs suffered their first defeat at the hands of the Turks, at Demotika in 1352. After Dušan's death, the Serbs, divided and weakened by the discord and dissensions that accompanied the untimely decease of their powerful ruler, failed to overcome the Turks once more on the Marica in 1371.

After the battle of Marica Turkish power in the Balkans consolidated and spread. At first the Turks acted to compel Serbian and other Christian rulers to enter into a state of vassalage and to agree to undertake definite financial obligations. Such an obligation was imposed upon the king Marko (later the most popular hero of Serbian oral poetry) who thus retained his father's title of king as well as his territory, indeed somewhat curtailed, not by the Turks but by his Christian opponents, and ruled from his 'fortified city' of Prilep. Similar relations with the Turks were held by brothers Dejanović, Dragoš and Konstantin, nephews of Emperor Dušan, whose land stretched in Eastern Macedonia, between Kumanovo and Strumica. Toma Preljubović survived for a time as ruler of Epirus, but due exclusively to Turkish protection.

During the 1380s Turkish penetration into the Balkans, mainly raids for plunder and reconnaissance, grew more and more frequent, but in these the Turks preponderantly suffered defeat. Among the worst of these defeats was that at Pločnik in 1386 and at Bileće in 1388. Having been informed of Turkish preparations for a new war against his country, the Serbian ruler, Prince Lazar Hrebeljanović, turned for help to the Bosnian king Tvrtko and to the Hungarian king Sigismund offering him vassalage in return.

The battle took place on June 15th in the 'old calendar' (June 28th in the 'new calendar') 1389. The armies were led by their rulers, the Serbs under Lazar and the Turks under Murad together with his two sons, Bajazid and Jacub. Lazar was supported, among others, by units of Bosnians under Vlatko Vuković as well as Croatian 'crusaders' led by Ivan Paližna. The Serbian rulers who were Turkish vassals were either afraid or unwilling to take sides with the Serbs. Some, like Konstantin Dejanović for example, gave food and shelter to the Turkish armies passing through their territories en route for Kosovo and even joined them with their own troops. History does not tell us what role was played by king Marko in the battle of Kosovo. The behaviour of these Serbian rulers may be explained by their fear of the huge Turkish

forces, but also by the fact that, as Vladimir Ćorović wrote, “There was a lack of real national solidarity and that the rulers, because of personal interest, lost any feeling for a unified state. Selfish individuals did not yet sufficiently understand that with the loss of the central state their own position would become more difficult and their significance in the eyes of the conqueror weaker.”[1]

At the beginning of the battle the Serbs broke the right wing of the Turkish army, which was commanded by the Sultan’s son Jacub, perhaps due to the confusion caused by the death of Sultan Murad killed by a Serbian noble of the name Miloš, who pretended that he wished to surrender. Miloš’s surname is not recorded in contemporary sources. Under suspicion of treason, Miloš had decided upon this sacrifice and exploit to show Lazar ‘who is faithful’ (‘ko je vjera’). The Turks killed him on the spot. The Sultan’s second son, Bajazid, made best use of the resulting confusion. To punish his brother Jacub for his failure and, at the same time, to rid himself of the rival to the throne, he ordered him to be killed. With fresh troops Bajazid mounted a counter-attack in which the Serbian centre, under the command of Lazar, suffered most heavily. Wounded, Lazar was taken prisoner and beheaded together with a large number of Serbian prisoners, at the side of the dead Murad. Despite heavy losses the commanders of both wings of the Serbian army, Vuk Branković and Vlatko Vuković, survived.

After the battle Bajazid did not continue to advance into Serbia but returned to Jedren in order to ensure his succession to the throne. This gave the impression that the battle of Kosovo had not ended with a decisive Turkish victory. The Bosnian commander Vlatko Vuković reported to Tvrtko that it had been a Christian victory and Tvrtko passed this report on to various places (via Venice and Florence it even reached Paris). Although the Serbian state was not to fall to the Turks until 1459, the Serbs, however, saw the battle of Kosovo as an event of extreme tragic significance. It was felt that “there was no longer anybody who could offer worthy resistance to the mighty onslaught and who would be able to defeat it… Lazar’s death was immediately seen as a conscious sacrifice for the preservation of the national and state honour and that it might serve as an inspiration and example of chivalrous duty to the fatherland for future generations.”[2] It was in this understanding that what was to come to be known as the legend of Kosovo, or the Kosovo myth, had its origin.

This myth was to receive its basic features during the first thirty years succeeding the battle of Kosovo in a series of texts devoted to the cult of prince Lazar. The earliest relate to the year 1391 or 1392 on the occasion of the removal of Lazar’s relics from Kosovo (Priština) to the monastery Ravanica and it is considered that the author was most probably the patriarch Danilo III. The authorship of the majority of these texts remains undecided to the present day, while for a small number it has been confirmed with certainty. These texts belong, generally speaking, to two groups. These are either ‘eulogies’ to prince Lazar (in which he is the person the writer addresses or of whom he writes), or his ‘lives’ (in which his works and

[1] Istorija srpskog naroda, 1997
[2] Ibid

person are extolled). Lazar's virtues are described in various ways, but the basic tone does not differ from text to text. For example, in her *Eulogy to Prince Lazar (Pohvala knezu Lazaru)* embroidered in gold in 1402 as a cover for Lazar's tomb in Ravanica, the nun Jefimija says: "From your youth up you were nurtured in all that is beautiful on this earth"; "In all goodness did you rejoice the hearts of Christians entrusted to your care and with manly heart and desire for piety did you go out against the evil dragon and enemy of the Christian churches"; and "The dragon did you slay and received from God the wreath of martyrdom." In the Eulogy written by his son Stefan Lazarević (1404), Lazar is the "Great autocrat, an earthly miracle"; "Great prince, the unwavering pillar of righteousness, gulf of true knowledge and profundity of wisdom, a mind of flame"; he leads his soldiers "Like a shepherd and leader, wisely"; "to receive the wreath of a martyr". In those eulogies not written by members of Lazar's family the centre of attention is directed to his bearing on the eve and during the battle. In the *Historical Slovo* of the patriarch Danilo by Ravničanin I, Lazar addresses his lords and soldiers with these words: "Let us go, brothers and children, let us go to meet the exploit that awaits us, following the example of Christ, the giver of rewards. Let us serve our duty by our deaths and let us give the limbs of our bodies unmercifully to be hacked to pieces for honour and for our fatherland and God will certainly take pity upon our relics and will not utterly destroy our people and our land… Better for us death in glory than life in shame. Better for us death in battle by the sword than to turn life into shame. Better for us death in battle by sword than to turn our backs to the enemy. Much have we lived for worldly things, therefore let us try for a short time to bear the exploit of martyrdom, that we may live for eternity in heaven". The soldiers' reply to these words was (according to Danilo III): "We shall not spare ourselves from dying for our fatherland… Let us die, that we may for ever live. Let us offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice…Let us not spare our lives, that we may be to others a compelling example."

To this fundamental basis of the Kosovo legend, into which is woven the idea of the outstanding valour of the Serbian warriors and their choice of the heavenly kingdom, is added the belief that defeat was inevitable due to the vast superiority in numbers of the Turkish forces, the treachery within their own Serbian ranks and God's punishment for "our sins". One anonymous account mentions the relative strength of the two armies. Lazar had "more than a hundred thousand men", but Murad had "not less than three hundred thousand".

In Danilo's *Historical Slovo* by Ravničanin I, Turkish superiority is still more impressive: Lazar was attacked by "Amurad, emperor of Persia together with a multitude of Agarians, so many they could not be counted, such that, compared with them, we were like a river to the sea and when they fell upon our land and set themselves against it, there was no place to hide, for the wild beast came roaring like a lion, seeking to devour the Christian flock and to destroy our fatherland".

Treachery, as a cause of the defeat, is mentioned only in one text, while it is hinted at in various ways in several others, by reference to "foes visible and invisible", "evil people" who "wrought evil deeds", or to Lazar as a man "whom enemies desired to overthrow out of envy".

It is characteristic of these early texts regarding the Kosovo tragedy that neither the traitor nor the hero who killed Murad are named. Murad's killer was first identified in Serbian literature by Konstantin Mihailović in his *Turkish Chronicle* at the end of the 15th century, a hundred years after the battle, and Vuk Branković was named as the traitor by the author of a chronicle from the beginning of the 17th century which is preserved in a Latin translation. According to Ljubomir Kovačević, this states that "the voivodas, betraying their prince, fled, Vuk Branković and others. Prince Lazar, seeing their betrayals, also turned to flee, but was captured by one of the enemy who inflicted a wound from which… he died on June 15th".

These two personifications of heroism and treachery were mentioned by foreign sources earlier than by Serbian; Miloš by the Byzantine historian Halkokondil (1483) and both Vuk and Miloš by the Turkish historian Ashik-pasha Zade (1484) and by the Dubrovnik writer Mavro Orbin (1601). "If, for the sake of the cult of Lazar, the names of all those taking part in the battle of Kosovo are excluded from the Kosovo cycle, why did the name of Miloš remain so long concealed and the name of Vuk even longer?" asks Vojislav Djurić in his study *The Battle of Kosovo in Serbian Literature* and he replies that "this remains an open question".

That their own sins contributed to the tragedy of Kosovo is most definitely expressed in Danilo's *Historical Slovo*: "Because of our sins we too were struck by an arrow of God", by which the Turks are seen as the executors of divine will. In the same text appears the concept of the "last time" (Doomsday) to which many writers, both old and new, have linked the Kosovo tragedy. "And there was a new martyr, Lazar, in these, last days".

Two texts from the 15th century complete the early accounts of the tragedy of Kosovo: *The Life of Stefan Lazarević* by Konstantin the Philosopher and the already quoted *Memoirs of a Janissary* or *Turkish Chronicle* by Konstantin Mihailović. Konstantin the Philosopher's text contains only one addition to the descriptions of the Kosovo battle in earlier manuscripts: the accounts of Murad's death. Mihailović's *Memoirs* (written in Poland and published in Polish and again in Czech in the 15th and 16th centuries) devote much greater attention to the idea of disunity and treason. Describing the battle, Konstantin Mihailović says: "The lords who were loyal to Prince Lazar fought truly and heroically beside him, but others turned a blind eye to the battle and, because of such treachery and disunity (and the envy of bad and worthless people) the battle was lost".

There were so many traitors that Bajazid, disgusted by what he saw, condemned them to death, saying: "If you could be so unfaithful to your lord in his need, then you could be the same to me".

This detail is not in the Serbian tradition. Mihailović also mentions that the Serbs lost the battle because "God Himself so willed it because of our sins" and continues to give a multitude of new details, but excludes the most important part of the Kosovo legend: why and how did Miloš kill Murad?

The greatest Serbian writer of the 18th century, Zaharija Orfelin suggests in his poem *The Serbian Lament* a new attitude to the myth of Kosovo. Orfelin repeats the idea of earlier laments that the Kosovo defeat was the reason for the endless disasters of the Serbian

people, but he differs from them in his thirteen-syllable lines in that, in his poem, Serbia weeps over herself alone and blames her fate as much on foreigners as on her own children. For foreigners the Serbs are merely slaves; erstwhile friends “now show themselves as my great enemies”; in her trouble “both her sister… and her neighbours and friends” have left her; her sons “laid down their fine guns and their sharp sabres”; “everywhere they fell into subjection, into great calamity”; “all my leaders took refuge”; seeking their own glory, they oppress me”. The last gasp of Serbian heroism Orfelin links to Kosovo and between the heroes who perished in the battle he makes no distinction: “All my glorious valour on Kosovo perished, and who shall console me, it is all gone”.

A similar attitude to the heroes of Kosovo was to be taken by Milan Rakić in the 20th century: “Your service was that you were the last”.

For Njegoš, the greatest poet of the 19th century, the greatest measure of heroism was that shown on the battlefield. Njegoš ranks heroes by the degree of their bravery. The first, without equal, is Miloš, while Lazar does not even number among Njegoš’s heroes. “All three of them”, says Vojislav Djurić, “have strayed from the old cult texts, in which the only named hero is Lazar, as also from the folk epic in which Lazar, with faults, and Miloš, faultless, are the main heroes among many outstanding and named warriors. Poets of the 19th and 20th centuries were not to follow any of these three. Neither, like Njegoš, did they place them in order, nor, like Orfelin and Rakić, take them as a whole, but rather they accepted their measures and – writing of various moments and personalities of Kosovo (among them the mother and the maid) and of the sufferings of later generations – developed, broadened and deepened the myth of Kosovo.

In the beginning of the 16th century the Kosovo myth began to take on its final form in the texts of two men from Dubrovnik, Feliks Petančić and Lujo Crijević, and in the writings of the Byzantine writer Duka which were translated into Italian by an unknown writer from either Dubrovnik or Boka. In the translated text of Duka for the first time there appear details which were to become basic elements of the Kosovo legend. These are, first of all, Lazar’s address to his soldiers on the eve of the battle; the secret correspondence between Miloš and Murad which Miloš reveals to Lazar; the prince’s banquet and the toast suggesting treason given to Miloš; Miloš’s departure to the Turks with his lance reversed; the slaying of Murad and Miloš’s death; the naming of the traitor (Dragoslav Probišić and not Vuk Branković); Lazar’s execution following his being taken prisoner after he had learned of Miloš’s faithfulness. In the opinion of Miroslav Pantić in his *Prince Lazar and the Battle of Kosovo in the Ancient Literature of Dubrovnik and Kotor*, the translator of Duka took all this “most probably from contemporary poems, in the first place oral”.

Feliks Petančić in his *History of Turkey*, written in Latin in 1502, gives his own version of the battle of Kosovo which in many essential features differs from the above as well as from the oral tradition; Murad’s killer is named as Milon and he decided upon his undertaking because Lazar accused certain of his nobles of receiving gifts from the Turks and demanded that they might sooner kill him “than they should betray him and go over to the Turks”.

Milon admits that he has taken gifts but denies that he is a traitor, assuring the Prince that he will prove his faith when he comes face to face with the Turks. This he does: “His right hand, as an eternal earnest of faith and glory, hangs to this very day in silver chain on the gateway of Brusa”, Petančić asserts.

Lujo Crijević in his Latin texts written between 1500 and 1527, keeps to the basic facts of the legend already mentioned, but, as Pantić says, there are a number of new details “in the fact themselves and in the context in which he places them and in the manner in which he gives them”.

Here, above all else, is the statement that Miloš was accused out of jealousy by one of his rivals; the detail concerning the goblet which Lazar gives to Miloš, together with the wine with which he toasts him; the description of the battle itself together with a mass of details concerning the behaviour of the warriors on both sides; “of the cunning of the Turkish commanders and of Lazar’s fatal change of horses and his still more fatal fall into a pit covered with brushwood which huntsmen had dug in order to catch wild beasts”.

Everything, says Pantić, points to the fact “that the Kosovo legend lived on the soil of Dubrovnik” and that Crijević took as his source some oral poems.

Almost a hundred years after Crijević, Mavro Orbin in his *The Kingdom of the Slavs* (*Regno delli Schiavoni*) written in 1601 in Italian “developed the Kosovo legend to its most complete form in historiography” (V. Djurić). In many aspects Orbin relied on Crijević, but he also gave much that was his own. The quarrel between Lazar’s daughters and the dues between their husbands Miloš Kobilić and Vuk Branković are given as the cause of Vuk’s treason in his ambition to take over Lazar’s throne. “Vuk Branković escaped with almost all his people”, says Orbin, “since (as some say) he had secret negotiations with Murad in which he agreed to betray (as he did) his father-in-law so as to gain his principality. Thus, after Lazar’s death, he remained ruler of a part of Raška”.

The few folk songs about Kosovo, written down at the end of the 17th century (one only) or the middle of the 18th, are either “entirely outside the theme of the Kosovo drama” (V. Djurić) or completely bereft of poetic value. The folk stories with Kosovo themes are also without artistic value, yet they are interesting not only for showing how much the Serbian people were preoccupied with Kosovo, but also because in them there is a different emphasis on details of the Kosovo myth than appears in the folk epics. In the stories, for example, the fault of the Serbs themselves for their defeat at Kosovo, because they either refused to go to the battle or were late in arrival, is stressed more strongly. Some, again, because of their impious or impertinent behaviour on the way to Kosovo drew upon them the “wrath of God”. In the stories Lazar gives far more time to cursing those who, for the most various excuses, failed to come to Kosovo than he does to blessing those who answered his summons. His curses are directed against not only individuals and individual towns but against entire districts.

In the stories concerning Miloš his heroism is stressed as well as his supernatural lineage (the son of a dragon nurtured on the milk of a nymph), his interest in giving money to

and founding monasteries, his bearing in battle and his presence in all areas of Serbia. Stories about the third key figure of the Kosovo myth, Vuk Branković, are fairly rare and largely limited to his being followed by the curse that results from his treason and to accounts of his death. There are even some stories concerning the origin of the name Kosovo.

Not many lyrical poems about Kosovo have been recorded. In them, naturally, the heroic elements of the legend are not emphasised, but rather they express “the warm and intimate relation of the Serbian people to the Kosovo heroes” (V. Djurić).

The myth of Kosovo took on its final form and its finest literary realisation in the Serbian poems of the Kosovo cycle which Vuk Karadžić recorded and published in his collection of folk poetry (in 1823 and 1833). Even a cursory analysis of the Kosovo myth in Serbian folk poetry would require far more time than is at my disposal. I will therefore limit myself to just several observations. The main person of the Kosovo ‘magic circle’ (Prince Lazar, Miloš Obilić and Vuk Branković) remain faithful to the role given to them by the legend. All that Vuk does is limited to one single plot, namely to eliminate Miloš with Lazar’s aid and thus to deprive both the Prince and the state of their main support. In the words of Vojislav Djurić, “one senses that he is cast in all the evils of the end of time”.

Although natural allies as defenders of state independence, Prince Lazar and Miloš are so different that conflict and misunderstanding between them are inevitable. To the inconsistent, vain, quick-tempered and vacillating prince is opposed Miloš, with his unshakeable loyalty, bereft of vanity, self-controlled and true to his conscience and high ethical principle. As the personification of the patriotic hero and representative of the cult of creating monasteries, he most clearly defines the ethics of the Kosovo myth.

The broad mythical picture which was created over centuries gained, in one poem of the Kosovo cycle, *The Fall of the Serbian Empire*, a new and interesting detail. The Virgin sends a message to Lazar in which she asks him which empire he would choose, the “heavenly” or the “earthly”. Since the earthly empire is “for little time”, but the heavenly is “for ever and for ever” the Prince easily solves his dilemma, even though aware of the fateful consequences of such a choice. In a second poem, *Fragments from Various Poems of Kosovo*, this moral choice is portrayed as a conscious result of a clearly defined historic pressure. Sultan Murad offers Lazar either life as a vassal or death on the battlefield:

“Heh Lazar, ruler of the Serbs!
There never was nor shall there ever be
One country that shall have two rulers:
One raja that shall pay two tributes:
Both of us can, therefore, not be rulers.
Therefore send to me the keys and tribute,
The golden keys of the gates of all your towns,
And the tribute for full seven years:
If you will not do what I demand,

Then come you straightway to Kosovo plain
So we may divide the kingdom with our sabres."

As he reads Murad's "book" (as it is called in the poems), Lazar weeps tears that foretell the inevitability of his honourable choice. As Svetozar Koljević states, in his book *The Epic in the Making*, "both these details attain a rich epic life because they dramatise Lazar's predicament, his moral impulse to fight for his honour against all the odds of worldly history".

No doubt, like all myths, the Kosovo myth has been used, in the stream of history, both honourably but also frequently abused. "Kosovo became a myth of warfare of a warlike people so that, in its more extremely distorted forms, it became a warcry of warlike tribal leaders" wrote Zoran Mišić in a text entitled *What is the Kosovo Ideal*, published in 1961. His answer to this question appears on the surface to be a defence of the Kosovo myth of today, when, once again it is being subjected to abuses as well as to unjust accusations. The myth of Kosovo, says Mišić, is neither the Vidovdan temple of Meštrović, nor the church on Oplenac, nor is it the četnik knife "drawn in the name of Kosovo, for Kosovo is neither četništvo nor a knife. The Kosovo ideal is no soldiers' motto, even though soldiers have emblazoned it on their banners, nor is it a weapon of vengeance, even though wars are conducted to avenge Kosovo. The Kosovo ideal is not the same as the sacred duty to avenge and defeat".

"Let us attempt to separate the Kosovo ideal from all those who during the centuries, for good or evil, have stood for Kosovo", Mišić continues. "Let us return to the sources themselves, namely the folk songs and we shall see that the Kosovo ideal is that final, uncompromising answer to the question of the sense of man's existence. We shall see that it is the choice of the hardest, most uncompromising path, that is the only true one. To choose the path of Kosovo is to reject all that is deceptive gain and the glory of greed, to abandon what is attainable for love of the unattainable, to desire, in the spirit of Njegoš, that which cannot be. This means to accept the game that he who loses wins, by death to achieve victory, to bet on the card of the impossible, the only one that does not fail."

The Struggle with Love: The Theme of Sevdah in Bosnian Folk Songs

After the surrender and beheading of the last Bosnian king, Stjepan Tomašević, in 1463, Bosnia was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire. Although some small areas held out and continued to resist - for instance, Hercegovina fell only in 1483 and the town of Jajce in 1528 - the Turkish occupation of the country was comparatively easy. After the gradual schism between the Eastern and Western Churches (often dated from 1037), Bosnia became exposed to both influences, but this already complicated situation was further increased by the spread of the Bogomil heresy and the formation of a 'Bosnian Church' in the 11th century.

Bogomilism became the faith not only of the common people but of many landlords as well. Despite the fierce persecution of Bogomils by both Christian churches, the heresy continued to spread and it became an essential factor in the subsequent development of the country. “The iron of papal persecution had entered into their ancestors’ souls, and the legacy thus inherited influenced the whole future of Bosnia.”[1] When the Turks came they found themselves welcome to a large section of the population, which, as W. Miller says in his *Essays on the Latin Orient*,

> “had preferred to be conquered by the Sultan than converted by the Pope; and, when once they had been conquered, they did not hesitate to be converted also. The Mussulman creed possessed not a few points of resemblance with their own despised heresy. It conferred, too, the practical advantage upon those who embraced it of retaining their lands and their privileges. Thus Bosnia presents us with the curious phenomenon of an aristocratic caste, Slav by race yet Mohammedan by religion. Hence the country affords a striking contrast to Serbia. There the Mohammedans were never anything more than a foreign colony of Turks; here the Mohammedans were native Slavs, men of the same race as the Christians, whom they despised”[2].

When the Bogomils converted to Islam the landowners and members of the aristocracy became Turkish begs. While they preserved their own language, they adopted the dress, the titles, and many of the customs of the victorious Turkish invaders. “They displayed”, says W. Miller in the same essay, “the customary zeal of converts and out-Ottomaned the Ottomans in their religious fanaticism“[3]. Although they “carefully preserved the heirlooms of their Bogomil

1 W. Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient*, Cambridge: The University Press, 1921, p.495

2 Ibid., p. 494.

3 Ibid.

forefathers, the Serb speech, and the old Glagolitic script", at times, they even became "keener in the cause of Islam than the commander of the Faithful himself"[4]. The Christian peasants, the 'raja', deprived of any rights, were less keen to follow and accept the Turkish ways, and it explains, to a certain degree, the differences between the Bosnian folk songs of towns and those of the country. While in the first the Oriental influence is obvious, in the latter it is almost negligible.

The Turkish occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina lasted for four hundred years, until 1878, when, under the provisions of the Treaty of Berlin, the two provinces were put under Austro-Hungarian administration, only to be annexed to the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on 7 October 1908. The centuries of Turkish rule provided many opportunities for the Turkish civilization to mould and influence consciousness, mentality, the way of life of the indigenous population, and with it, the Bosnian and Hercegovinian folk song. The impact of Turkish culture and of the Turkish language on the culture and the language of the people in Bosnia and Hercegovina (as well as in the whole of the Balkans) influenced all aspects of material and spiritual life. The Turks were the force instrumental in creating and transforming urban centres of the Balkans. "From culinary terms to obscenities Turkish linguistic elements constitute a common denominator (not the only one, to be sure) for the spoken form of all Balkan languages", claims Kostas Kazakis in his paper on *The Status of Turkisms in the Present-Day Balkan Languages*[5]. The Turkish 'melos' performed a similar role in the music of the Balkans.

Basically, there are two kinds of Bosnian singing: village singing, widespread mostly in rural areas, and town singing, popular mainly, but not exclusively, among the Moslem population of big and small towns. The older way of village, polyphonic singing is widespread in a considerable part of former Yugoslavia and it is characterized by the narrow range of melody and gradual progression of tones. The main singer leads, with the others, usually two singers, accompanying him. These songs have only two stanzas.

When visiting Bosnia and Hercegovina in 1875, Sir Arthur Evans (1851-1941) had heard some Bosnian songs, undoubtedly of this kind, and made the following comment:

> "But the songs, though interesting, were not beautiful, and, to tell the truth, were often more like a succession of street-cries than any other sound, human or divine! This was mainly owing to what was the chief peculiarity of the singing - the long stress, namely, laid by the voice on the last syllable or the last trochee, insomuch that success in a

4 Ibid., p. 495.

5 *Aspects of the Balkans*. Edited by Henrik Birnbaum and Speros Vryonis, Jr, 1972, p. 89.

singer seemed to lie in the ability of keeping on at the concluding howl longer than his fellow"[6].

Originally, singing town songs, or 'sevdalinkas', to instrumental accompaniment was not widely spread either. However, later, they began to be sung to the accompaniment of an instrument called a 'saz'. It is a kind of lute with a long fingerboard which may be made with more than ten strings; it is usually tuned to three voices (G sharp, C sharp, F sharp). It is of Oriental origin, as is another stringed instrument of the lute type, called 'šargija', which is also used for accompaniment. A šargija also has a long fingerboard, with wooden crossbars; it usually has six strings which are also tuned to three voices. In most recent times, the most popular instrument used for accompaniment has been the accordion, when sevdalinkas are sung in small companies and among friends. Popular singers, whose records are readily available in the shops, are always accompanied by string orchestras, in which some of these traditional instruments sometimes find a place.

What happened in other parts of the world must have happened in the Balkans. No folk music may be said to belong to only one national group. Musical and linguistic traditions of former inhabitants, or of the peoples they have come in touch with, must have influenced singing of any ethnic group. The centuries of migrations, invasions and conquests contributed to the increased contact between both close and distant musical cultures. Gradually, a national group develops its own musical idiom, and the songs are passed orally, with the folk singer playing a creative role while performing. It is impossible to say how many songs have disappeared, and how those which have survived have changed. What is possible to talk about are the forms and the contents of the songs which have been preserved and recorded for the first time in a considerable number only in and since the 1850s[7].

The Bosnian and Hercegovinian sevdalinkas don't differ, in the ways they have developed and survived, from any other group of Yugoslav or Balkan songs. (It must be emphasized that sevdalinkas are not only Bosnian, but Hercegovinian songs as well, because the matter of a separate territorial identity is of the greatest importance and pride to Hercegovinians; but they are usually called Bosnian for the sake of simplicity). But what distinguishes them, as well as some other folk songs in other parts of the Balkans (particularly in Macedonia and South Serbia), is their oriental flavour.

If we listened to one such song, for instance a very popular one entitled *U Stambolu na Bosforu* (*In Stambul on the Bosphorus*), we would recognize immediately not only its

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6 Sir Arthur Evans, *Through Bosnia and the Hercegovina on Foot during the Insurrection*, August and September 1875, London, 1877, p. 137.

7 See Albert B. Lord, 'The Effect of the Turkish Conquest on Balkan Epic Tradition'. *Aspect of the Balkans*, pp. 298-318.

Oriental musical features, but its equally evident Turkish language elements in the contents. It is, maybe, even a Turkish song. The song is about an old pasha lying on his deathbed; he summons all his dervishes to reward them for their faithful services to his harem. 'Therefore', he says, 'let each of you take at least one of my wives'. While he is departing from this life, just one teardrop is shed from 'the old Moslem's eye'.

In addition to the two toponyms from the title, the number of Turkish words used in the song is very high: paša; mujezin; minaret; Alah ilalav, selam alejhum (repeated six times); saraj; derviš; harem; minder; musliman. Many Oriental musical ingredients are also present, but may we say that this is really an example of a sevdalinka, one of those love songs 'that often express a helpless yearning and lament the pangs of unrequited or despised love', as it is commonly described?[8]

We may, because in spite of a popular and widespread misconception, sevdalinkas offer a somewhat bewildering variety of themes. On the other hand, what distinguishes sevdalinkas from other types of love songs is not so much their content, but how they are performed. One may listen to the same song performed by two different singers and conclude that one version is a sevdalinka whilst the other one is not. Every sevdalinka is not a love song, and every Bosnian love song is not necessarily a sevdalinka. But as far as *U Stambolu na Bosforu* is concerned, wouldn't it be proper to say that the old pasha's desperate love of his fading life is just what the word sevda (or sevdah in its Serbo-Croat form), in one of its meanings, implies: a 'hopeless passion', an utmost form of 'longing' and 'melancholy', which are appropriate moods of any sevdalinka? But in spite of all the bitterness and despair of the dying pasha's thoughts, this song has something almost cheerful and mischievous in its fatalism of mood and tone. The adverb 'barem' (in 'jednu ženu barem' - 'one wife, at least') somehow disturbs the solemnity of the occasion and introduces the idea that many new passions will spring after the pasha's death, and that, being a good Moslem, he will be properly rewarded in heaven.

The very name of these songs (sevdalinke) suggests their Oriental origin, for 'sevda' is an Arabic word, from an Arabic root meaning 'black'. In Turkish, as in Arabic, it is the exact equivalent of 'melancholy', one of four 'humours' of medieval medicine (the 'black humour'). Hence its other meanings in Turkish sprang up, namely: a 'passion', especially a 'black hopeless passion', a 'pining' or an 'obsession'[9]. In Serbo-Croat, however, where this word appears not as sevda, but as sevdah, its first meaning is just 'love', but 'love', I would say, which often implies some of those meanings contained in its Turkish usage. However, as H.

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8 J. A. Cuddon, *A Dictionary of Literary Terms*, London, 1979, p. 620.

9 I am grateful to Dr Margaret Bainbridge, of the London School of Oriental and Afrikan Studies, for providing this information.

C. Hony's Turkish-English Dictionary suggests, one of the meanings of the word 'sevda' can be 'love' - in addition to 'melancholy', 'spleen', 'passion' and 'intense longing'.

In Serbo-Croat there is also an adjective, 'sevdali', meaning 'enamoured' or 'madly in love', as well as a verb 'sevdalisati', meaning 'to be engaged in the affairs of love', 'to court', or 'to woo'. The word 'sevdalinka' has been formed by adding to the adjective 'sevdali' a suffix '-nka', which is used in forming feminine nouns (omladinac-omladinka; Srbijanac-Srbijanka).

Some writers who have written about sevdalinkas suggest that the name of the songs is of a more recent origin than the songs themselves. The first nineteenth century collectors of Bosnian and Hercegovinian urban songs used other, different names for them: šeherske or šeherli pjesme (šeher - big town, therefore, 'urban songs'); dilberke (dilber-songs from dilber - 'sweetheart', 'darling'); ašiklije (ašik-songs; from ašik - 'love'), or ašiklijice (which is a diminutive of ašiklije). One collector, Anton Hangi by name, called them haremske pjesme (harem songs).[10] The Serbian romantic poet Jovan Ilić (1823-1901) used for his songs of love and passion, in which he glorified and praised the Orient, the word sevdalije which, in modern Serbo-Croat, can mean either 'one who sings sevdalinkas' or, just, a 'womanizer'. Some commentators suggest that the term sevdalinka was first used by the travelling Gipsy musicians who, since the early nineteenth century, have been most responsible for the spreading of Bosnian love songs in other parts of what was Yugoslavia, or even all over the Balkans.[11]

But, leaving aside these uncertainties about the origins of the name, another uncertainty should be mentioned. Those who have written about sevdalinkas also disagree about the date of the first of these songs. While some put the date of their origins as far back as the sixteenth century, others point out that they must have emerged much later, probably some time in the eighteenth century.

What the evolution of sevdalinkas looked like is uncertain, since their words were first written down in the mid-nineteenth century. Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864) included many of them in his collection of 'women's songs'. Even less is known about the evolution of their music, because the first recordings were made only in the twentieth century, when a more systematic research began.

Prof. Vlado Milošević (1901-1990), a composer, musicologist and the leading expert on and collector of sevdalinkas, has an interesting theory to offer. He claims that the sevdalinka was born when an 'augmented second' became a dominant feature of its musical idiom. The 'augmented second' is, Milošević points out, 'that magic interval' which lends to a song “that particular flavour of sevdah, the picturesqueness of distant horizons and unknown

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10 Vlado Milošević, *Sevdalinka*, Banjaluka, 1964, p. 5.

11 Ahmed Muradbegović, ‘Sevdalinka, pesma feudalne gospode’, Politika, Belgrade, 5 February 1940.

regions, the restlessness of unfulfilled dreams and many other thing which are difficult to express". It has the same intoxicating effect as a strong alcoholic drink, and it is the main feature of the sevdalinka melodic line, giving to its music a highly Oriental flavour. The 'augmented second' is, according to Milošević, common to all songs of similar 'musical contents' in the area of the Levantine cultural circle. The other musical features typical of the sevdalinka are: a broad range of melody [12] and heavy melismas (florid ornaments or embellishments); sentences of a long breath and span; the Mixolydian mode, the major and harmonic minor scales with augmented intervals; the songs mostly end on the second tone of the scale[13].

While it is generally accepted that the sevdalinka originated in Bosnian and Hercegovinian towns, where the contacts with the Turkish civilisation were continuous and strong, a disagreement appears again when literary and musical historians come to deciding among which social groups the songs had first emerged. Some, like the German professor, Gerhardt Gezeman (1888-1948), and some Yugoslav authors, argue that the sevdalinka sprang and flourished among the Moslem upper classes[14]. The others, including prof. Milošević[15], point out that the social background of these songs has been much wider and that it encompasses all the strata of town population. Rich Bosnian nobles - agas and begs - did like music, and some of them are known to have kept professional singers in their houses. They expected not only to have singers singing to them, but to have singers who would sing about them. And there is not any doubt that among sevdalinkas there exist a great number of such songs in which well known historical characters and people of a noble stock appear as protagonists. But even more numerous are those in which the social milieu is not clearly defined, or those in which common people of Bosnian towns - merchants, craftsmen, soldiers, or just wives and girlfriends, sing about their various struggles with love.

It has often been said that in sevdalinkas the notes melt into ornaments, and that whoever tried to purify Bosnian singing and deprive it of its ornaments would destroy the very spirit of these songs. Some of the basic features of these songs from Bosnia and Hercegovina are easily recognized in a short description of Oriental music given in the Encyclopaedia Britannica:

> Islamic music is characterized by highly subtle organization of melody and rhythm, augmented by virtuoso improvisation and melodic ornament. Musical forms are closely tied to poetry and often alternate vocal solos with instrumental interludes... Being an

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12 Vlado Milošević, *Sevdalinka*, p. 24-32.

13 Ibid., p. 32.

14 Gerhard Gezeman, 'O bosanskim sevdalinkama', Prosveta, No. 10-12, 1937, p. 682-687.

15 Vlado Milošević, *Sevdalinka*, p. 6.

> essentially vocal music, it displayed many singing and vocal techniques, such as special vocal colour, guttural nasality, vibrato, and other stylistic ornaments. Although the music was based upon strict rules, pre-existing melodies, the performer enjoyed great creative freedom. The artist was expected to bring his contribution to a given traditional piece through improvisation, original ornamentation, and his own approach to tempo, rhythmic patterns, and the distribution of the text over the melody. Thus the artist functioned both as performer and composer.[16]

If one listened, for instance, to a few bars of a song called *Izvi se Mujo na grade (Mujo is soaring above the towns)*, which has as its theme the healing power of love, one would easily recognize some of the above mentioned characterizations of Islamic music in the singing. The song is distinguished by a typical instrumental prelude and interludes. The singing has a distinctive nasal quality. The ornaments are not clearly separated from the basic tune, but are rather merged together with it, and it is not always easy to say where an ornament ends and a tune begins. The values of the notes are not stable and are often changed by the performer. The melodic line is interspersed with numerous glissandi, which lend a highly Oriental flavour to the music. Some musicologists suggest, however, that rich ornamentation is a typical feature not only of Islamic music but of the Byzantine church-singing as well, and that much of the Balkan music must have been very melismatic even before the arrival of the Turks. The singing is sometimes interrupted, and the words are split in two following the demands of rhythm. An added Oriental tenor is given by a frequent usage of words of Turkish origin, which is not surprising, since Turkish was the official language of the Ottoman Empire, and enjoyed considerable prestige among non-Turkish speakers irrespective of their religion.

According to Abdulah Škaljić,[17] the great number of Turkish words in the Serbo-Croat language in general use was due to several factors: the presence of Turkish military and administrative personnel; the influence of native Moslems, some of whom studied in Istanbul; and the diffusion of folk songs and oral literature in general, which were full of words and expressions of Oriental origin. The role Turkisms play in Bosnian sevdalinkas would demand a separate study, but I would like to mention just one example how a careful choice of words may contribute to the meaning of a song. The names used in sevdalinkas are exclusively Oriental (Azra, Emina, Rabija, Zilha, Fata, Ismihana, Omer, Mujo, Hasan, etc.) When a

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16 Encyclopaedia Britannica, Fourteenth Edition, 1929.

17 Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom-hrvatskosrpskom jeziku (*Turkisms in Serbocroat-Croatoserb Language*, Sarajevo, 1973, p. 11-13.

Christian name is used, it is with a special purpose, almost as an understatement suggesting how destructive for love social conventions may be.

In the song *Ali-paša na Hercegovini (Ali-pasha in Hercegovina)* it is obvious straight from the beginning that Ali-pasha's beloved lives far away from him, in Bišće (Bihać), but also that her name is Mara. The name suggests, without any doubt, that she is Christian. So, when we realize that their love for each other is a forbidden love, we are not surprised; but we are deeply moved by the subtlety of tragic feeling which is interwoven into Mara's rather ambiguous, restrained way of accepting and returning Ali-pasha's love, while at the same time realizing that it is futile:

Alipaša na Hercegovini,
l'jepa Mara na Bišću bijaše.

Aj, koliko su nadaleko bili,
jedno drugom jade zadavali.

Knjigu piše paša Alipaša:
'L'jepa Maro, bi li pošla za me?'

S Bišća Mara njemu poručuje:
'Da me prosiš, ne bi pošla za te;
da s'oženiš, bih se otrovala!'

(In Hercegovina lived Ali pasha,
The lovely Mara far off in Bishche.

Ah, they were so far from one another,
That each of them caused sorrow for the other.

Ali pasha wrote to the Christian Mara:
'Lovely Mara, would you be my wife?'

From Bishche Mara sent to him this message:
'If you begged me, I'd not marry you,

But if you took another, I'd take poison!')[18]

Sevdalinkas are remarkable for the range and strength of feeling they express. There is controlled fury of the song *Kaharli sam, večerala nisam (I'm distressed, I haven't had my dinner)*, in which a girl complains about her sweetheart's habit of always being late, and says: 'I cursed him from morning till night. I cursed him, but my heart did not. Why should I curse him when I love him? Why should I curse him when he will marry me!' There is a less controlled anger directed this time against the dawn, which is called 'my enemy' by a young man in the song *Akšam mrače (Dark night)*. In this song the same kind of sexual pleasure is glorified as subtly as in Juliet's words:

Wilt thou be gone? It is not yet near day.
It was the nightingale and not the lark
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of thine ear,[19]

or in the opening lines of John Donne's poem 'The Sun Rising':

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us?[20]

The song is only five lines long:

Evo zore, dušmanina moga,
Koja sviće za dva do tri sata!

Kad bi znala koju dragu ljubim,
Ne b' svanula za dva i tri dana,
A kamoli za dva do tri sata.

(The dawn is approaching, my enemy,
It will get light in two or three hours!

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18 Published in *A Green Pine, an Anthology of Love Poems from the Oral Poetry of Serbia, Bosnia and Hercegovina*. Selected and translated by E. D. Goy, Belgrade, 1990, p. 111.
19 William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Scene V.
20 *Songs and Sonnets*, London, Methuen, 1976, p. 11.

If it knew which lover I'm making love to,
It wouldn't dawn in two or three days,
Let alone in two or three hours.)

There is a fatalistic reconciliation with the waning of love in the following song of only four lines:

Mislio sam, moja mila draga,
Da nas niko zavaditi neće,
Da nas niko rastaviti neće!

Došli dani, rastasmo se sami!

(I used to think, my beloved darling,
That nobody could make us quarrel,
That nobody could part us!

Days passed by, we drifted apart!)

There is an allergy to love expressed in the lines:

Od sevdaha goreg jada nema
Nit žalosti od ašikovanja.

(There is no greater sorrow than sevdah,
Nor greater sadness than lovemaking.)

There is a subtle glorification of physical love in the song *Bol boluje lijepa Hajrija (Beautiful Hajrija is lying ill)*. Three dilbers (sweethearts) come to visit her:

Prvi veli: 'Boluješ li Hajro?'
Drugi veli: 'Bolov'o bi' za te!'
Treći veli: 'I umro bi' za te!'

(The first says: 'Are you ill, Hajra?'
The second says: 'I would willingly be ill instead of you!'
The third says: 'I would even die instead of you!')

But the mischievous girl replies:

'Niti boluj, nit' umiri za me;
skini fermen, pa lezi uza me!'

('Don't be ill or die for me;
take off your waistcoat and lie by me!')

In some songs there is a characteristic change of tone. In *Nema ljepše cure, od malene Djule (There is no prettier girl than tiny Djula)* the beginning is about blissful happiness, the middle about tragic despair, and the end - just a happy end. Its dominant feature is humour. 'There is no prettier girl than tiny Djula' - says the young man who likes smoking his pipe and making love to his sweetheart. But, alas, she deserts him and marries another man. He is desperate, the nights are long and he is lonely. However, his despair does not last long. There are many pretty girls around, and it is better to waste one's time with girls than to be alone. And so, his heart is warmed by a certain Rabija. However, he makes a surprising point. When he has changed the girl, he switched from smoking a pipe to smoking škija, a rather cheap kind of tobacco. It is true that he does it partly for the sake of rhyme (Rabija-škija), but nevertheless this change provides quite a subtle point, the implication being that he has become somewhat more realistic about girls.

There is, finally, a naive recklessness on the part of a girl, and a mischievous cunning on the part of a young man in the song entitled *Prošetala Suljagina Fata (Suljaga's Fata went for a walk)*, where the similar tone of mockery dominates both the words and the tune. When the young girl is lured into the shop of a rich Mostar bazardžan (merchant), the narrative ends by him locking the door. A folk singer has been as decent as a Victorian novelist, making sure not to be too outspoken.

It is not uncommon that a sevdalinka tells a story. Probably the best example of such a song is *Kad ja podjoh na Bembašu (When I went to Bembaša)*, one of the most popular and most beautiful of the Sarajevo songs. A young man went to the part of the town called Bembaša to fetch some water, and he took his lamb with him. All Bembaša girls were standing by the gates of their houses, only his sweetheart was behind a barred window. He greeted her, 'Good evening', and she answered, 'Come tonight'. He did not come the same night, but the next day. However, she had already got married to another. The intensity of emotions is enhanced by the usage of the first person in the narrative.

It has often been claimed that melancholy is a dominant feature of the Balkan Slavs, or for that matter all Slavs, and that the sevdalinka is the most typical expression of that

sentiment. In my opinion, the sevdalinka owes something to what the prose writer Ivo Andrić (1892-1975) - who made Bosnia central to his fiction - calls, in a different context, the Oriental habit of idleness and the Slav need for excess. Without idleness there would be no songs, and without excessiveness they would be very different. The fact that there were so many things which were common to both Slavs and Turks, melancholy included, contributed to the fact that the native element was not submerged, but enriched under Oriental influence. Andrić's fellow writer Niko Bartulović (1890-1943) makes an interesting point. In his introduction to Andrić's first collection of poetry, *Ex Ponto*, he says that Andrić's "whole heritage has been condensed into the traditional Bosnian inclination to melancholy. The songs of the area he came from, with all their soft minor-key intonation, are nothing but one great sorrow and unspecified longing."[21]

One of the paradoxes of the Bosnian melancholy is that when Bosnians want to entertain themselves in the company of their friends, when they drink and want to be happy, and to have fun - they ask for sad songs. The more cheerful the mood, the sadder the song. So, occasionally, sevdalinka becomes a lament, dominated by a plaintive, almost wailing sound of the singing. For instance, the song *Hasanagin sevdah (Hasanaga's sevdah)* is like an elegy. The words were written by the Serbian poet from Mostar, Aleksa Šantić (1868-1924); it is not known who set them to music. Many of his songs are sung nowadays like sevdalinkas (very popular *Emina* and *Azra*, for example). Šantić loved his Mostar with its unmistakable Oriental character, and the song is not only a story of hopeless love, but also a nostalgic evocation of the good old days, a lament for all things past.

The sevdalinka, in its original form, was not born in taverns and coffee-houses, but in the privacy and seclusion of Moslem homes, in the gardens of roses and hyacinths hidden behind the tall walls of Bosnian courtyards. Sung mostly by Bosnian Moslem women, in their long and lonely hours of waiting for their beloved ones behind the barred windows of their chambers, it preserved its original purity for many years. As soon as it was transplanted to the tavern, some writers claim, it became contaminated in an unhealthy atmosphere of alcohol,

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21 Zagreb, 1918, p. 9.

and began to degenerate into an exaggerated exultation of physical love and an expression of the utmost despair. A new word, dert, became central to it. Dert is Turkish for 'pain',' suffering', 'grief', 'trouble' or 'obsession'. However, when the Bosnians say dert, it is more than that; it is something more complex largely because it is an extremely evocative word. It is when one finds it impossible to live with the pain and longing caused by love, and drinks himself into a stupor, and starts breaking glasses against walls and floors.

The two popular songs, *U djul bašti (In the rose garden)* and *Mujo kuje konja na mjesecu (Mujo is shoeing his horse under the moonlight)* express a similar feeling, the hopelessness of karasevdah ('black sevdah'). In the first one, a young girl, picking roses in her garden, keeps asking her darling, 'Why did you kiss me, and then leave me?' In the second one, Mujo is shoeing his horse not in daylight, but during the night. Asked by his mother why he was doing that at such an inappropriate time, he replies, 'When I think about my dear one, I can't distinguish between the sun and the moon, neither can my horse tell darkness from the cloud'.

However, there are sevdalinka type songs in which there is no mention of any struggle with love. They, like the popular *Bosno moja (Oh, my Bosnia)*, simply praise Bosnia, its numerous green mountains, and its two towns, Sarajevo, 'full of sevdah', and Banjaluka, 'the town of sevdah'. When these songs are heard performed by good singers, one becomes aware that what makes the sevdalinkas dull or brilliant, hackneyed or original, is not what they are about, but how they are performed.

East is East and West is West
Travels of an Englishwoman in Bosnia and Hercegovina

When there is talk of the Englishwomen and Scotswomen who travelled in the South Slav lands and wrote of their experiences and impressions of the Balkans, the name of Maude M. Holbach is usually not to be found among them. Compared with Miss A. P. Irby (1833-1911) and her companion Miss G. Muir Mackenzie, for example, who travelled the Slavonic provinces of European Turkey before the Austrian occupation of Bosnia and Hercegovina, this much younger countrywoman of theirs discovered that part of Europe only at the very beginning of the twentieth century when its Europeanisation had already begun. Moreover, she did not, as did Miss Irby, link her life and work to any particular area of the Balkans so that her memory would be preserved in the collective and historical memory of the land of which she had left such interesting evidence. On the other hand, compared with the book *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* by Rebecca West, who spent several years in Yugoslavia before the Second World War, Maude M. Holbach's two books on "three twin sisters of almost equal though varied charms"[1] - Dalmatia, Hercegovina and Bosnia - are written with far less literary pretentiousness and never enjoyed the fame of a classic of their genre. It is strange, nonetheless, that at a specialised symposium held in 1987 in the English town of Bradford[2], at which discussions were held of the women from the British Isles who, driven by wanderlust, visited the Balkan provinces and wrote about them, nobody made the slightest reference to the work of this woman, even though her accounts of her travels through Dalmatia[3] and Bosnia and Hercegovina, illustrated with photographs taken by her husband, Otto Holbach, are all of varying and considerable interest.

Having become acquainted with and described Dalmatia, her "first love in the Balkans"[4], Maude Holbach, one May morning in 1908, set out with her husband from the Dubrovnik port of Gruž on her pilgrimage to Bosnia and Hercegovina - more securely and comfortably than her predecessors - by the narrow-gauge railway to Mostar. In that first, spring stage of her journey, this Englishwoman, driven by curiosity, saw and described mainly those parts of Bosnia and Hercegovina which were accessible by either train or automobile. After Mostar, she visited Jablanica, Jajce, Banjaluka, Travnik, Sarajevo and its surroundings,

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[1] Maude M. Holbach, *Bosnia and Herzegovina*. London: John Lane, the Bodley Head, New York: John Lane Company, 1910, p. 5.
[2] The conference proceedings were later published in *Black Lambs and Grey Falcons: Women Travellers in the Balkans*, edited by John Allcock and Antonia Young. Bradford, 1991.
[3] Maude M. Holbach, *Dalmatia*. London: John Lane, the Bodley Head, New York: John Lane Company, 1908.
[4] Maude M. Holbach, *Bosnia & Herzegovina*, p. 5.

Goražde and Višegrad. Only the journey from Goražde to Višegrad by raft down the Drina had anything adventurous in it. The second, autumn, stage was far more exciting. The Holbachs found themselves in Bosnia at the time of the political crisis caused by the Austrian annexation, visiting areas reachable only by the more primitive means of transport - horse-drawn vehicles. Before they reached Pljevlja, just as the last Austro-Hungarian troops were leaving Sandžak after thirty years of occupation, the English travellers visited some of the less accessible parts of Bosnia. From Goražde their way led to Foča, Rataj and the valley of the river Sutjeska. On their return from Sandžak they passed through Metalka, Čajniča, Gacko, Trebinje and a succession of villages on the railway-line Sarajevo-Bosanski Brod, as well as the Franciscan monasteries in Sutjeska and Fojnica and the ancient royal town of Bobovac. Impressed by the number and appearance of the feudal castles in the settlements alongside the railway, Mrs. Holbach noted that she could devote an entire book to them.

Although addressed above all to those of her countrymen who were prepared to set out to discover this exotic part of Europe, Maude Holbach's book about Bosnia and Hercegovina is not written as a tourist guide. In it there are, indeed, many useful pieces of advice, but she did not regard herself as a tourist. On the lake at Jajce where, as she says, “rich Mohammedans”[5] withdraw so that in their houses built in the shade of trees they might enjoy the leisure they so greatly love, she feels that not even the rare tourist, like herself, is welcome in that unbroken peace, but at once corrects herself: “Or shall I not rather say travellers, for the wanderers who come so far from the beaten track surely deserve the more serious and dignified appellation”[6].

Any traveller who, at that time, was thinking of journeying to that distant part of the Balkans surely found in this book a wealth of facts without which he would have hesitated to undertake such a journey as that of the author. Speaking about Bosnia, Maude Holbach encourages her reader and also dispels some illusions. Instead of “a wild mountain land inhabited by a half-savage people showing still the traces of oppression”[7], as she herself had expected, she found “this smiling country” with intelligent, naturally courteous people, whose obvious artistic inclinations most clearly and directly show themselves in the richness and luxury of their “national dress”[8], evolved from their “innate, if unconscious, sense of beauty and fitness”[9]. Instead of the backward Turkish provinces described by her countrywomen who visited these lands in the nineteenth century, this woman met with a country which, during the thirty years of Austrian occupation, had changed considerably since “Austria has done

[5] Ibid., p. 65.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid., p. 15.
[8] Ibid., p. 17.
[9] Ibid.

much"[10] for them; with towns linked, as she frequently emphasises, by excellent roads built for the military and a modern railway network built for industry; with well-run vineyards and tobacco plantations, with good hotels and progressive prisons; with "model farms supported by the state"[11], modern factories and industrial buildings. At times, with a true ecological conscience, she asks whether, perhaps, the fruits of civilisation are not the first "blot on the landscape"[12] and whether they have not already begun to threaten this "otherwise ideal spot"[13], its unspoiled beauty of wild nature. In Vitez, coming across "the giant trees of the virgin forest"[14] felled and prepared for transport, she comments: "Bosnia will lose half her charm if her forests fall a victim to the march of civilisation!"[15]

Whenever the English have written about the Balkan peninsula they have usually written nonsense, Rebecca West said in her *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, because they were steeped in the "imperialist idea that it is good to have and therefore apt to draw the false conclusion that those who have not are not good. The nineteenth-century English travellers tended to form an unfavourable opinion of the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Empire on the grounds that they were dirty and illiterate and grasping (as poor people, oddly enough, often are) and cringing and inhospitable and ill-mannered (as frightened people, oddly enough, often are). He condemned them as he condemned the inhabitants of the new industrial hells in Lancashire and Yorkshire, who insisted on smelling offensively, drinking gin to excess, and being rough and rude. Even as he felt glad when these unfortunate fellow-countrymen of his were the objects of missionary efforts by philanthropists drawn from the upper and middle classes, he felt glad because these Christian Slavs were in the custody of the Turks, who were exquisite in their personal habits, cultivated, generous, dignified, hospitable, and extremely polite".[16] Only some "noble women"[17] like Miss Irby spoke the truth concerning the Turkish atrocities. After the fall of the Turks, and, after them the Russian and Austrian Empires, many Englishmen, as Rebecca West affirmed, "regretted that one or the other was not custodian of the Balkans. Even after the war, which showed both these great powers soft as rotten apples, and the Serbs as strong in the saving of European civilization, many Englishmen lamented that the Balkan peoples were not under the tutelage of the charming, cultured Austrians."[18] Maude Holbach's book is written at a time that directly preceded such lamentations, but it contains plenty of elements which justify Rebecca West's

[10] Ibid., p. 16.
[11] Ibid., p. 20.
[12] Ibid., p. 78.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p. 87.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Rebecca West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. London: Macmillan, 1982, p. 1095.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ibid., p. 1096.

views and which point to the fact that our author herself joined in this patronising chorus of regret.

Maude Holbach did not speak Serbo-Croat and could gain any more profound and complex knowledge of the past and present only through conversations with the official persons, civil and military, who were her hosts. This Englishwoman (in all probability, judging by her surname, married to a German) could not but feel flattered and touched by the welcoming and obliging chivalry of Austro-Hungarian officials at the height of the crucial anti-Austro-Hungarian campaign being waged at that time in the press of her country. The annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina had led to changes in British policy towards the struggle of the South Slavs for liberation and unification, since the real fear of a German infiltration to the East over-rode the belief that the strengthening and independence of the Balkan Slavs automatically involved the spread of Russian influence in that part of Europe. Mrs. Holbach does not hesitate to polemicise with the British press. For instance, on the occasion of an outing to Trebević in the company of the 'Prefect' of Sarajevo, baron Mollinary and his friends, she notes that, with the exception of one pure Austrian from Vienna, all the officials - Hungarian, Poles, Italians – "all spoke Serb"[19], contradicting the British newspapers that "Bosnia is entirely governed by Austrians of Teutonic race who are ignorant of the native tongue"[20].

Although she regarded Bosnia and Hercegovina through her own, English eyes, at times she describes them as seen by her Austrian hosts and in a way that favoured them:

> "An incident which came under my notice at the time of the annexation shows that the Bosnians on the Serbian frontier had little faith in their kinsfolk the other side. A petition was sent to Sarajevo when war was imminent, asking for the protection of Austrian troops against Serbian bands"[21].

Yet, of Maude Holbach one may say she was more a credulous than a partial witness. She does not hesitate to note her immediate observations when they contradict what her Austrian hosts suggest. At a moment when the annexation crisis had reached a climax, she succeeded in getting permission to visit Sandžak. This, in the eyes of the officers who tried to dissuade her, was a pure adventure; a mad Englishwoman wanted to go where officers' wives and children, sick soldiers and civilians had already been evacuated. "Madness of this sort, however", she states with some pride, "is characteristic of our nation"[22]. Leaving Goražde the

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[19] Maude M. Holbach, *Bosnia & Herzegovina,* p. 111.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., p. 20-21.
[22] Ibid., p. 172.

next morning, she noted that “the people we passed on the outskirts of the town did not return our greetings, which seemed suspicious, as we remembered their friendliness on our previous visit to Bosnia”[23]. The political crisis had brought to the surface certain emotions that were suppressed and harder to note during peaceful times, and this Englishwoman who was somewhat austrophile, nonetheless noted them.

Although it seemed to her that the Austrian administration, with the late minister von Kallay at its head, was benevolent both towards Christians and Moslems, that it had “brought peace and prosperity to a land which little more than a generation ago was given up to bloodshed and sedition through the inability of the Turkish Government of that day to repress robbery and clear the country of agitators who incited the people to crime”[24] she attempts to be objective even towards the Turks. Remarking that half of the population of Bosnia and Hercegovina remained Christian, she admits that the suspicion grew in her mind whether the western world had not, despite what it had heard of the persecution of Christians in the Moslem lands, done the Turks an injustice and painted them blacker than they should.

> “Alas! my lack of knowledge of the native language stopped my investigations here, and much that went before the occupation is more or less a sealed book”[25].

As historical evidence Maude Holbach's book is most exciting in those parts that relate to her stay in Pljevlja. “Nothing like what we witnessed has been seen in Europe for a generation, if ever, save in time of war”[26], she writes regarding “the evacuation of an army which has occupied a country for thirty years”[27]. She carefully notes her meetings with the Austrian consuls (one of them, count Drascovich, was the only man in Pljevlja who spoke English), generals and officers, as also with the commander of the Turkish garrison. With sincere wonderment she describes the 'gemütlichkeit' of the atmosphere of the Austrian officers' mess and the last mass in the small Catholic church in Pljevlja where (as she believes for ever) the Christian bells ceased to chime. She gives a lively account of anecdotes linked with the name of the old Turkish governor Suljman (Sulejman)-pasha and his unusual “criminal weakness” for punishing Christians for their crimes.

Another story illustrative of Suljman rule related to a young Montenegrin girl, who loved and was beloved by a Turkish soldier, and left home to join him, but was overtaken by her parents before she reached Pljevlja, cruelly beaten, and forced to return with them. She ran

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[23] Ibid., p. 173.
[24] Ibid., p. 21.
[25] Ibid., p. 16.
[26] Ibid., p. 194-5.
[27] Ibid., p. 194.

away, however, a second time, and reached the Turkish barracks, where she begged to become a Moslem and marry the man of her choice. The Turkish priests were willing to receive her as a convert to Islam, but not so the Suljman Pasha, who saw an opportunity of winning popularity for himself with the orthodox population; so he sent the poor girl back with an escort of zeptiahs, and the story ends with her death, “whether from a broken heart or ill-usage I cannot say! Yet this was the charming cultured man whom all travellers who met him united in praising, and many Austrian officer told me was a delightful person socially - a typical Turk of the old school; vastly different to his equals and to the people he ruled”.[28]

She strikingly conjures up the disorders of the evacuation, the streets blocked by furniture from officers' houses and barracks, the ritual ripping up of old Austrian uniforms and a visit to a Serbian monastery. She leaves Pljevlja carrying with her, as befits an English lady, a grey cat from an Austrian Fremdenzimmer, which, as she believes, would have died of hunger without its former owners among the harsh, self-centred people in those difficult and insecure times.

These chapters deserve a more detailed commentary, but here I prefer to concentrate on those parts of the book that speak directly of the author's experience of Bosnia and its people, its natural beauties and its history, but, above all, of its stories and legends woven about its past and its historical monuments which Maude Holbach heard and noted. When, some years ago, in a Lancaster second-hand bookshop, I purchased an old, worn copy of this book, with the marginal comments and corrections of its former owner, it opened itself at a place where the binding had given way. At the top of page 124 I read: “...for a Serb proverb runs: ‘As firm as the bridge at Višegrad’”. Some lines further down, a new passage began with the words: “There are many legends about the building of this bridge...” So, I concluded, in May 1908 stories similar to those which Ivo Andrić would tell in his novel Na Drini ćuprija (A Bridge on the Drina) some forty years later, were still so alive in the minds of the inhabitants of that Bosnian kasaba on the Drina that somebody told them to a guest from England and she carefully noted them in her book. Andrić was then a schoolboy in Sarajevo, yet it was as though he had personally told her them:

> “There are many legends about the building of this bridge, of which one relates that the builder had ridden into the stream to ascertain the depth of the water when suddenly his horse stood still, and neither whip nor spur availed to move it. Looking down he espied the river fairy with her golden hair wound round the horse's forefeet to stop its speed, and drew his sword to free his steed by cutting off her head. The fairy begged that her life might be spared, and promised in return to help with the

[28] Ibid., p. 192-3.

building of the bridge, but failed to keep her promise, and for seven years the building done in the day was undone in the night."

At last the Pasha grew impatient and told the builder to again summon the fairy to his aid. She came and declared her inability to help (the river spirits being against the building of the bridge), but made the gruesome suggestion that they might be propitiated if two living maidens were walled up in the pillars. According to the story this was done, and from that time on the building proceeded without interruption. Another version has it that a woman was to be the sacrifice, and the workmen determined on seizing the first who approached; this happened to be the young wife of the builder, who, in spite of her prayers for mercy, was buried alive in the foundations of the bridge that is an enduring monument of her husband's art.

Such sacrifices are frequently mentioned in Bosnian folklore, and it is related that as late as the middle of the last century, when a bridge was being built at Trebinje, the people begged the dead body of a child to bury in the foundations. If this be true, it is a curious instance of how superstition lingers among a primitive people!

The last of the stories about the bridge at Višegrad relates that after its completion the Pasha feared it would be unable to withstand the force of the trees carried down by the water in flood and, at the builder's suggestion, made a present of money to the spirits of the river! A pile of gold was deposited in the centre of the bridge and shovelled into the flood beneath, while at the same time the builder had himself let down by a rope and struck viciously at a great pine tree that lay across the arches and blocked the passage. The legend ends by saying that the tree bled as the axe struck it, and a voice proceeded from it declaring that Mahmed's bridge would last till the end of time. So the Drina spirits were conquered and the bridge remains!

Some crumbling walls, which are all that remain of the once strong castle of Starigrad, crown a height above the Drina just outside Višegrad; an old tower below, which doubtless once formed part of the fortifications, is connected with the story of the Serbian hero Kraljević Marko who figures so largely in the national songs and folklore. Tradition says he was a prisoner here for nine years, and at his escape cleared the Drina in one bound - a feat which, had he performed it, would place him in the foremost rank of the world's athletes of all times.[29]

The legends about the building of the bridge at Višegrad are, for obvious reasons, of greater interest for us than the others. Although, in this book, there are many, told with equal suggestiveness, they are not linked to events, persons or historical monuments that have such direct literary references as 'The Bridge on the Drina'. "It always seems to me", writes Maude Holbach, evoking the heroism of the "grey-headed commander" of Jajce, Petar Keglević, "that

[29] Ibid., p. 124-127.

the ruin without a story is but an empty shell, as unsatisfying and shorn of human interest as the land, however beautiful, that has no history!"[30] Whenever she finds herself at some place of interest of whose past nobody knows much - in Počitelj or Rataj, for instance - she openly expresses her disappointment that she cannot fill out her description with a story.

For this traveller and writer of travel books, places where people have hoped, defied, suffered and performed exploits are "consecrated ground"[31] where one walks with pious awe. Struck by the story of Stjepan Tomašević, of Petar Keglević and the legend of St. Luke and the catacombs of Jajce and conscious that she neglected the beauties of the surroundings, she almost apologises to the reader: "And now perhaps you have had enough of history and legend, and are impatient with me that I have not sooner hastened on to tell you of nature's wonders - the falls of the Pliva river."[32] Among the legends told especially impressively and with skilful narrative one should mention the "pretty story" of the founder of Foča's Aladža mosque, Hasa Nasir; the tale of the Grand Vizir who gave the miraculous ikon of the Holy Virgin to the Orthodox Christian church in Čajniča and for the faithful in the same town raised "the finest mosque"[33] beside which he lies with his wife and son; the touching story of the dark, orthodox chapel in Čajniča decorated with "curious leather belts of great weight and thickness which were formerly universally worn by the women"[34] and left here by bereaved wives after they had avenged the death of their husbands on the Turks; or the anecdote concerning the bandit Risto Bakac (at that time still alive) whose exploits remind this woman of modest yet authentic literary gifts of the gallant deeds of Robin Hood.

Everything she sees around her Maude Holbach views "like a charming scene on the stage"[35]. She is enthralled by the picturesqueness and richness of the national costume, which complete the coquettish beauty of the women (with the obligatory flower struck behind the ear) and emphasises the supple, athletic stature of the men. Yet she never passes over to "the other side" and does not mix with the actors of this picturesque pantomime. She communicates with them only by smiles and movements, for she was revolted by any closer physical contact. On her way to Rataj, for example, they had to ford a stream. The guide offered to carry her across on his back. But, she tells us,

> "for reasons of cleanliness I had scruples about coming into such close contact, and decided to take off my shoes and stockings and wade! I must confess, however, I had not bargained for the icy coldness of the water, which was nearly knee-deep in places,

[30] Ibid., p. 52.
[31] Ibid., p. 53.
[32] Ibid., p. 58.
[33] Ibid., p. 222.
[34] Ibid., p. 220.
[35] Ibid., p. 29.

> nor yet for the difficulty of walking over the slippery stones of the river-bed against a strong current, and had not our guide come to the rescue and held my arm, I think I should have fallen. On the return journey I resigned myself to the inevitable, and consented to be carried!"[36]

Only once in the course of all her wanderings in Bosnia and Hercegovina did she succeed in overcoming her "scruples about the doubtful cleanliness of 'hans'"[37] and entered a wayside tavern to drink a black coffee. The owner was called Omar. And this made her think of the Persian poet Omar Khayyam and his Rubaiyat and led her to the conclusion that "East is still the East" and that "Bosnia, though now politically Europe, is the Orient of the Prophet."[38]

Although she regarded the people who inhabited the lands whose natural beauties and historical monuments inspired her only from a distance, Maude Holbach had a strongly developed sense for detail and an excellent power of observation and introduces into her story of her travels a multitude of interesting perceptions. The Moslems of Bosnia, she notes, are more conservative than those in Turkey, but they have only one wife, though this does not mean that her position in Bosnia is in any way better. "Once married, the Bosnian peasant woman is content to trudge behind the man through life - (there is, indeed, a saying that when a peasant greets another he asks him first as to his own health, then that of his children, then that of his cow, and lastly that of his wife - of so little importance is the woman".[39] In the "tiny capital"[40] of the Bey of Rataj she is surprised to see that the harem windows are not covered by the musharabeah (musabak).

> "Did the Turkish women of Rataj have more liberty than elsewhere, I wondered, because there is no one to see them but their blood relations?"
>
> "What a strange survival in the Europe of the twentieth century is the patriarchal mediaeval life of this Turkish village in the heart of the Bosnian mountains!"
>
> "Only a mile or so distant modern civilisation is represented by a neat European house in a garden where the Austrian revenue officers live... Here we left our carriage, and begged for some hot water to make tea on our return before setting off on our long drive back to Foča."[41]

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[36] Ibid., p. 147.
[37] Ibid., p. 166.
[38] Ibid., p. 167-8.
[39] Ibid., p. 64.
[40] Ibid., p. 150.
[41] Ibid., p. 150-1.

While she notes that Moslem children, male and female, play together on the streets, she remarks, sadly, that the time of play will soon cease for the girls and that many would be married in their thirteenth or fourteenth year, be shut up in a harem and for the rest of their lives see the world from under a veil covering their face or through a slit in the grilled windows of their room.

Often she takes time to describe individual elements of dress. While the young men wear fez, the older men more often wear the turban, "which is singularly becoming when its crimson folds crown a grey head"[42]. In Mostar, however, the Moslem women are dressed in the most terrible dress imaginable, cowled and hidden from any curious gaze. They did not even dare to photograph them "for fear of giving offence to Moslem prejudices"[43]. Although it was difficult to tell from the dress who was a Moslem and who a Christian, Moslems could easily be distinguished from men of the Catholic or Orthodox religion by their light green belts, for the others were forbidden under the Turks to wear "the colour sacred to the Prophet"[44] and did not wear it even under the Austrians.

Among the Bosnian Christians she notes many customs which, she believes, were of Oriental origin. The men of Jajce shaved their heads as did the Turks, but left a single lock of hair on the crown which, if long enough, was plaited into a pigtail like that of a Chinaman. This could be seen only in church when the turban was removed, but "the origin of the pigtail remains a mystery"[45]. Also in the way the Christians of Jajce pray to God she sees something Oriental: the falling on their knees, touching the ground with the head, raising the hands with palms forward during the blessing, remind her of Moslem prostration. However, in the same region, she learned that among Catholic males the custom persisted of tattooing the cross on the arms and chest.

> "It is said it was introduced in Turkish times to prevent apostasy, for no Christian thus marked with the sign of his faith could go over to Islam without enduring the painful operation of removing the tattooed portion of the skin. The custom, however, is limited to the Catholic population and not adopted by the Serbs, who belong to the Orthodox Church and are in a minority at Jajce."[46]

Graves and Moslem graveyards exercised an unusual fascination on her:

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[42] Ibid., p. 35.
[43] Ibid., p. 87.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., p. 63.
[46] Ibid., p. 62.

> "The tourbaned graves are those of men; but the form of the turban decides the rank; those marking the graves of the janissaries and the dervishes are higher than those of merchant. The stone above a woman's grave is always pointed, and women are laid to rest in a coffin, which is never the case with men among the Mohammedans of Bosnia."[47]

Graves drew her attention also in Banjaluka where she spent less than a day, spread, as they were "between the houses; they are eminently picturesque, but quite uncared for, and seem a little out of place to Western eyes among the abodes of the living."[48]

Approaching Banjaluka from Jajce along the new road which she describes as "one of the engineering feats of the world"[49], she marvels at the skill of the Austrian engineers who had constructed the whole track on almost the same level with, in places, a rise of no more than two percent – "nothing more ideal for motorists and cyclists can be imagined".[50] While Bočac, Zvečaj and other ruins of fortified dwellings on top of the surrounding hills passed her by, she concludes that, because of its frequency, the river Vrbas "almost deserves the title of the Bosnian Rhine".[51]

Of all the places Maude Holbach visited in the course of her wanderings through Bosnia and Hercegovina, she was most impressed with Jajce.

> "The beauty and romance of Bosnia reach their culminating point in Jajce, the royal town of the Bosnian kings which saw so many vicissitudes in the Middle Ages... But even if you do not care for history or for art, the view from the castle walls will repay you for your climb, for Jajce, lying below you, is one of the most picturesque towns to be found, not alone in Europe, but anywhere in the world, and it is framed in by forest-clad mountains, like a jewel lying in a casket of dark green velvet... The whole quaint Japanese-looking town seemed to be perched on the brink of the falls, while behind it the white campanile shone out against the green and grey of the castle-crowned hill."[52]

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[47] Ibid., p. 105.
[48] Ibid., p. 74-5.
[49] Ibid., p. 68.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p. 71.
[52] Ibid., p. 44, 54, 61.

Mostar was almost as impressive. Built on both sides of the Neretva (Narenta), “worthy indeed to rank with the scenic rivers of the world”[53], it is “one of the most picturesque towns in Europe”[54].

“Almost every world wanderer who visits Mostar has heard beforehand of Mostar's bridge, and turns his footsteps thither before he has been many hours in the semi-Oriental town on the Narenta River.

If he is fortunate enough to see it first, as I did, when the golden light of late afternoon illumines the quaint houses that cluster by the river side, and the slender high-arched bridge is silhouetted against the light, while over it pass the white figures of Herzegovina peasant women driving sheep or cattle back from market, he will carry away a memory of a scene unsurpassed for picturesque beauty in Europe.”[55]

One of the most beautiful sights she saw in Mostar, or anywhere else in her world wanderings, “was the Sunday morning Mass at the Catholic Church”, full of the Austrian military, their wives, and “white-veiled peasant women, with here and there a stalwart man, clad in his festal attire, kneeling reverently behind the soldiers”[56]. Delighted by the looks of the people she saw there, Maude Holbach comments: “Both the men and women of Herzegovina are singularly good-looking, with dark expressive eyes and clear-cut features, and the men's close-fitting clothes show off their slim athletic figures to perfection”[57].

Coming from Mostar to Jablanica, she discovered there a place most appealing “to English tastes: Fishing, shooting, mountaineering, are all to be had there”[58] In Travnik, she was delighted with “the great mosque, ... a white building delicately painted in ornamental designs, of which the colouring is soft and beautiful”[59]. What she found particularly strange there was that “the old Mohammedan city”, the capital of the country until 1850, became “a centre of Catholicism”, with its “great Jesuit college”[60].

Sarajevo, which in the middle of the 19th century, “was the stronghold of feudalism - the focus of fanaticism”, revealed itself to the wandering Englishwoman as “a modern European city, with fine public buildings, good shops, and electric trams”[61]. But, “side by side with Austrian Sarajevo is Turkish Sarajevo (so wonderfully situated that former travellers have

[53] Ibid. p. 26.
[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid., p. 27-8.
[56] Ibid., p. 29.
[57] Ibid., p. 32.
[58] Ibid., p. 40.
[59] Ibid., p. 81.
[60] Ibid. p. 83.
[61] Ibid., p. 89.

likened it to Damascus) - the unchanged Orient; there are no boundary lines between them".[62] However, "in the battle for supremacy between East and West, the West has won!"[63], she exclaims, but, aware that her love "for that which has the charms of antiquity" might lead her "to underrate the present"[64], she pays her due attention to the modern city: "its fine Government buildings and its beautiful cathedral"[65], the Town Hall, the Post Office and the National Museum, "an institution of which the Austro-Hungarian Administration may well be proud"[66]. But "Sarajevo without its bazaars would not be Sarajevo"[67], she comments.

> "The Čaršija is seen to the greatest advantage on a market day, when the variety of costumes is truly amazing; for then side by side with the Turks are seen the Catholics and Orthodox peasants from all the surrounding country-side. The trains coming into Sarajevo on a market day are filled with the picturesque crowd, and the scene in the open market-place baffles description.
>
> The crowning glory of the Čaršija is the beautiful Begova Džamija - the third finest mosque in the realms of Islam, of which the Bosnian Mohammedans may well be proud."[68]

She was most impressed by the 'Sheriat' college for law students, "established by the Government so that Bosnian Mohammedans need not go, as formerly, to Constantinople. This college, though not large, is worth seeing"[69].

> "The arrangements for the comfort of the students are as much in advance of the Mohammedan university in Cairo as the English universities are of this. In Cairo the students have but one little cupboard each in which to keep their food, their scanty clothing, and their books - they sleep on the floor altogether; here each has a comfortable little room furnished with a divan, which forms a bed at night, a small wardrobe, and a table, and takes his meals in the general dining-hall."[70]

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[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid., p. 90.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid., p. 91.
[67] Ibid., p. 95.
[68] Ibid., p. 96.
[69] Ibid., p. 99.
[70] Ibid., p. 100.

The students she saw were “extremely intelligent-looking; many, no doubt, were sons of those Bosnian nobles who survived the insurrections of thirty years ago - the proud Begs who set even the Viziers at defiance”[71], Maude Holbach remarks, and continues:

> “Nothing in Sarajevo recalls those days more vividly than the old Serbian church, hidden behind a high wall and sunk beneath the level of the street, so that not even its roof shall meet the eye; it typifies the condition of the subject race who worshipped there, tolerated only when not persecuted, so long as they made themselves inconspicuous and kept out of the way of the followers of the Prophet.”[72]

She mentions also some 3000 Spanish Jews, who “took refuge in Bosnia in the sixteenth century and are a very interesting section of the community, as they carefully preserved the language and customs of their forefathers and hold no intercourse with the Jewish traders who have settled in Bosnia since the Occupation”[73]. Disappointed that the Jews of Sarajevo have “discarded their Oriental dresses for those of Europe”, she expresses her fear “that before long the Serbs will follow this example”[74].

> “But as yet the Bosnian capital shows greater variety of national costumes than any other city of the near East, and lovers of the picturesque should hasten to visit it before they vanish into the limbo of the past and 'Sarajevo Golden' loses one of its chiefest charms.”[75]

Banjaluka was somewhat disappointing, for it turned out to be “less picturesque than other Turkish towns”.[76] The wide main street, bordered by trees, had too European an appearance to please her. The heat of May 1908 was unusually great, and she preferred a pleasant shady seat in the garden of the hotel 'Bosna' to searching for more attractive parts of the town in the market place and Gypsy quarter. Nowhere in Bosnia, she notes,

> “were the Begs more powerful and despotic than at Banjaluka, and much blood flowed in their strife with the Turkish viziers during the early part of the last century, when the feudal nobles rose in arms to protect their ancient rights and resent any change in the condition of the subject race - the Christian "rayahs".

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[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid., p. 101.
[73] Ibid., p. 105-6.
[74] Ibid., p. 106.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., p. 72.

> As Mohammedanism has always been so strong in Banjaluka, it is not strange that there should be no less than forty-five mosques in the town; most are built of wood and unimportant, though picturesque, but the Ferhadija Džamija is very beautiful. It dates from the sixteenth century, and is said to have been built with the money paid by the noble Austrian family of Auersperg to ransom their son who had been taken prisoner by the Turks. The Christian population of Banjaluka is now almost equal in number to the Mohammedan, but against the forty-five mosques they have only three churches - two Roman Catholic and one Serbian Orthodox."[77]

To visit Banjaluka, she advises further, is best on a market day. Its streets are then a study in costumes and feast of colour - for hardly anywhere else in Bosnia or Herzegovina is there such variety of dress to be seen, or such fine gold and silver ornaments worn by the women. Struck by the religious and economic activities of the Trappist monks (who even brewed their own beer, which particularly impressed our Englishwoman), she notes how "strange" it is that a monastery was built on the banks of the Vrbas when the country was still under Turkish rule. "Still stranger, Turkey, the traditional oppressor of the Christians, was the only country willing to take the poor monks in when they were driven forth from France and then from Germany!"[78]

Yet, for Maude Holbach, was Bosnia really Europe? Completing her account of the Banjaluka residences of the dead among the dwelling-places of the living, she addresses her readers: "But the East is East and the West is West - And never the twain will meet".[79]

[77] Ibid., p. 73-4.
[78] Ibid., p. 75.
[79] Ibid.

The Theme of Bosnia and Hercegovina in the Works of Jovan Dučić

As regards the essence and the essential value of Jovan Dučić's (1871-1943) work, the subject of this text is marginal. The Serbian critic Pero Slijepčević (1888-1964) noted that in Dučić's poetry “there is no landscape specifically ours, nor any type that characteristically belongs to us”[1]. Even in the earliest works which, by the poet's express wish, remain to this day excluded from his collected works, “the Hercegovinian homeland is evoked perhaps only once - at the moment when the poet leaves to take up schooling - naturalistically, as a mass of rocks and a land of suffering which would be liberated by its sons”.[2] Yet, nonetheless, in many poems which the poet did not reject, and which find their place in the Collected Works (1969), traces of the poet's native habitat may be felt in a succession of carefully observed images. Though not portrayed as 'specifically ours', when these images are taken apart and individually, rather than in the context in which we find them, they point to Dučić's bond with his native landscape even in poems of a wider and more profound orchestration.

The path “all white and naked” that winds between graveyards and villages[3]; “the skeleton of willow thickets” over the pale river[4]; the hill “above the wet cliff”[5]; “brambles... sunny, hot”[6]; “the cracked earth” torn by drought, “the coppice of mountain ash” and “the pumpkin in hot gardens”[7]; “burning heat” and the river “dying for a drop of water”[8]; the empty “river-bed”, “the dread and bloody star of hunger”, and again “the cracked earth” that, this time, “cries out with thirst”[9] - all these images sift through Dučić's poetry not merely as a memento of days spent amid the rocks of Hercegovina, but as a repressed energy that is released of its own volition. Undoubtedly the poplars that “stir... so passionately, so strangely”, in the poem published in 1903[10] are the same trees mentioned in a letter to his friend and fellow-poet Aleksa Šantić (1868-1924) written in Trebinje in 1901: “Trebinje is wonderful. On clear nights the Trebišnjica reflecting the poplars in its glassy surface resembles some mystic paintings from Berlin”.[11] At that time, Dučić had already surrendered to the “Nomadic

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[1] *Sabrani ogledi,* Belgrade, Prosveta, 1956. Vol. 1, p. 94.
[2] Ibid., p. 101.
[3] 'U sumraku', *Pesme. Sabrana dela,* Sarajevo, Svjetlost and Belgrade, Prosveta, 1969. Vol. 1, p. 13.
[4] 'Novembar', Ibid., p. 23.
[5] 'Svitanje', Ibid., p. 98.
[6] 'Polje', Ibid., p. 97.
[7] 'Suša', Ibid., p. 99.
[8] 'Sunce', Ibid., p. 103.
[9] 'Omorina', p. p. 105.
[10] 'Jablanovi', Ibid., p. 19.
[11] Radovan Popović, *Istina o Dučiću,* Belgrade, Književne novine, 1982, p. 40.

liberation" from a native land and town that "was too small for an ambition that knew no bounds. All ephemeral decisions were offensive to the wildness of a character that desired neither to find peace nor to settle, nor ever to be satisfied"[12].

Dučić believed he needed to depart from his native land not only physically. According to Ivo Andrić, Dučić "poured the sea" before his eyes and tried to warn him against limitations imposed by the milieu to which his writings were devoted. "He told me: chuck Bosnia once and for all. Go down to the sea. That's where the world is"[13]. On another occasion his advice was the same: "You are a young and talented writer. For God's sake leave these effendis and friars and return to Europe; that's where the real world is"[14]. Such advice to a young colleague was motivated not only by a love for the "foreign and the unknown" but by a contempt for the Oriental Balkans. In his essay on the Serbian writer from Bosnia, Petar Kočić (1877-1916), written in 1911, Dučić speaks of the abuse of the language and the unjustified introduction of Turkisms. "So many Turkish words have been introduced into the language that with some writers and poets one may speak of a Serbo-Turkish jargon... The language is turning into a perversity, and this is due to Turkish words which, however you look at them, are the enemy of sublime feelings"[15]. Naturally, Andrić did not take his advice, nor did Dučić always stick to the counsel he gave to others. Circumstances changed, as did literary, national and moral pressures, which forced him to digress from his convictions and change them.

In the year 1930, in the third volume of his *Collected Works*, in the cycle entitled *Moja otadžbina (My Country)*, is the poem *Hercegovina*. This was Dučić's first and last direct evocation of his native land right up until 1942, when he published in the *Amerikanski Srbobran* several poems reacting to the news of genocide committed against his people in the fascist Independent State of Croatia. Although published in 1930, the poem *Hercegovina* was probably written considerably earlier. In Dučić's ringing verses, the opening lines echo with triumphal anticipation as the moment of retribution draws near for those responsible for the historical injustices to which his people had been subjected:

"Our winds will scatter their ashes,
We shall wash their heathen tracks from our rocks.
Better days will dawn;
spiders' webs will gather on swords;
the plough will shine;

[12] 'Mostar', *Staza pored puta. Sabrana dela.* Vol. 6, p. 115.
[13] Ljubo Jandrić, *Sa Ivom Andrićem,* Sarajevo, Veselin Masleša, 1982, p. 425.
[14] Ibid., p. 387.
[15] *Moji saputnici, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, p. 400.

and in place of the trumpet calls of battle will be heard the cock announcing the peaceful dawn."

"A new breed" shall come upon the earth, who will know that "only that land is bright where no tear of shame has fallen" and in which the memory of its fathers lives "in hymns and in prayers"[16], says the poet.

Thirteen years later, in the poem *Bosna (Bosnia)*, published on 11 January 1943, in *Amerikanski Srbobran*, the same dodecasyllabic rhythm was to echo not triumph, but tragic bitterness. History cynically repeats itself. "Bright" Bosnia, "our sacred letter inscribed upon a sword", "the eternal advance guard of glory and tears", is once again for sale. "The land made for bright battles" is, once again, led by its leaders from market-place to market-place, for it is condemned by history to be for ever "upon the scales of shameful merchants". In the market-place it even has its "bright legend". The entire poem is permeated by the tone of hardened pessimism. It contains more bitterness than anger, more injured pride and reconciliation with fate than defiance or hope. Since "the base market shall end in darkness", even the efforts of the mythical and historical heroes will be in vain. Starac Vujadin[17], Pecija[18] and Golub[19], Petar Mrkonjić[20], Starina Novak[21] and Bajo Pivljanin[22] will "draw in vain the ready sword"[23].

This poem, with its tone of resignation to the fateful and inevitable national tragedy, differs from the poem *Vrbas (The Vrbas)* published a year earlier (written on 20 October and published on 31 January 1942). In this poem there is both "pride and anger" and a belief in the "joyful victories" that the heroes will achieve. There is also defiance ("Rather everyone's prisoner than anyone's servant") and hope in a "dreadful justice"[24] that the dead will ensure. *Bosna*, on the other hand, by its tone - in which there is an apotheosis of the past and a tragic sense of the vagaries of history, together with a resignation in the face of fate - resembles more the late *Večernje pesme (Evening Poems)* which, as the Serbian literary critic Milan Kašanin (1895-1981) states, "continue Dučić's monologue of people and things in parting with the world"[25].

In his essay *On the Collected Works of Jovan Dučić*, the literary historian Živorad Stojković notes that "in the earliest Dučić two lines are clearly visible - the artistic and the

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[16] *Pesme. Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, p. 400.
[17] *Starac Vujadin* (Old Vujadin), popular folk poetry hero.
[18] Pecija, probably local folk poetry hero from Hercegovina during the so-called 'Kandija war' (1645-1669)
[19] Golub, probably local folk poetry hero from Hercegovina, from the same period.
[20] Petar Mrkonjić, *nom de guerre* of Petar I Karadjordjević of Serbia (1844-1921).
[21] Starina Novak (Old Novak), popular folk poetry hero.
[22] Bajo Pivljanin (?-1685), famous Montenegrin fighter-hero against the Turks.
[23] Reprinted in *American Srbobran SNF Literary Supplement,* Vol. 2, No. 3 (December 1993), p. 9.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Milan Kašanin, *Sudbine i ljudi,* Belgrade, Prosveta, 1968, p. 343.

patriotic. Though consistently separated, to the point of being mutually exclusive, both these lines remained emphatic right up until the poet's death: the artistic in the poetic works, the patriotic in his public activity"[26]. This separation of lines is most obvious precisely in those of Dučić's texts that deal with themes of Bosnia and Hercegovina. While as a public person he dealt with them with the greatest devotion, in moments of national crises, he left his poetic contribution to such matters uncollected. This was the case even when, in the USA, he was preparing his final volume in fear lest "the manuscript be mislaid in the vicissitudes of the present war"[27] - as if he cared little for such poems.

There can be no doubt that Dučić's poems on a national theme, written during the Second World War, in Gary, Indiana, were inspired by his sincere patriotic fervour. Yet there is no trace of them in his books.[28] "Dučić the poet greeted his fateful hour entirely as a poet, in a profound and spiritualised muting of the truth of his despair", Stojković cogently remarks.[29] Why? Dučić made a distinction between patriotic and political poetry, repeating Goethe's view that a political poem was a "disgusting poem". "Political poems truly lose their value the moment that the time and the people they refer to pass away. Patriotic and war poems, on the other hand, resemble war-like marches even when the battle and struggles have ceased... Truly patriotic poets... Still remain modern and their poems for ever beautiful, and this because the patriotic poem expresses love for one's country, which is at once the deepest and darkest love man may have in this life. And it expresses love for its people rather than hatred for any other people, even when they are enemies"[30]. Although this segment of Dučić's later poetry was inspired by political events, it is certain that the poet did not see it merely as "disgusting" political poetry, meaningless in its ephemerality. On the other hand, it is possible that he may have felt that, at times, through his honest feeling for his fatherland, they filtered hatred and patriotic blindness that, by his own standards, disqualified these poems from being patriotic.

When, for example, in the poem *Vrbas* he says that this "Serbian river" bears the blood of grandchildren as once it bore the blood of their forebears, and that "the murderers' swords are all of the same forging"[31], he expresses the hatred which he undoubtedly had inside him more by a general tragic tone than by an aggressive, chauvinistic one (as, for example, in the poem *Bugari (The Bulgarians)* of 1916, published in the *Collected Works* in a shortened and bowdlerized version under the new title of *Horda (The Horde)*[32]. Still, it is obvious what historical example Dučić had in mind when he speaks of "filthy hyenas". He is obviously

[26] *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 10.
[27] Radovan Popović, *Istina o Dučiću,* p. 201.
[28] They were collected in the book edited by Aleksandar Petrov.
[29] 'Uz Sabrana dela Jovana Dučića', *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 12.
[30] 'Aleksa Šantić', *Moji savremenici. Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, p. 158.
[31] *American Srbobran SNF Literary Supplement,* Vol. 2, No. 3 (December 1993), p. 9.
[32] *Pesme. Sabrana dela,* Vol. 1, pp. 232 and 376.

referring to those murderers who, in the past, used the same river for the same purpose. Of their crimes, we may recall, he wrote thus in the essay on Mohammed II, the Conqueror: “A third of the common people of Bosnia and the entire nobility were compelled to accept the faith of their conqueror's namesake and twelve thousand of them who refused to do so were drowned in the torrential river Vrbas”[33].

Milan Kašanin rightly asserts that Dučić “was not attracted by the days of the fall, but rather by those of our rise; he recalls our conquests and our victories, not our defeats... He seeks triumph in life and not in death”[34]. The Golgotha which his people endured during the Second World War was not Dučić's “natural theme” and therefore he considered those poems on this theme - like *Molitva (A Prayer), O herojima (Of Heroes), Razbojnik (The Bandit), Lički mučenici (The Lika Martyrs), Na obali Neretve (On the Banks of the Neretva)*[35] etc - perhaps not to be in harmony with the others and so did not include them in his last book. Or, perhaps, as with so many of his early poems, he simply thought them unworthy of bearing his name.

Dučić's 'fervent leadership', which in poetry he rejected, would appear whenever he felt the fateful need of the nation required it. This was particularly clear during the crisis caused by the Austrian annexation of Bosnia in 1908. Then, on a full page of the leading Belgrade daily, *Politika*, he published, anonymously, what was, in the words of Živorad Stojković, “one of the most moving proclamations of our late history”[36]. Among the texts inspired by these events, and by their causes and effects - texts in which current political questions were discussed critically but relatively calmly (for example, the new Bosnian and Hercegovinian Constitution, the Church Question, the timidity and lack of national consciousness of Serbian youth etc. - two works, written with more polemical asperity, merit more detailed commentary.

In the first, *Slaveni i Bosna (The Slavs and Bosnia,* 1908)[37], the target of Dučić's indignation is the pathetic, still-born, alcoholic pan-slavism whose moral awareness was not forthcoming, at a moment when Austria was attempting “in its usual underhand manner to seize two Slavonic lands”. At the outset of the crisis Serbia alone stood “in defence of the Slav idea”, not only as the armed adversary of Austria and Germanism, “but also as the desperate opponent of that great Slav lie by which we have lived hitherto and which, one day, surprised us with the treaty of San Stefano and now astonishes us with the miserable, slavish bowing of Russia and its government before the Bosnian catastrophe”[38]. In his patriotic fervour Dučić

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[33] *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 166.
[34] *Sudbine i ljudi,* p. 336.
[35] Reprinted in *American Srbobran SNF Literary Supplement,* Vol. 2, No. 3 (December 1993), pp. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.
[36] 'Beogradjani, otadžbina je u opasnosti', *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, pp. 398-99.
[37] Ibid., p. 401.
[38] Ibid.

reminds his readers that Serbia “does not listen to the servile wailings of her Slav brethren”[39] who are either entirely negligible or advise a shameful peace of the defeated, or else attempt to profit by inheritance. Dučić's defiant words of condemnation echo with prophetic zeal: Austria, that great power before whom the other Slavs stand in terror and defeat, “will, sooner or later, be torn apart by a Serbian bomb”[40].

The second article, published in 1909 in the magazine *Slovenski Jug* under the title *Bosna i Hercegovina (Bosnia and Hercegovina)*, is written as a call to “influential national leaders” (uplivnim narodnim ljudima) to resist “the great evil” - the expulsion of Moslems which the Bosnian government was assisting “by every known means”[41]. On this phenomenon Dučić sees a twofold disaster: while the native people are expelled, foreigners are brought in and, supported by favourable terms of credit, buy up the large estates of the Begs and Agas, thus hindering the strengthening of the Serbian element which might be achieved by agricultural reforms. He was to touch upon this theme later, in his essay on Aleksa Šantić, recalling the effect Šantić's poem *Ostajte ovdje (Stay Here)* had upon “conscious Moslem spirits”. This, says Dučić, “was no mere literary matter, but a matter of conscience”. The Mostar poems grasped that religious difference between “divided brethren, Orthodox and Islamic Serbs” presented “a fateful reminder of the history of a people of the same blood and the same name” which “needs to be forgotten”. Svetozar Ćorović (1875-1919), “the story-writer of the Mostar Parnassus... in his stories full of love for the Moslems of our country, was the first to give a sign of such understanding; and Šantić with his poem... held out this love as a duty for future generations as much as a literary movement in our Mostar”[42]. Dučić proudly asserts: “That love is one of the greatest prides of the Serbian people”[43].

As regards this theme, it is necessary to mention Dučić's treatment of two Hercegovinian Moslem poets, Osman Djikić (1879-1912) and Riza-beg Kapetanović-Ljubušak 1868-1931). For Dučić, Djikić is “the most outstanding personality among our Moslem population since Mehmed pasha Sokolović”[44]. In a text written on the occasion of his death, there are no doubts about it. As a champion of the idea “that all or at least the vast majority of Bosnian-Hercegovinian Moslems are of pure Serbian blood, Osman, in his earliest youth, sensed the whole burden of the harsh policy implemented by Benjamin von Kallay[45] aimed at denationalization of the Serbian people in Bosnia and Hercegovina”, persecuting all those who defined themselves as Serbian, especially “those few Moslems who saw a better future

[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p. 407-408.
[42] *Moji saputnici, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, pp. 151-52.
[43] Ibid., p. 427.
[44] Mehmed pasha Sokolović (1505 ili 1506-1579),
[45] Benjamin von Kállay (1839-1903), Austro-Hungarian governor of Bosnia-Hercegovina from 1882 to 1903.

for Bosnia and Hercegovina only in common, fraternal political effort with the Serbs of the Orthodox faith"[46]. Dučić appears not to have noted - and makes no effort to explain - the paradox that only "those few" out of the vast majority of Moslems of Serbian blood "saw that their only hope" lay in common Moslem-Orthodox Serbian political action.

With Riza-beg the case is more complex. Opposed to the idea of Bosnian nationality (Bošnjaštvo), Dučić writes: "We cannot say to our readers that our poet Riza-beg is neither Serbian nor Croatian, but of a quite other nationality. No matter how strange it may seem, many consider that there has arisen in Bosnia and Hercegovina a nationality of its own and separate from others - a nationality which history neither notes nor bears a trace of, yet which has existed for some time. So the Bosnian Mohammedans, a few years ago, rejected their Bosnian Cyrillic script (bosančica) and took to the Latin alphabet, ceased to speak Serbian, as they used, but rather 'Bosnian' and were no more either Serbs or Croats, but 'Bosnians'. Such a distorted view certain pioneers promote more and more into life and, alas, they take root the more the Bosnian Moslems feel themselves between two fires, not knowing 'to which realm to give their choice'"[47].

In his political evolution Dučić passed from a careful and partial acceptance of the concept of South-Slav unity, through an enthusiastic support for the Yugoslav idea and the idea of a South-Slav state, to a complete rejection of both. Despite such changes, one view remained constant: that Bosnia and Hercegovina were Serbian lands.[48] "In Bosnia they sing of Tsar Dušan and the nine Jugovićs, but not of Ban Kulin and King Tvrtko; and similarly they sing of the defeat at Kosovo and not the defeat at Bobovac[49] and Jajce"[50], he wrote in 1932 in his essay *Meštrović and the Serbian mystique*[51]. And in his essay on Petar Kočić he recalls that the memory of the ancient Serbian realm and heroism "still today obfuscates the view of our people and bewitches them with a legend which is stronger than all other spiritual conditions"[52]. In Bosnia he sees a land "with a new Serbian soul, dissatisfied, embittered, furious and vengeful, powerfully bound up with the ideal and justice of Obilić... There, at hand, that frontier which the Serbs in their masses occupied from Bihać all the way to Senj and the sea in order to defend the European West from the Asiatic invasion and there to create the famed Serbian epic and that of the Uskoks[53] who bore sonorous names from Hercegovina,

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[46] *Moji saputnici, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, pp. 408-410.
[47] Ibid., p. 174.
[48] See 'Dva Ribnikara', *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 429.
[49] Bobovac,
[50] Jajce, the last capital of the medieval Bosnian state, captured by the Turks in 1463.
[51] *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 323.
[52] *Moji saputnici, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, pp. 48-49.
[53] *Uskoks,* Serbian and Croatian fighters who fought against the Turks by attacking them in Bosnia from Austrian territory.

from Kosovo and from Vardar, especially from Hercegovina"[54]. In Kočić's stories of "heroes and maniacs, rebellious dreamers and quixotic characters", Dučić discovers "typical humour concerning monastic drunkards and village clowns, as may often be encountered in our lands of the guslar, as an antithesis to the epic hero sung in the folk ballad"[55].

Recalling that this land belongs neither to the agitators nor the propagandists who encourage separatism, but to the heroes and poets, "to those who, for its sake, raised rebellions in the name of one nation and in the name of history... to those who, for its sake, gave up the ghost on a Turkish stake or at the end of an Austrian rope", Dučić in 1928 warned the politicians that Serbia was bound to Bosnia "by sacred and inseverable ties", "and that Belgrade, which maintains the tradition of its history, must not continue to regard Bosnia and Hercegovina solely as a component to be taken into political consideration only at particular moments". As a supporter, at that time, of an integral Yugoslavia, Dučić grasped that the significance of these two areas exceeded even their connections with Serbia. These areas make up "that land that serves as a link between us all", for it is "part of the very soul of our great and united nation"[56]. Without that link, the nation itself would be under threat.

In the introduction to his study of Count Sava Vladislavić (between 1660 and 1670-1738)[57], Dučić admits that, in writing this book, he was "as a poet far removed from his normal literary province, which had always been (to create) a work of pure inspiration"[58]. He had crossed into new territory "solely for love of my Serbian people, as on many other similar occasions". In the same place the poet's special love for his native Hercegovina is emphasised as the "nursery of language" and "the smithy wherein our decasyllabic line was forged"[59]. Dučić was to return, in various texts and contexts, to this theme of nostalgia and pride.

In Sava Vladislavić, the man who "as a foreign emissary in missions to foreign states represented our race's innate talent and farsightedness"[60] Dučić sees a typical man of the Hercegovinian climate:

> "Both mental and spiritual, both supple and proud, as cautious as he was fearless... A Hercegovinian Serb, more a Mediterranean type than a Balkan, as much a realist as a man of imagination, and a man of dreams as much as a positive creator."[61]

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[54] Ibid., p. 36.
[55] Ibid., p. 37.
[56] 'Bosna i Hercegovina u našoj istoriji', *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, pp. 433-34.
[57] Count Sava Vladislavić,
[58] Count Sava Vladislavić, *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 5, p. 10.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., p. 9.
[61] Ibid, p. 10.

In another place[62] he notes that among all our peoples the Hercegovinians are “the most polite and least inclined to gossip”. Modest, pious and moderate, they are “the highest form of noble expression, the farthest reach of nobility and good nature”. The Hercegovinian Serb is “by his nature not only polite but also warm and outgoing, loving and generous” - in him the best balance is achieved “between man's virtues and failings”. In his text on Trebinje also, found among the writer's papers after his death and first published in 1991[63], there is similar, breathless praise of his native town. Trebinje, after Belgrade “perhaps the most outstanding historic town we possess”[64], was not only the cradle of the first and of the several later and lesser Serbian dynasties, but also the place where, for centuries, the struggle against the enemies of Christianity never ceased; the poet's countrymen were not only philosophers and poets “but also the finest merchants”[65]. Belgrade's great business district was created not by Tsintsars[66], but by men from Trebinje; it was they who founded “the greatest and most reputable credit bank in Serbia”[67] and gave “glorious leaders to the national uprising”[68], and so on.

This text Dučić prepared and gave as a lecture in 1938 on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone for the gymnasium at Trebinje and the opening of the memorial to the heroes of the First World War, which he had personally presented to his native town. It was, as he himself said, “a symbol of the warlike past and of the martyrdom of this land”[69], as was the memorial to Njegoš, raised four years earlier, also at his expense, as “a symbol of the cultural genius of this broad, national group”[70].

While the text on Trebinje is redolent, above all, of open pride in all the gifts of his native town, in the history, culture and economy of his people, in Dučić's writings and notes on Mostar, the town of his youth and the beginning of his career as a writer, there is more nostalgia and poetry. There is a reason for this. When he speaks of Trebinje he feels it is within his reach whenever he should wish for it and that, though often far removed from him, it could return to him and even contribute to his progress and development. He was still in full strength, able to contribute, assist and influence. With Mostar the situation was very different. When, in America, he remembered it; behind him and his memories was an entire human life. It seemed to him that this town of his boyhood and youth was only a fata morgana, and that it

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[62] 'O uljudnosti', *Jutra sa Leutara, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, 153.
[63] 'O Trebinju', *Književnost,* Vol. 94, No. 9-10, 1991, pp. 1240-42.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] *Tsintsars* (or Macedo-Vlachs), romanised Dacian or Vlach population, settled throughout the Balkan Peninsula. Also called Romani, Rumeni, Romeni, Aromani or Karavlachs.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

existed only “as a vision”, and that every attempt to return to it would be in vain, “for I would not find it any more, and I would lose myself”[71]. Remembering Mostar, Dučić writes:

> “When people ask a man where he's from, he replies, firstly, with the name of the town which was the town of his youth, and only then with the name of the one where he was born... I feel that the town within me is greater and more beautiful than that other town on the Neretva river.”[72]

And at the moment of writing he sees his shadow “in the afternoon of a burning sun in that Hercegovinian town”[73].

In another evocation of Mostar, written in 1900, the object of his melancholic reminiscences are the Mostar suburbs, “a strange piece of the earth, an anachronism, a life that is dying out, a body decaying while the heart still beats within it... where every stall-counter is a cathedral of virtue... How great that dear, unforgettable age of the anterija[74], of sandals and yellow slippers; the age of our furriers, blanket-makers, harness-makers and wool-carders”[75]. Here Dučić still feels Turkish words to be a part of his language and recalls the pusto tursko, the times of Turkish life-style, which, later, in the works of Petar Kočić and the Serbian writer Bora Stanković (1875-1927) he was to find so objectionable. Still, in that late, American reminiscence about the friends of his youth, now dead in a Mostar graveyard “as if they'd all been shot on the same day”[76], the selfless idealists and bearers of new ideals who lived “for a fatherland without politics and greed”[77] and for “their youthful sense of the sublime”[78] - traces of those times exist only in negations. “What remains is the memory of the Turkish executioners who would stick the heads of Serbian freedom-fighters on the old stakes on the balustrade of the crooked bridge, and of the prisons in the towers in which they tortured Serbian priests”[79]. The whole of this portrayal is dominated by the image of a divided town, which is simply a more developed variation on the same theme as that in the essay on Aleksa Šantić. Here is the shorter version:

> “Then it was as if the Neretva divided two worlds, for its two banks presented two very crude contrasts. On one side the Orthodox bishop and the Mufti, on the other the

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[71] *Sabrana dela,*, Vol. 6, p. 205.
[72] Ibid., p. 206.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Anterija, type of long-sleeved robe.
[75] 'Svetozar Ćorović', *Moji saputnici, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, pp. 223-25.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] 'Mostar', *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 205-10.

> Catholic bishop; on the one side people speak ijekavski, on the other ikavski[80]; on the one witty humour and good-hearted jokes, on the other malice and chauvinism spread by foreigners and emigrants. On the one bank people have been free in spirit from time immemorial, while on the other they have borne the most unbearable slavery from the time of Herceg Stjepan[81] to that of the Austrian occupation. On the one bank they pray to God for liberation, on the other they pray for rain; on the one for powder and lead, on the other for wax and incense. So it was, at least, until my time and Šantić's."[82]

In the longer, later version, this final sentence is missing. The visions of Mostar were by that time yet more painful and severe.

Today, however, the final sentences of Dučić's bitter-sweet return to the past acts both as a proud historical truth and as a tragically realised prophesy; it also represents a great error and illusion.

> "Mostar may be separated from all else, but not from its Serbian tradition, its hajduk [83] past and from Serbian poetry. There will be struggles for it, people will write about it, for it people will die in the future too; but Mostar will remain for ever the town of the finest generations of Serbs in the twentieth century. Not only a Serbian province, but an entire Serbian Fatherland cannot be complete without their names."[84]

When one recalls the memory of all that Dučić wrote on a patriotic theme (and much of this remains unmentioned in this paper) one has the firm impression that between him and his native soil - indeed because of his "eternal seeking after the new"[85] - there existed a sound, innate, Antaean relationship. In a letter to Aleksa Šantić, written in 1922, Dučić confirms this impression.

> "For me my journey through a free Fatherland and my meeting with you, and then with members of my family, was a complete renewal. Alien lands had discouraged me, left me feeling for ever alone; I had ceased to believe that anywhere anyone waited for me or cared for me, that my happiness or unhappiness meant anything to anybody.

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[80] *Ijekavski* and *ikavski,* two variants of Serbo-Croat, based on different reflections of the Old Slavonic letter 'yat'.
[81] Herceg Stjepan, or Stjepan Vukčić Kosača, 1404-1466
[82] 'Aleksa Šantić, *Moji saputnici, Sabrana dela,* Vol. 4, p. 142.
[83] *Hajduks,* Serbian outlaws during the Turks rule.
[84] 'Mostar', *Sabrana dela,* Vol. 6, p. 210.
[85] Ibid., p. 209.

This brief contact with my own soil and my own people has given me a renewed love for life and will to work."[86]

The Hercegovinian and Bosnian themes of Dučić were the fruits of this relationship and of this contact.

[86] Radovan Popović, *Istina o Dučiću,* pp. 99-100.

Jovan Skerlić and Serbian Modernism

The assessment of Jovan Skerlić's (1877-1914) uncomfortable relationship with Serbian modernism has been most commonly based on the analysis of his crusade against 'false modernism in Serbian literature', as his 1911 article on the poetry of Vladislav Petković-Dis (1880-1917) is subtitled. It was his ruthless, destructive dissection of *Utopljene duše (Drowned Souls)*, the collection of poems which he found more interesting as 'a literary phenomenon' than as 'a work of literature', that established Skerlić's image of someone who appreciated 'soundness, optimism and frankness in literature', and detested decadence, 'romantic extravagance, verbosity and literary pessimism'[1].

On the other hand, Skerlić tried to emphasize the European character of Serbian literature, and he neither paid too much attention to nor appreciated Serbian medieval literature and folk poetry. A Westerner by education, intellectual outlook, and interests, Skerlić despised the 'oriental poison' which he discerned in the Serbian mentality and way of life, and encouraged his fellow writers to reject outmoded traditional and conventional literature, and to search for new means of expression. Therefore, Skerlić's relation with Serbian modernism should not be assessed only by what he said in his essay on Vladislav Petković-Dis. Between 1901 and 1914, the year of his death, he published a great many articles on what might be called modernist writers, the authors who experimented with language and form, discovered new subject matter, followed an anti-mimetic method in their writing and delved into the inner states of mind.

Skerlić's critical activity, as is well known, was never exclusively aesthetic and literary. Skerlić, the literary critic, was not only an analyst, commentator and appraiser of literary texts which constituted the Serbian literature of his times, but also a diagnostician and portraitist of the mentality and character of his people, a moral historian of his epoch, and a national ideologist for a whole generation. To use his own words, Skerlić was “a clear voice of many whispers” (“jasni glas mnogih šapata”)[2], which intertwined and retracted within him, only to be voiced in accord with the needs of the moment, and those higher ideals to which he subordinated, in equal measure, both literature and criticism.

One of the most prominent features of Skerlić's critical personality was his skepticism, which he inherited from his literary guru, the French literary critic Jean Marie Guyau (1854-1888). Skerlić often claimed that an absolute truth did not exist, and that he believed in the

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[1] Antun Barac, *A History of Yugoslav Literature*. Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1973, p. 195.
[2] Jovan Skerlić, *Pisci i knjige,* Belgrade, 1964, p. 54.

existence of 'partial, relative, and temporary truths'[3]. His literary judgements are a clear reflection of that belief, and were generally dependent on 'truths' which were, obviously, very 'partial'.

His critical syntheses of the development of Serbian literature, as expressed in his *Istorija nove srpske književnosti (A History of the New Serbian Literature)* and some other topical articles, are, in many cases, different from, and even contradictory to the impression gained when one reads his texts about the same authors which had appeared earlier, as his direct critical responses to their newly published books. When he wrote about the past and about the present, he did it in the name of 'temporary truths', which he identified not only with his personal moods and sentiments, but also with his political ideas and the long-term political interests of his country.

In his texts published before the coup of May 1903, Skerlić, on many occasions, gave expression to his dissatisfaction with the Obrenović regime. His bitter and scathing condemnations of pre-Karadjordjević Serbia could be rightly placed among the most pessimistic literary characterizations of that period of Serbian history.

"Our present-day life is uniquely similar to a prison where people choke and sob because of the darkness and stale air", he wrote in his review of Božidar Knežević's (1862-1905) book *Reflections (Misli)* in 1902[4]. In his *A History of the New Serbian Literature* (1914) he described the same period as the time of a 'general spiritual depression', which made its impact on literature, dominated in those years by the voices of 'exhaustion and dejection'[5].

"A wave of pessimism flooded almost all of Serbian literature; graveyards were never written about so much before and nirvana never seemed such an ideal as in those dark and miserable times"[6], wrote Skerlić. In such a political atmosphere, it was optimism which was the tone not to Skerlić's liking. He praised, for instance, Laza Lazarević's (1851-1890) story *Švabica (The German Girl)* for its 'lack of that almost customary optimism', reminding his readers that the works of almost all great writers are free of cheerful tones, that true art is always sad ('tužna'), and that 'every true novel should poison sensitive readers'.[7]

However, after the large and radical political changes of 1903, the general tone of Serbian literature, as Skerlić pointed out in 1914 in his *A History of the New Serbian Literature*, also changed dramatically. 'With the change of circumstances which caused that pessimism', the general somber tone which had dominated Serbian literature for some time disappeared.

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[3] 'Povodom smrti Stevana Sremca', *Pisci i knjige,* vol. III, p. 267.
[4] 'Božidar Knežević: Misli', *Pisci i knjige*, Vol. IV, p. 193.
[5] *Istorija nove srpske književnosti,* Belgrade, 1964, p. 435-436.
[6] Ibid.
[7] 'Pripovetke Laze K. Lazarevića', *Pisci i knjige,* vol. III, pp. 70-71.

It was replaced by the spirit of reawakened 'national energy', applied to 'useful and fruitful' national endeavors.[8]

The political developments which followed the crisis caused by the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina by Austro-Hungary (1908), and the favourable outcome of the Balkan wars (1912-13), had 'as a happy consequence' an enormous boost of 'national faith and self-confidence, and created an enormous national optimism, which, naturally, also found its expression in literature'[9]. In these words one can easily recognize Skerlić's 'partial, relative and temporary truths' of 1914, because, if closely observed, some modernist books written and published after the political changes, and Skerlić's own critical response to them, give a rather different view of the period described than the one which is found in his *A History of the New Serbian Literature.* In his essay on Svetolik Ranković (1863-1899), published in 1904, Skerlić gave a clear indication that in those days his own view of life was generally pessimistic, and that for him pessimism was not exclusively a consequence of his political discontent. Namely, he wondered whether Ranković 'was a pessimist because he could clearly see the truth of life'.[10] One year later, in 1905, in the short review of Ranković's short stories, he wrote with approval of the writer's pessimistic sentiments. In 1909, he criticized Stevan Sremac (1855-1906) for failing to write about the hardships and miseries of life, about its gloomy and dark moments, 'which are more frequent and more common that the festivities he has described'[11].

The early Skerlić, in his article on *Secession*[12], distinguished two types of pessimism. The first one 'kills energy and faith in work, and looks for a cure for life not in life itself, in honest and useful work, but in absinthe, in the worst (kind of) sensuality, in the cult of words and religious mysticism'[13]. The other type of pessimism originates among more noble minds. It is caused by a feeling of disgust towards the animal side of human nature, and by the injustices and falsehoods in human society. This kind of pessimism does not lack faith in at least a minimal improvement of the human situation and is, therefore, an instrument of progress, because the world is not moved forward by those people who are contented with it. In those days, Skerlić considered even the decadence which some young Croatian writers resorted to in fighting their 'sick' literature, as something wise and useful. The pessimism which found its expression in the poetry of Kosta Abrašević (1879-1898), with its funereal tone of 'death and destruction', on the one hand, and its socialist hopes and love for humanity, on

[8] *Istorija nove srpske književnosti,* p. 435.
[9] Ibid.
[10] 'Svetolik Ranković, *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. III, p. 253.
[11] 'O Stevanu Sremcu', Ibid., p. 301.
[12] 'Secesija', *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. IV, pp. 97-105.
[13] Ibid., p. 102.

the other, Skerlić justified and explained by Abrašević's dissatisfaction with life and his hatred of its 'filth and vulgarity'[14]. It was, in other words, accepted.

A characteristic indicator of the change in Skerlić's position towards life and literature as its reflection, is his first text about the poetry of Milan Rakić (1876-1938) published in 1904[15]. However, whether because it was about the poetry of Rakić, the poet whom Skerlić highly respected, or because the literary critic still prevailed over the national ideologist, this piece of writing was written with an unusual degree of restraint and caution. Although Skerlić did mention the somber moods which prevailed in Rakić's poetry, he did not explicitly reject the poet's pessimism. He even found in it something that was almost Buddhist. However, he did say that Rakić, with his pessimistic outlook and his moral stoicism, remained 'alien and hostile towards the stream of life'[16], but his general remarks on contemplative pessimism as a narrow and futile kind of writing did not directly refer to Rakić.

Moreover, Skerlić almost apologized to the poet for his critical remarks. Rakić, as 'a sensible man'[17], should realize that the critic's unfavourable comments were 'dictated by respect for his talent'[18]. In the same text he defined certain 'more permanent'[19] values which should, according to him, dominate Serbian literature in the following thirty years. Those values were defined as new words - 'the words of hope and faith, the words of love of life, of which certain phenomena can be evil, but which is not evil in its substance'[20].

It might be said that in that moment the poetry of new words and of moral health was a necessity for Skerlić, the man who was shifted from one emotional register into another by a change in the political climate of his country; he was not yet the critic who would, only a few years later, make that kind of poetry into almost an aesthetic absolute. It is obvious that in 1904 'egotistic poetry' was not exactly what Skerlić liked, but it did not irritate and enrage him as it would in 1911, as it did with Dis. It is not too difficult to establish the reasons for that. Skerlić still felt the lethal influence of the Serbian 'dead, colourless environment, with wretched interests and even more wretched feelings, an environment (spiritually) poor and destructive'[21], which did not tolerate anything higher than 'common mud and common misery, an environment where one glows without being young, withers without having blossomed, and dies without having lived'[22].

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[14] 'Jedan socijalistički pesnik', Ibid., pp. 154-55.
[15] 'Milan Rakić: *Pesme'*, *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. V, pp. 39-47.
[16] Ibid., p. 47.
[17] Ibid., p. 44.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.,
[20] Ibid., p. 46.
[21] Ibid., p. 42.
[22] Ibid.

Exactly this image of his country, with its bitter undertones, in which he recognized the causes of Rakić's somber moods, indicates the ambiguity of Skerlić's position. He admitted that Rakić, who lived in such a country, was justified in writing the kind of poetry he wrote, although at the same time Skerlić sincerely believed that the purposes for writing poetry should be substantially different. What is noticeable, however, is that his value judgements were passed with a leniency completely lacking in the doctrinaire and exclusive criticism of his later career. Therefore, it is not accidental that in those years Skerlić wrote his best criticism. Milan Kašanin (1895-1981) has rightly stated that in his critical writings published between 1901 and 1904 Skerlić was not so much fighting for the cause of committed literature, as interpreting writers and books.[23]

In this ambiguity of Skerlić's critical position it is not difficult to recognize certain basic tenets of his teacher Guyau. Guyau, said: “The supreme wisdom of this age consists perhaps in the fact that a man thinks as a pessimist, because the nature of things is cruel and sad, but acts as an optimist, because no just and generous effort... is ever completely wasted”[24]. Therefore, when Rakić in 1912 included in his *Nove pesme (New Poems)* a cycle of patriotic verses, Skerlić completely disregarded the poet's tragic philosophy of life. The piece on Rakić was written immediately after he had ruthlessly crushed the poetry of Vladislav Petković-Dis, and preached about the importance of 'vitality and moral health'[25] to the bemused Sima Pandurović (1883-1960). He even quoted in full one very gloomy Rakić poem calling it 'pure and bright', and claiming that its 'simple and natural' words achieve 'high artistic effects'[26].

Skerlić praised highly Rakić's poems inspired by Kosovo as an expression of 'our contemporary patriotism devoid of trite phrases, rational and discreet, which is a constituent part of our soul and a fruit of our mature thoughts'[27]. It is symptomatic that even at the peak of his campaign against the poetry of Pandurović and Dis, Skerlić did not reject the pessimistic literature of those writers who happened to have one of the three alibis which he considered essential: the alibi of frankness, the alibi of patriotism, and the alibi of solidarity. In other words, he did not stigmatize all those writers whose literature was permeated with the poisonous breath of doom and gloom, but only those for whom he could not establish that they were sincere in their outlook, that they were patriotically inclined, and that they sympathized with the sufferings of the unfortunate.

So, thanks to his newly found patriotic aureole, Rakić suddenly was out of his 'ivory tower'. The poet who was earlier described as 'alien and hostile'[28] towards life, turned, in

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[23] Milan Kašanin, *Sudbine i ljudi,* Belgrade, 1968, pp. 292-93.
[24] Quoted from, Midhad Begić, *Jovan Skerlić - čovek i delo,* Belgrade, 1966, p. 63.
[25] 'Jedna književna zaraza', *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. V, pp. 56-66.
[26] Ibid., p. 52.
[27] 'Milan Rakić: *Nove pesme*', Ibid., p. 50.
[28] 'Milan Rakić: *Pesme*', Ibid., p. 47.

Skerlić's opinion, into the author of the best verses written in Serbian literature after Vojislav Ilić (1860-1894). Skerlić gave a brilliant and accurate description of the external features of Rakić's poetry. He spoke extensively about his intellectualism, the depth of his mind, the power of his thoughts, the warmth and perfection of his verses, his conciseness, and the regularity and harmony of his rhythms. But when he discussed what was expressed by those regular and harmonious rhythms, he did not go further than making some very general comments on the great human feelings and lofty and powerful thoughts which he found in Rakić's poetry. He avoided analyzing the essence of Rakić's poetic sentiments. As if he felt that, with respect to what he had said about Dis and Pandurović, his high esteem for the poetry of Milan Rakić would sound false, hypocritical and contradictory to what he then preached as the truth which Serbian poets were obliged to follow.

However essential the year 1903 was for Skerlić, with its dramatic political changes which greatly influenced his views on both politics and literature, the year 1908 was, in this respect, even more important and crucial. The change of tone in the texts written before and after 1908 is considerable. His pre-1908 writings seem comparatively balanced and moderate in their evaluations and general approach, because whatever Skerlić wrote after 1908 was subordinated to the idea of national awakening, regeneration, and the restoration of vital national energies.

Writing in 1907 about the play *Naši sinovi (Our Sons)* by Vojislav M. Jovanović (1884-1968), Skerlić praised the young writer for his 'powerful love of the naked truth', his 'unyielding frankness', 'socialist zest' and 'pessimistic bias'[29]. In 1908, he reproached Velimir Rajić (1879-1915) for 'the too dark, morbid, and almost clinical'[30] tone of his poetry, but he did not deny him as a writer, as he did with Dis. It was because Rajić had one of the three alibis, which was sufficient for Skerlić to give him a passing mark: “In this book there is not a single feeling, a single thought and event which the poet did not feel and experience in his own soul”[31]. He was also quite tolerant when, in the same year, he reviewed the short stories of Milutin Uskoković (1884-1915), describing the bookish and verbal pessimism of Uskoković's sketches as hackneyed and boring banality, but he did not see this artlessness as a major obstruction in the development of contemporary Serbian letters.[32]

Skerlić launched his crusade against pessimism in Serbian literature in 1909, in the article *Jedna književna zaraza (A Literary Infection*)[33]. Now, he approached pessimism as a 'dangerous literary illness which has began to cause us a lot of harm'[34]. Although he was less

[29] 'Vojislav M. Jovanović: *Naši sinovi'*, Ibid., p. 250.
[30] 'Velimir J. Rajić: *Pesme i proza*', Ibid. p. 126.
[31] Ibid., p. 125.
[32] 'Milutin M. Uskoković: *Vitae fragmenta'*, Ibid., pp. 214-15.
[33] Ibid., pp. 56-66.
[34] Ibid., p. 56.

rude towards Pandurović than he would be towards Dis, and did not completely reject his poetry, finding in it some positive qualities, he clearly indicated why such a poetry was inappropriate in that particular moment of the Serbian national drama. It was the moment when, according to Skerlić, the Serbian nation 'put more effort and showed more will and energy toward life than ever before'[35], while Serbian poetry stank of corpses, and the poets wrote exclusively about the ugliness of life, the futility of all efforts, and the comfort and calmness of the grave. So the former somber portraitist and sarcastic commentator of Serbia's morals and her way of life, turned into a writer glorifying her newly-discovered virtues, a pathetic defender of her 'normal and sound'[36] life, and a passionate advocate of the new literature which in its essence, as he saw it, was brimming with life and health.

Assessing in his 1913 article, *Novi omladinski listovi i naš novi naraštaj (New Youth Journals and Our New Generation)*[37], 'the national earthquake of 1908', Skerlić expressed his new feeling of nationalism in the following words:

> "The new nationalism is of a higher order and of wider horizons; it is, in fact, a living instinct of a race capable for life, a self-defence of a strong national organism, a manifestation of the inseparable right of a people to live its own life and to be the master of its own destiny; it is a high sense of solidarity which unites into one harmonious unit all the generations and all the parts of a people."[38]

For understanding Skerlić's critical praxis, the key words in this quotation are 'the high feeling of solidarity'. When one analyzes his critical texts it becomes obvious that, most commonly, pessimism for Skerlić was just a means, or an excuse, for settling his accounts with those writers who irritated him because they lacked in their outlook the feeling of solidarity. As early as 1901, he despairingly noted that the 'excesses of individualism have mercilessly crushed the high principle of solidarity'[39]. The absence of that sentiment, something Dis boasted about, was the main cause of Skerlić's tragic misunderstanding of his poetry. (I don't say 'of his poetry', because, it seems obvious, Skerlić understood Dis's poetry only too well, but just did not approve of what he found in it.) For the critic who identified himself with Aleksa Šantić's (1868-1924) verses,

> "Mene sve rane moga roda bole,

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[35] Ibid., p. 63.
[36] Ibid., p. 64.
[37] Ibid., pp. 263-77.
[38] Ibid., p. 274.
[39] 'Milan Nedeljković: Prelom', *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. IV, p. 222.

I moja duša s njima pati i grca...”
(All the wounds of my nation hurt me,
And my soul suffers and sobs with it...),

which were quoted in his article *Obnova naše rodoljubive poezije (The Renaissance of Our Patriotic Poetry)*[40], Vladislav Petković's lines (the direct response of an anarchic individualist to the pathetic expression of patriotism by a fellow poet),

“Što drugoga boli ne boli i mene;
Mene tudji jadi nimalo ne tište.”
(What hurts others, does not hurt me;
The miseries of others don't bother me in the least)[41],

were not only an impudent challenge to the idea most sacred to Skerlić's heart, but also the proof of the artificiality, insincerity, affectation and falseness of his poetry. Skerlić passionately believed that 'homeland' ('domovina') was the most essential and most personal part of any human being ('ono što je najosnovnije i najintimnije u nama')[42], so he could not tolerate anybody publicly boasting that he was deprived of it, while he loved 'cloud, and flowers which bloom and wither'[43], but not the people who 'grumble and moan'[44]. (As distinct from Šantić, who sympathized with his country: 'On duboko saoseća sa celom zemljom svojom.' - 'He profoundly sympathises with his entire nation.')[45]

The mere possibility that Dis's individualism and lack of sympathy for those who suffered might be interpreted as the reflection and expression of 'Serbian reality' and of the 'pathological condition of Serbian society' (as was the case in the reviews of *Utopljene duše*, written by two young Croatian writers and published in the Zagreb magazine *Hrvatski pokret*, the Split journal *Jug*, and the Belgrade paper *Radničke novine* respectively)[46], was additional reason for Skerlić's uncontrolled anger. Therefore, his view of the poetry of Vladislav Petković-Dis is a model example of a revengeful criticism by an injured, offended, and betrayed ideological critic, who released an avalanche of ridicule and insults against the defenseless

[40] *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. V, p. 91.
[41] Vladislav Petković-Dis, 'Razumljiva pesma'. Quoted from Jovan Skerlić, 'Lažni modernizam u srpskoj književnosti', *Pisci i knjige V,* p. 72.
[42] 'Obnova naše rodoljubive poezije', *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. V, p. 98.
[43] Ibid., p. 72.
[44] Ibid., p.
[45] Ibid., p. 91.
[46] They were Vladimir Čerina (*Jug,* 1911, No. 7, pp. 207-211 and *Radničke novine,* 1911, No. 115, pp. 2-3) and Stjepan Parmačević (*Hrvatski pokret,* 1911, No. 160, pp. 3-4).

poet, accusing him of hypocrisy, decadence, degeneracy, madness, imitation, outdated romanticism, egotism, lack of taste, and lack of talent.

That pessimism was not the main element in his denigration of Dis, can be seen from other texts which Skerlić published at the same time. No other writer whose vision of life was so dark and hopeless as Petković's was treated with such a merciless hostility, and even hatred. *Bespuća (Without Exit),* the novel by Veljko M. Milićević (1886-1929), described by Skerlić as a 'dark and oppressive story'[47] which had no equal as an "analysis of hopelessness and physiological fatigue of life'[48], was, according to him, 'a good piece of writing' ('dobar književni posao')[49]. He did make the remark that in times of faith in life and effort, this novel seemed rather old-fashioned, as if it belonged to the distant past. However, Milićević was treated as a writer who 'has made such a good start'[50].

In the collection *Dani i noći (The Days and Nights)* by Sima Pandurović (published in 1912), Skerlić approvingly noticed the transformation of a vague and sickly pessimism into a 'higher philosophical resignation and discreet melancholy'[51]. He read this collection 'with subdued sadness and bitter satisfaction'[52].

He was also extremely lenient towards all the sickly feelings, bizarre ideas and decadent features in the poetry of Veljko Petrović (1884-1967). Because Petrović possessed what was 'the most important' ('ono glavno') - 'the deep feeling of devotion to his country, and the new and well-developed concept of patriotism'[53] - he consequently was entitled to wear the 'fashionable mask'[54] of snobbery, anguish and ennui. Skerlić recognized in Petrović a representative poet of a 'complex generation'[55], in whom Western and national elements were equally present (the combination of 'the Western spirit' and 'the national soul'); they thought and expressed themselves as Westerners, but deeply within themselves they had the soul and 'voice of the blood' of their ancestors.[56]

Certainly, Skerlić's most blatant error in judgement was the one passed on the poetry of Proka Jovkić (1886-1915). Obviously Skerlić's acceptance of Jovkić's poetry was based on reasons which had nothing to do with aesthetic judgements or literary values. He did not have to say much about Jovkić's poetry, except that he had found in it some powerfully composed

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[47] 'Veljko Milićević: *Bespuća'*, Ibid. p. 296.
[48] Ibid., p. 297.
[49] Ibid., p.
[50] Ibid., p. 299.
[51] 'Sima Pandurović: *Dani i noći*', Ibid., p. 67.
[52] Ibid., p. 68.
[53] 'Obnova naše rodoljubive poezije', Ibid., p. 93.
[54] Ibid.
[55] 'Veljko Petrović: *Na pragu*', Ibid., p. 106.
[56] Ibid.

lines ('dobrih, krepko kazanih')[57]. What attracted him to this poet was Jovkić's 'very strong and very sincerely expressed feeling of social justice and of human brotherhood'[58]. So, although Dis was ruthlessly rejected and Jovkić sympathetically launched into prominence, there is no doubt that Skerlić considered Dis an important (and as Predrag Protić has shown[59], even dangerous) literary figure, while Jovkić was an unimportant poet who was given the critic's support because his social and political views happened to be identical with Skerlić's.

One of the main features of Skerlić's criticism is that he was more precise in his descriptive than in his evaluative capacity. I say descriptive and not analytical capacity, because Skerlić's criticism dealt with the description of the external features of literary works, rather than with the intrinsic features of literary texts. So even when his judgements are shown to be wrong, his descriptions of the works concerned are usually right.

Probably the most striking justification for this claim is the article *Dve ženske knjige (Two Female Books)*[60], a review of *Saputnici (Fellow-Travellers)* by Isidora Sekulić (1877-1958) and *Ispovesti (Confessions)* by Milica Janković (1881-1939). Skerlić described Sekulić's book as 'the flowers which grow from an ink-pot'[61], while in Janković's work he saw one of those books which 'purify the air'[62]. Irrespective of their differences, these were, as Skerlić saw them, two good books which had enriched Serbian literature.

The case is apparently simple: both writers had passed their exam, but Milica Janković got a higher mark. However, when we compare how Skerlić described these two books, the matter becomes less straightforward. As the main quality of Janković's *Ispovesti* Skerlić points out 'the tone of discreet generosity'[63]. She is able to move, but not to scandalize, excite, or cause admiration. Her simple 'truths of the heart'[64] are written in a 'correct, exact, calm and normal'[65] style, which is 'spontaneous and natural'[66]. Further, Skerlić finds in Janković's book some 'interesting observations, original impressions, and sound thoughts'[67]. In spite of all these praises, Milica Janković's work does not appear to be in any way exceptional.

On the other hand, Isidora Sekulić confused Skerlić. And he admitted it. She had a well-developed and rare ability of introspection, but she misused it. However this ability helped her to see, 'in a frightfully cruel way'[68], all the corners of her own soul. She was a pure

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[57] 'Nestor Žučni: *Knjiga pjesama*', Ibid., pp. 116.
[58] Ibid., pp. 115-16.
[59] Predrag Protić, *Stvaralac i politika,* Belgrade, 1972, p. 176.
[60] *Pisci i knjige,* Vol. V, pp. 278-292.
[61] Ibid., p. 282.
[62] Ibid., p. 290.
[63] Ibid., p. 289.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid., p. 280.

intellectual, with a 'superiority of mind',[69] but this was not the sort of talent which is helpful to a writer, because it prevents him or her from direct observation of life. Isidora Sekulić was 'a bookish writer'[70], but she was one of the better writers of that kind. She knew what she wrote about, because she had seen everything that was in her books. But then he added, contradicting himself, that in her case it was difficult to talk about spontaneity and frankness, because the writer who lives a bookish life acquires a bookish nature. But the moment he put these words onto paper, he corrected himself, saying: 'But who knows... Who could ever know what happens at the bottom of the soul of a person, particularly of the writer, who lives a double life'[71].

Skerlić knew and felt that he had an exceptional book in front of him, and he was almost scared of being unjust towards the author of *Saputnici.* Isidora Sekulić, obviously, wrote a literature which Skerlić did not particularly like; but he was too good a critic not to realize that she was a first-class writer. 'It is not sufficient for her to write well, she wants to write too well'[72]. He rejected her outlook, her themes, her egocentrism and her tone, but he was impressed by her rare ability for intellectual analysis and her literary means of expression. But what she wrote about - in 1913, when Serbia was again in a turmoil - was for Skerlić 'egotistic'[73], and 'exotic', with its 'atrophy of feelings, paralysis of will, something tired and sickly'[74]. It was a new literary sensibility which Skerlić found alien to him. It was confusing, and he could not accept it. But he could not but see that it was a sensibility backed by a rare talent, rare skill, and rare intellect. Nevertheless, in the final analysis, his sympathy was on Milica Janković's side.

In this example we can see clearly how practical needs and literary concepts oppose each other and even conflict with each other in the same article and even in the same thought. Practical needs say it is necessary to favour Milica Janković; literary concepts point toward favouring Isidora Sekulić. So Skerlić reveals the possibility of a dual point of view in one man, and in one text. This dualism became the intimate drama of Skerlić, the literary critic. When dogmatism - for practical, political, national or ideological reasons - acquired a harsh form, this dualism was abolished. The perspective of literature was neglected in favour of the needs of the day. Fortunately, in Skerlić's critical career, this was not always the case.

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[69] Ibid., p. 281.
[70] Ibid., p. 282.
[71] Ibid., p. 283
[72] Ibid., p. 285.
[73] Ibid., p. 284.
[74] Ibid., p. 285.

Tin Ujević and the Yugoslav Idea

In this essay I treat a short period in the life of Tin Ujević (1891-1955). This period covers his political activity from March 1912, when he went to Belgrade for the first time, to the end of World War I, when, on his return from Paris to the newly-formed Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, his participation in public political life ceased. This political activity was based on the idea of the unification of Croats, Slovenes and Serbs as formulated by the so-called "Nationalist Youth" and was contemporary with Ujević's work on the verse which would become the core of his first collection, *Lelek sebra (The serf's lament, 1920).*[1] Between 1912 and 1919 Ujević wrote some eighty political articles. The majority of them were a variation on the 'one and the same thought' which he formulated in a statement made to the Zagreb police on September 11, 1912; he had been arrested in Zemun on September 10 on his return from Serbia:

> ”The present regime in the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia is harmful to the people and the present relationship between the Kingdom of Hungary and Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia is equally harmful to the Croatian people... From a political point of view, I accept entirely the position taken in the programme of the Club for National Unification. I cannot state here what means may be used to achieve national unity of the Croats and Serbs, but I consider that in cases of need, all means are permissible. The aim of national unification would be, in the narrower sense, an independent Croatia and, in a broader sense, a Yugoslav Republic.”[2]

Among the large number of writers who supported the 'one and the same thought', none did so with more consistency, determination and political and poetic passion than Ujević. It is paradoxical that Ujević's role is omitted almost entirely in Viktor Novak's *Antologija jugoslovenske misli i narodnog jedinstva (Anthology of Yugoslav Thought and National Unity, 1930)*, a work devoted to the development of the 'Yugoslav' idea from 1390 to 1930. In more than 900 pages, space was found for only a single brief telegram sent by the Croatian publicist Oskar Tartaglia (1887-1950) and Tin Ujević, in the name of the Nationalist Youth of the

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[1] For a more detailed analysis of the same period in Ujević's career, see Dragomir Gajević, *Jugoslovenstvo izmedju stvarnosti i iluzija*, Belgrade, 1985, pp. 134-152 and Vojislav J. Vučković, 'Revolucionarna mladost Tina Ujevića', *Zbornik istorije književnosti SANU,* Belgrade, 1960, vol. 1, pp. 163-202.

[2] Tin Ujević, *Sabrana djela*, vol. 17, Zagreb, 1967, p. 493. The terms 'Yugoslav', 'Yugoslavia', 'Yugoslavism' were used long before the South Slavs united in the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, on December 1, 1918, and before the name of the country was changed to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, on October 3, 1929.

Dalmatian Littoral, to the Serbian prime minister Nikola Pašić (1845-1926) in November 1912: “The Serbo-Croatian Nationalist Youth of the Littoral greet the victory of their brother Serbs and Yugoslavs and bow to the victorious avengers of Kosovo and the creators of the new Yugoslavia.”[3] Novak doubtless had little respect for the unrespectable Ujević. Ujević, known as 'king of the bohemians' had, on November 16, 1925, been expelled from Belgrade (where he had lived since January 1920) for vagrancy, idleness and bohemian disorderliness.[4] The anthology was dedicated to the forerunners, prophets and creators of Yugoslavia and it was published with a message from King Alexander. Ujević's political articles were not collected until the publication of his *Collected Works* (1965-67).

Ujević was born in the village of Vrgorac on July 5, 1891; he attended elementary school in Imotski and Makarska. In Split, between 1902 and 1907, he attended a Roman Catholic seminary; as he himself put it, on leaving the seminary he 'returned to his freedom'.[5] He did his matriculation in Split in the summer of 1909, and he registered at the Faculty of Arts at Zagreb University in October of the same year. He arrived in Belgrade with a certain literary reputation that was gained not so much by his poetry as his 1911 polemics with his hero and mentor, the Croatian leading modernist writer and literary critic Antun Gustav Matoš (1873-1914).

During his six-month stay there Ujević published some forty political articles in Serbian newspapers as well as in the Croatian newspapers published in Zagreb (*Hrvatski pokret*) and in Rijeka (*Riječki novi list*). On March 17, 1912, at a Belgrade University student protest meeting against the 'oppressive' regime in Croatia, Ujević gave his first political speech, in which he greeted 'dear brothers from free Serbia' and said: 'I am delighted to see that our sufferings find an echo in your hearts. For us in Croatia, there is no finer encouragement than the fact that you and your army are with us.'[6]

After interrogation following his arrest in Zemun the police decided that Ujević should be exiled from the territory of the Kingdom of Croatia and Slavonia (in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy) to Dalmatia (in the Austrian part of the Monarchy). In December of the same year he was arrested again, in Mitrovica, and he spent six weeks in a Zagreb jail. His friends from the Central Committee of Nationalist Youth published on January 3, 1913, in *Napredњak* (after his exile from Zagreb, he had written several partly or completely censored articles for this newspaper), an appeal entitled 'Let us help Ujević'. In this piece the Croatian intellectuals were called upon to assist 'this, the most brilliant mind of our younger generations' (as the dramatist Ivo Vojnović (1857-1929) named Ujević in another article, published in the same

[3] *Antologija jugoslovenske misli i narodnog jedinstva,* Belgrade, 1930, p. 643.
[4] *Sabrana djela,* vol. 17, p. 509.
[5] Ibid., p. 489.
[6] Ibid., p. 492.

paper) ‘with the spoken and written word, interventions and their own reputations, with all available means'.[7] After leaving prison he spent most of his time in Split, but resumed his work for *Naprednjak* (where his articles continued to be censored) as well as on other periodicals like *Pijemont, Reč, Slovenski jug, Pokret*. Ujević's third imprisonment took place on May 3, 1913. After launching the periodical *Ujedinjenje,* as the organ of the 'Yugoslav Nationalists', Ujević was arrested together with his co-editor, Milostislav Bartulica (1893-1984), five days before the first number was due to be published, because of the leading article *Nakon Markova uskrsa (After the resurrection of Marko),* signed by the Central Committee of Nationalist Youth, and because of the article *Pravaši pravdaši* (The wrangling rightists), signed 'Somebody'. The author of both articles was Ujević. He and Bartulica were each sentenced to two months' imprisonment for founding the secret society, 'National Unification'.

In November 1913 Ujević arrived in Paris. 'Except for a short trip to Cetinje at the beginning of the war and a brief stay in London in 1915, I did not move from Paris', wrote Ujević in 1922.[8] During his stay in Paris, in June 1914, Ujević published ten poems in the collection *Hrvatska mlada lirika (Young Croatian verse);* the most important among the other eleven contributors were Ivo Andrić (1892-1975), Vladimir Čerina (1891-1932), Fran Galović (1887-1914) and Janko Polić Kamov (1886-1910). By the end of 1914, on the initiative of the Croatian politician from Dalmatia, Frano Supilo (1870-1917), he joined the Yugoslav Committee which was not yet fully constituted but had begun producing information bulletins and propaganda material. From Paris, Ujević wrote for *Jugoslovenski glasnik* in Niš and *Zabavnik* on Corfu, and for newspapers supportive of the Yugoslav cause published in North and South America, like *Svjetlo* in New York and *Pokret and Jugoslavenska država* in Antofagasta. He also worked as a translator and proofreader and (together with the Frenchman, Pierre de Lanux) produced a grammar of Serbo-Croat, *Grammaire élémentaire de la langue serbe (1916)*. As 'friends of the Russian revolution',[9] Ujević and his fellow writer and nationalist ideologue from Hercegovina, Vladimir Gaćinović (1890-1917), visited Leon Trotsky in his Paris hotel and discussed 'various obscure questions concerning our and the Russian socialists'.[10] During his time in Paris, Ujević experienced his first disappointment at the way in which the idea on which he had built his ideals had begun to be put into practice by the professional diplomats and politicians. In his *Mrsko ja (My hateful self)* he wrote:

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[7] Ibid., pp. 493-4.
[8] 'Mrsko ja', *Sabrana djela,* vol. 14, Zagreb, 1966, p. 41.
[9] *Sabrana djela,* vol. 17, p. 498.
[10] Ibid., pp. 497-8.

> "My stay in Paris gave me the opportunity of making acquaintances of very varied kinds, of which it is better that I do not speak here, since they led me to be persecuted by our official and semi-official personalities both at home and abroad. From the end of 1911 I have put quite a lot, sometimes, indeed, a great deal, into print, not only in the fatherland, but also in the New World and elsewhere. This was, in the main, the usual journalistic drudgery and toil, lacking in any greater pretensions and once and for all robbed me of any desire to engage in politics".[11]

Although he had written several political articles before March 31, 1912, when the king Francis Joseph suspended the Croatian constitution and used his right to appoint a commissioner, Ban Slavko Cuvaj, after that date Ujević subjected the Austro-Hungarian policy regarding Croatia to particularly severe and thorough critical analysis. He did this in a series of texts whose very titles bear witness to the anger that inspired them: *Proganjana Hrvatska (Croatia persecuted)* or Mrtva *domovina (The dead homeland)* or *Jedna gnjila država (A rotten state)*.[12] In these pieces, Ujević, a 'catholic atheist', as he described himself,[13] adopts not only an anti-Austro-Hungarian, but also an anticlerical position. In the article *Omladina vjeruje (Youth believes)* Ujević centres his attack on the 'internal chaos and disorientation of the party of Rights'[14] and their 'anti-Serbo-Croatianism'. He accuses the party's followers of 'a pathetic devaluation of all ideals' and of 'the daily shaming of everything sacred to the Croats'; he describes them as a:

> "handful of pitiful men who surrender our souls to Rome and our bodies to Vienna, linking the religion of idiocy with the cult of tyranny... Infernal clerical creatures who make a mockery of all ideals and, in particular, try to soil the Party of Rights with their unclean hands; in the words of Victor Hugo they are 'so Catholic that they are no longer Christian' ... these are so Catholic that they are no longer Croats; so Croat that they are no longer Slavs, nor Serbs, nor, in the end - Croats, so much priests that they are no longer men; these clericalists have done all they could to destroy Croatianism and to annihilate independent Croatian thought ... Clericals may, to the accompaniment of

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[11] *Sabrana djela*, vol. 14, p. 41.

[12] Other articles include: 'Komeserijat u Hrvatskoj' (The commissariat in Croatia), 'Beč prijatelj Hrvata' (Vienna, the friend of the Croats), 'Prilike u Hrvatskoj' (Conditions in Croatia), 'Komesarske lakrdije' (Commissioner's trivia), 'Austrija pritiv sebe same' (Austria against itself), 'Sramotno ćutanje' (A Shameful silence), 'Lekcije komeserijata' (Lessons of the commissariat), 'Poklič iz tamnice' (A cry from the dungeon), 'Grudanje blatom' (Mud-slinging), 'Bombe' (Bombs), 'Našoj mladoj omladini' (To our young youth) etc.

[13] *Sabrana djela*, vol. 7, Zagreb, 1965, p. 36.

[14] Croatian Party of Rights based its ideology on the affirmation of state rights that belonged to the Croatian 'political people'. See Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia,* Ithaca and London, 1984, pp.85-89.

> drums and kettles, announce that they alone are Croats; we, on the other hand, are well aware that only those who are not clericals may be Croats".[15]

Criticising the clerical narrow-mindedness of the 'Croato-Slovene' leaning of the Party of the Rights in which he saw a 'Vienna-Rome' mentality and étatiste and religious motives, Ujević sets up the 'national interest' against them.[16] He was to develop and vary this view, within his central idea, his 'Yugoslav' ideal, in many of his political articles, but nowhere with such polemical passion as in this piece:

> "Certainly, our Croatian thought is no less Croatian than all other Croats' and surely our Croatianism is no less certain than that of Starčević and Kvaternik?"[17]

> "We, the Serbo-Croatian nationalists, do not admit that any so-called radical, that is exclusive, Croat could be more Croat than we are; we do not admit even that any exclusive Croat could be as much Croat as we are. Do they hold it against us that we are Serbo-Croats? It is strange that people who recognise the unity of the Croats and the Slovenes should refuse to recognise the unity of the Croats and the Serbs. Being Serbo-Croats, we are no less Croats than other Croats. Being Serbo-Croats, we are twofold Croats, for we cannot see in Serbdom any diminution or destruction of Croatian thought; on the contrary, we see a strengthened Croatianism. To be also a Serb means to be more of a Croat; to be a Croat and simultaneously not to be a Serb means not to be a Croat. For us, every Serb, every Serbian nationalist, is a hundred times better Croat than the Croat of the Croatian Party of Rights."[18]

Ujević defended the use of the label Serbo-Croat by stating that it emphasised the inseparability of Serbs and Croats and demonstrated that 'we desire the death of neither name'.[19] He declared his view as constitutive of 'integral nationalism', claiming that:

> "Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, no matter to what confession they belong or in what province they live, are more than just brothers; they are one nation, one and indivisible, with the task of realising its unique national culture and shared independent future.

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[15] *Sabrana djela,* vol. 10, Zagreb, 1966, pp. 113-121.
[16] Ibid., p. 118.
[17] Ante Starčević (1823-96) and Eugen Kvaternik (1825-71), founding fathers of the Croatian Party of Rights.
[18] *Sabrana djela*, vol. 10, p. 117.
[19] Ibid., p. 118.

> Hence, whatever is great in Serb or Slovene, we love as being Croat. Equally all Serbian or Slovene failures hurt us just as though they were Croatian."[20]

> "Through this conviction, which, be it remembered, our Nationalist Youth supported before the war, comes our pride at the victorious Serbian war, for we are sure that at Kumanovo, Prilep and Bitolj, Croatian battles were fought. And no one can hold this against us; no one can condemn our pride at, I will not say 'our fraternal', but at our very own successes ... Still less may one accept the objection at our joy at the entire cultural development of Serbia which is our country, for there dwells a people with our language and our spirit. We do not just accept or recognise our love for that part of our homeland, but we lay great emphasis on it, and we know that we are not wrong. Not Serbophiles, but true Serbs, we know that we are true Croats through and through ... For some, the name Croat is an empty word; for us Croatia is a thought and an emotion, an inner value, a soul ... Anyone for whom Croatia is a moral value will strive to liberate her, to cleanse her of foreign influences and to preserve her culture. Those who brandish the name 'Croatian' maintain that others neglect it. This is the core of the conflict between Croatian nominalism and Croatian nationalism."[21]

Ujević's writing is emotional and bombastic, but he believed that this was necessary to serve the aim that inspired them. His *Na žrtveniku Evrope (On the altar of Europe)* demonstrates that Ujević was, for a hyperbolical rhetorical style, in imitation of Italian journalism. At the beginning of the piece he chooses to quote extensively from an article from *Corriere della sera,* concerning Serbian heroism in 1916, to give an example of the Italian gift for beauty of style and for resonant phraseology. In Italian, such rhetorical exaggeration may sound empty, false, writes Ujević,

> "but this time... but this time, this time we sense with all our nerves, with all our heart, with our entire soul, the bloodstained truthfulness of the description ... How wonderful it is when the Slav fights and the Latin describes, when we find Italian words for the Serbian cause, when Serbian deaths are chronicled in an Italian article! Then, then sonorous words are not emptied of meaning; the decorative takes on a content and can move us. Yugoslav heroism fills the Italian rhetoric with the thrill of truth and the tingle of life."[22]

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[20] Here we see Ujević using the early nineteenth-century Slovaks, Kollár and Šafarik's, language of 'Slav Reciprocity'.

[21] *Sabrana djela*, vol. 10, pp. 118-9.

[22] Ibid., p. 274.

Clearly, Ujević loses his critical judgement when it is a matter of the national cause. On June 25, 1916, writing of the Meštrović exhibition in London, he bewails that 'Yugoslavia is still in the realms of dreams and of art'. The realm of dreams is the realm of his ideal, which he calls his 'ardent intuition'; Ujević believes that his ideal justifies his hyperbolical lyricism:

> “Yugoslavia! In the rosy mornings and purple evenings, from prison chains, from hospital palliasses, your name trembles on fevered lips and your picture emerges before enchanted eyes. You have become the faith of those who have suffered long and, with the ardour of the early Christians, men cry out for you from our catacombs and bloody arenas. Yugoslavia! It is you that men embrace and for you that men suffer; and if you are an illusion, you are a majestic illusion and your beauty is worthy of ardour and sacrifice.”[23]

In his Serbo-Croatian, that is Yugoslav, nationalism Ujević sees an idea so 'natural and understandable' that he finds it 'truly amazing that it should have arisen with us'. On the other hand, he considers it the fruit of truly poetic inspiration. And here, incidentally, he is involving the old National Revival notion of the poet as national prophet and national sage. In a country in which 'the simplest truth appears as an incomprehensible intellectual perversity', only the poet ('in other words a madman', he adds in a fashionable Schopenhauerian manner) could utter

> “the strange words of forgotten meanings, words of liberation, of unification, of statehood. What practical man could have thought of it, what man of sense have spoken of it? This could be only the ravings of a fanatic, of an exultant poet and here, if anywhere, the writer has proved himself a good means to, if not general, then individual, awakening of the national spirit.”[24]

Ujević frequently emphasised that the aim of his work was 'purely cultural', but, at the same time, contended that 'for a national culture one must have a national state'.[25]

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[23] Ibid., p. 266.
[24] 'Za novu omladinu', Ibid., p. 129.
[25] Ibid.

> “The unification of our people, ... spiritually, in one culture and, politically, in one state, that is our programme ... Unity is the basis of our struggle and the means to our success, while unification in freedom is our highest aim.”[26]

On the other hand,

> “cultural struggle is possible only in a civilised milieu, but what struggle is possible in a Zagreb full of spies and policemen?”[27]

Ujević replies that he was prepared to 'use any means whatsoever for Croatia and against her oppressors'.[28]

Since 'the parliamentary fata morgana'[29] has betrayed all our expectations, it is necessary to resort to other means. 'Parliamentary vagaries' and 'purely parliamentary and journalistic struggles' clearly lead nowhere.[30] ‘In a state based on invasion and conquest, the first right and the final reason - is might and we shall have to use it', writes Ujević in his brochure *Hrvatska u borbi za slobodu (Croatia in the struggle for freedom),* published anonymously in Belgrade in 1912. 'The extensiveness of our ideal lies in the fact that it is not exclusive, but is Croatian, Serbian and Slovene; its intensity lies in that it is not confined to a parliament, but demands the most radical means, that it is revolutionary. We demand a revolution.’[31] In his *Situacija u Hrvatskoj (The situation in Croatia),* written in Zagreb earlier in the same year, Ujević expresses his radical views as follows: 'If Cuvaj intends to suppress freedom by armed force, we shall show that we, too, can use arms in defence of our personal freedom and the freedom of our country.’[32] He regarded the terrorist, Luka Jukić's, unsuccessful attempt on Ban Cuvaj's life in this light: 'It will be said that this act was not opportune, not tactical, that it was mad, that it spoils the work of politicians and provokes persecution. All this may be true; all this is true. The act was mad, yet still, despite this, it was great.'[33] Jukić's 'ethical bullet'[34] has demonstrated that he had no group of conspirators behind him, but 'our entire people. Our people will not organise assassinations, but it will prepare itself for revolution.'[35]

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[26] 'Narodno jedinstvo', Ibid., p. 17.
[27] 'Komeserijat u Hrvatskoj (I)', Ibid., p. 23.
[28] 'Situacija u Hrvatskoj', Ibid., p. 15.
[29] 'Lekcije komeserijata”, Ibid., p. 67.
[30] 'Grudanje blatom', Ibid., p. 75.
[31] Ibid., pp. 140-1.
[32] Ibid., p. 14.
[33] 'Nakon Jukićeva djela', Ibid., p. 47-48.
[34] 'Omladina u Hrvatskoj', Ibid., p. 53.
[35] Nakon Jukićeva djela', Ibid., p. 48.

In Ujević's view, however, there was a serious obstacle on this revolutionary path. 'The Croats' greatest misfortune is not that they are in Austria', he wrote in *Hrvatska u borbi za slobodu*; 'their greatest misfortune is that Austria is in them, ... at least to the extent that they tremble before her, if only out of hatred.'[36] Clearly Ujević differentiated between two Croatias and two senses of Croatianism. On the one side was Dalmatia, 'the spiritually anticipated Yugoslavia..., the memory of the great cultural past of Croatia', which 'more profoundly and more consistently than any other of our lands... has expressed the idea of Serbo-Croatian unity, the new Yugoslavism.'[37] On the other side there is 'that part of our Croatian people which is so incapable of the conscience defiance and the action of pride' - the Croatia of Cuvaj.[38] While Dalmatia was 'more Croatian than Croatia itself, (it was) Serbian in thought as the Serbs are in action',[39] Zagreb 'which was always only slightly Croatian... was never less Croatian, less national, than it is today'.[40] Writing after Jukić's trial, Ujević expresses his horror at the silence, the absence of a single gesture of dissent or resistance on the part of its 'lazy, selfish youth',[41] at the fact that 'today all Croatia sleeps'.[42] Recalling that Jukić was a Croat from Bosnia and not a citizen of Zagreb, and that at his trial he was declared a madman by his own defence counsel and his comrades were referred to as 'children', Ujević exclaims with anger and shame:

> “Oh, hundred-times shameful land, in which only madmen and children can sense slavery in a time of general moral anaesthesia and shameful apathy! Born in Dalmatia, I am a fanatical Croat, a fanatical Serbo-Croat and a fanatical Yugoslav: I am a nationalist; I love my entire people and, in particular, I love those lands that are in poverty and unliberated. Ceaselessly, pathologically, I love that unworthy apathetic Croatia, that cowardly Zagreb with its frightened citizens. I love them and when I mention that Jukić is not from there, I say it with sadness ... For me a Bosnian, or a Croat or a Serb from Vojvodina or from Serbia is, and never can be a foreigner if he is of our blood, our thought and our name; but for the very reason that this Croatia is of our blood and ours by right, I regret that it is not ours by its actions, that it is not manly, active time when we must all be full of moral strength and pride.”[43]

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[36] 'Hrvatska u borbi za slobodu', Ibid., p. 141.
[37] 'Značenje Dalmacije, Ibid., p. 243-246.
[38] 'Sramotno ćutanje, Ibid., p. 62.
[39] 'Značenje Dalmacije', Ibid., p. 244.
[40] 'Sramotno ćutanje', Ibid., p. 63.
[41] Ibid., p. 65.
[42] Ibid., p. 64.
[43] Ibid., p. 64.

Ujević's notion that national liberation was possible only on the basis of moral regeneration is borrowed from Masaryk. Ujević considered, however, that the moral regeneration of a part of the then Croatian intelligentsia could not be realised until such time as it was not educated in Austria-Hungary. 'How', he asks, 'can we carry on a struggle against the oppressor, Vienna, when this very Vienna is our cultural centre... Remaining in a prison cell, we see nothing but darkness and our eyes are blinded; our eyes are Dualist, Vienna-Budapest, eyes.'[44] Insofar as he wishes to learn 'the inestimable price of freedom', the young Croat must study in 'the great school of free Europe' and become a Croat and a Croatian nationalist outside Croatia; on his return to Croatia he must give back freedom to his fatherland. Hitherto, because of the propaganda 'of the Slavist and Realist thought'[45] large numbers of Croats have gone to Prague to study. This is no longer enough. In Prague, students learned to value small-scale work (drobná práce), but 'small-scale work is not everything; small-scale work is necessary for a great national programme, but it is merely a preparation for our cause, which cannot be small.'[46] On the other hand,

> "he who desires relief should come to Belgrade. He, who desires to see how the moral strength of rectitude and self-sacrifice can elevate the people so that they do not fear enemy guns, nor the aggressor's bayonets, should come here. Our people in the Monarchy have no idea how much our Serbia is ours, how our Serbia is a hundred times not only more Serbian but more Croatian than Croatia herself and (Croats) must learn, see and hear this. Therefore it is necessary that they come here; therefore it is especially necessary that Croatian youth come to Belgrade University, which is not only a good training-ground, but, what is more, a training-ground for freedom ... How can we speak of national unity, if we do not know this part of our people, which is the most important part because it is free?"[47]

His *Hrvatska danas (Croatia today),* where he attempts to give a broader analysis of Croatian public life, is written in the same tone. The lives of Croats were saturated with a sense of restriction, the result of which, as Ujević saw it, was 'narrow-mindedness', 'superficiality', 'timidity', 'sleepiness'[48] and 'the greatest evil of all, the inner evil that is known

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[44] 'Na Beogradski univerzitet', Ibid., p. 42.
[45] Ibid., p. 45. 'Realist' was the name Masaryk gave to his political party. This has nothing to do with literary realism.
[46] Ibid. The notion of the need for 'small-scale work' in the national cause is also derived from Masaryk, for whom it had become a slogan in the 1890s. (Masaryk himself claimed to have taken the idea from Marxism.)
[47] Ibid., pp. 43-44.
[48] 'Hrvatska današnjica', *Sabrana djela,* vol. 7, Zagreb, 1965, p. 45.

as cowardice'.[49] The sense of restriction is the source of 'the policy based on the petty interests of party leaders bereft of broader, national, liberated ideas' and 'the pettifogging, mildewed knowledge of learned moths devoid of powerful creative ideas';[50] it is also the source of 'the emptiness of official art, frightened by the boldness of unrestrained Modernism'.[51] In literature, apart from 'linguistic anarchy', there is 'critical chaos'.[52] Only 'in a country of idiots and party mediocrities could it happen that utterly worthless, illiterate works would be flaunted as masterpieces.'[53] Criticism is eccentric, biased or party-controlled, for it is based not on literary criteria, but on 'all sorts of petty quarrels'.[54] Furthermore, 'it is well known that no one on earth despises his language as much as the Croat, and this must bear the blame for the fact that our literature is so illiterate.'[55] Ujević's fellow writers 'not only do not have the slightest knowledge of their language because they have not made any deep study of it; our writers just do not know it at all. One often thinks, when reading a Croatian book, that it has not been written by a Croat, but certainly by some German settler, who, after a two-to-three- year stay here has taken up our grammar.'[56] The political aim of the national idea was liberation and its literary aim was a 'united literature, good, literary and free from impositions... All that is good, be it Serbian or Croatian, must be both Serbian and Croatian; all that is illiterate, bad, inferior, be it Serbian or Croatian, should be neither Serbian nor Croatian.'[57] National unity should not be 'a cheap fairground advertisement' and 'whether anyone is an artist or not should be decided by the criteria of his work; his loyalty to programmes (even when pretended) is irrelevant.'[58] To the question, what, if anything, Croats could learn from the Serbs, Ujević replies, 'Language and criticism'.[59]

Ujević regularly refers to personalities from the Croatian and Serbian past who had the same or similar ideas of liberation and unification: Dositej Obradović[60], Ljudevit Gaj[61], Vuk

[49] Ibid., p. 46.
[50] Ibid., p. 45.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid., p. 49.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., p. 48.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p. 47.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Serbian writer and translator (1739?-1811).
[61] Croatian language reformer and leader of the Illyrian movement (1809-72).

Karadžić[62], Ante Starčević, Karadjordje[63], prince Mihailo[64], Eugen Kvaternik, Jovan Skerlić[65], Ivan Meštrović[66].

> We must remember you, teachers, educators, forerunners, you, our national prophets! From the *Judita* of Marko Marulić[67], written with the hatred and the desire for future punishment of the Ottoman Holofernes, through Ivan Gundulić's[68] *Osman* and *Razgovor ugodni naroda slovinskog (The Pleasant Conversation of the Slav People)* of Kačić-Miošić,[69] to the *Gorski vijenac (Mountain Wreath)* of Bishop Petar Petrović Njegoš[70] and Ivan Mažuranić's[71] *Čengić-aga,* in the whole of our Dubrovnik literature, our kajkavic[72], Serbo-Slavonic, Illyrian and modern writing, to Vojnović's *Majka Jugovića (The Mother of Yugoviches)* and to Rakić's[73] *Jefimija* and *Simonida* there lives the same inspiration: enmity for the Turkish slaughterer, revenge for Kosovo![74] This sense of sanguine intensity penetrated deep into all hearts and it is inevitably imprinted in the monuments of our culture.[75]

Attacked by his political adversaries for treachery to the 'Croatian idea' and 'Croatian ideals', Ujević defended himself by affirming that the nationalist movement sought to unite the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes 'in a future Yugoslavia' and not in a 'Greater Serbia'. He laid particular emphasis on the claim that they were fighting not only for the unity of these peoples, but also for their equality.

> "If we Serbs and Croats call ourselves 'Serbo-Croats' that does not mean that we reject the name Croat, for it is a necessary, integral part of the term 'Serbo-Croat'"[76]

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62 Serbian language scholar and the father of Serbian folk-literature scholarship (1787-1864).

63 Djordje Petrović, nicknamed Karadjordje, leader of the First Serbian Uprising against the Turks (1804) and the founder of the Karadjordjević dynasty (1768-1817).

64 Mihailo Obrenović, Prince of Serbia (1823-68).

65 Serbian literary critic and historian (1877-1914).

66 Croatian sculptor (1883-1962).

67 Croatian poet and moral philosopher (1450-1524).

68 Croatian poet and dramatist (1589-1638).

69 Andrija Kačić-Miošić, Croatian historical poet (1704-60).

70 Serbian poet and Prince-Bishop of Montenegro (1813-51).

71 Croatian poet and politician (1814-90).

72 Variant of Croatian, spoken in the region north-west of Zagreb. The name comes from the word 'kaj' for 'what'.

73 Milan Rakić, Serbian poet and diplomat (1876-1938).

74 The field of Kosovo; the place where the Serbs were defeated by the Turks in 1389.

75 'Ispunjeni zavjet', *Sabrana djela,* vol. 10, p. 94.

76 'Nacionalizam i hrvatstvo', *Sabrana djela,* vol. 10, pp. 178-179.

he writes. In the forthcoming struggle, in which the Southern Slavs must show that they are not 'an inferior race', 'only our strength', affirms Ujević, 'physical and intellectual, our consciousness, our reason and our fists will decide.' There is no more time for 'peaceful and passive Realism which ... tolerates the injustices of a state of slavery'. The time has come 'for a disobedient and active realism, that will not merely look on and tolerate, that desires to be fruitful and energetic...: to create and overthrow.'[77] Despite 'senseless separatisms', there should be an awareness of 'a definitive process of integration which will unite all differences, local, provincial, nominal and etatistic, in a broad harmony of national totality'.[78]

Yet even in the early days of Ujević's patriotic zeal, in 1912, a worm of doubt and apprehension reared its head. The powerful upsurge of patriotic energy that occurred among the Nationalist Youth of the Monarchy in the early 1900s was

> "so unexpected, so sudden that it fills us with fear; we are taken by surprise and dread lest it should soon collapse like a house built too quickly and unsolidly on shallow foundations. Yesterday often reacts to today, so we cannot but fear a fatal repetition of our old mistakes. We well know the inconstancy of Slav enthusiasm and we are aware that we possess more sudden ardour than we do the ability to persevere."[79]

For Ujević, that house began to collapse at the moment it had begun to be built. As some of Ujević's letters written from Paris bear witness, this occurred at the height of his propaganda work.

In June 1918, in the Valparaiso paper *Jugoslavenska država,* Ujević poses essential questions regarding the state that was to be created a few months later. These questions represent a character-sketch both of those who were creating the state and of those for whom it was being created:

> "Yugoslavia shall be one day, but what then will the Yugoslavs be? Will they live, a free and happy people, in an independent state? Will that people be cultured, well-fed and contented?... Let us ask our consciences whether the material Yugoslavia will be followed by the noble soul of Yugoslavia, whether our intelligentsia will for once show itself worthy of the wonderful self-sacrifice of the Serbian peasant, what the vocation and message of Yugoslavia will be, her 'religious function in the world', her international, supranational contribution, how she will educate and bring up her people? For, to be honest, it would be dreadful if we remained as we are now or, in

[77] 'Borba nacionalističke omladine', Ibid., pp. 87-90.
[78] 'Za mladu Dalmaciju', Ibid., pp. 77-79.
[79] 'Povodom *Zore*', Ibid., p. 38.

> the great majority of cases, as we were until yesterday, selfish, jealous, pettifogging, gossiping, superficial, empty-headed, spineless, illiterate; without justice, without strength and without courage, hating those who are more powerful than we are, incapable of doing anything, despising heroism and ardour, scared stiff of thought and sympathy. Beside Yugoslavia's better soul that has given birth not only to Marko,[80] but also to countless others, gentle and unknown, selfless and kind and hard-working; there is in Yugoslavia also a horrid atmosphere of plague-ridden breath where all Austro-Germanic perfidy embraces and unites with the Balkan breath of hatred and vindictiveness: a world of the sycophant and the gendarme, of evil and the abyss. Liberating her and her people from this inner Austro-Germanic spirit of vengeance and madness, must be the most urgent task of the Yugoslav orientated youth, once victory over the external enemy is won. The defining of the frontiers of democratic Yugoslavia will be the beginning and not the end of understanding; other matters, cultural and moral, await those strivers who understand the meaning of love and who themselves love reason."[81]

The clash between his poetic vision of a new state and the pragmatic machinations of the politicians who achieved it was painful for Ujević. At the beginning of 1917, the Montenegrin government rejected his application for Montenegrin citizenship and in July he returned his Serbian passport to the Serbian consulate in Paris 'for well thought-out and absolutely understandable reasons.' 'Ever since I have had it, the gentlemen of the consulate have never ceased to undertake the most shameful intrigues which sabotage all my intellectual work and hamper my every attempt to settle in peace', Ujević wrote to a friend on 14 July, 1917.[82] In another letter, written on September 8, 1917, he complained that 'all the behaviour of our official gentlemen towards me ... has been the most awful, most dishonest and shameless possible'.[83] He was to say more about this in an interview given to the Belgrade *Novosti* on September 24, 1922, after his decision to abandon his name Augustin and to begin to sign himself Tin:

> "As Augustin, from my earliest youth, I led an idealistic struggle for our national liberation and unification and expended many words and much ink in that cause. Formally, liberation and unification have arrived, yet in reality, everything is the same.

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[80] Prince Marko, popular folk poetry hero.

[81] 'Obrisi Jugoslavije', Ibid., p. 292-293.

[82] *Sabrana djela*, vol. 17, p. 230.

[83] *Sabrana djela,* vol. 14, p. 246. For Ujević's stay in Paris see also Dragovan Šepić, 'Augustin Ujević u Parizu', *Forum,* V, vol. 12, 1966, 11-12, pp. 546-75.

> The hero of our days of liberation is Rade Pašić[84] and our literary supremo is Marko Car[85]. Thus my ideals remain unrealized and, since there is no apparent sign that we can liberate ourselves from the society of Rade Pašić and Marko Car, I desired formally to part from my unhappy nation. I have become an Irishman and cast away my fine given name and re-christened myself with the name you have just mentioned".[86]

Ujević had expressed the same disillusion, without the sarcasm of this statement, in January of the previous year with the words: 'And how wonderful it was to think of that young Yugoslavia in those days, five years ago, in Geneva and Lausanne! But hope has betrayed us, at least for the time being!'[87] At the end of the same year, 1921, he gave a more thorough critical analysis of the political and moral climate of the country, without rejecting the ideals for which he had fought.[88] At the same period, in several articles, he declared himself to be 'a convinced communist'[89] who would 'heartily wish' to see a communist revolution, even though he was aware that 'this (was) impossible'.[90] The problem of Yugoslavia, as he then saw it, waking out of his youthful intoxication, was the 'incomplete homogeneity of the national element, divided as it is into different religious confessions, names and orthographies'.[91] Sound government policy might succeed in solving such problems; the ideal one would be able to remove them entirely, but

> "with today's bourgeois politicians at her head, Yugoslavia lives in constant danger of being split internally and partitioned from without. When we add to this that, besides this social misery, we have the dreadful misery of our proletariat and the truly unbelievable corruption and hard-heartedness of the upper classes at the centre of our state, we must come to the pathetic conclusion that, since no successful policy is possible without a higher morality and a better economy, Yugoslavia, as it is today, has little hope for the future. In this country, the elements of disorder and disaster are sitting in government itself, on the ministerial seats.[92]

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[84] Son of the prime minister Nikola Pašić, involved in numerous scandals and corruption.
[85] Serbian traditionalist literary critic and historian (1860-1953).
[86] *Sabrana djela*, vol. 17, pp. 506-507.
[87] 'Božić omladine', *Sabrana djela*, vol. 12, Zagreb 1965, p. 35.
[88] 'Politička inteligencija omladine', *Sabrana djela*, vol. 10, pp. 310-319.
[89] 'Mrsko ja', *Sabrana djela*, vol. 14, p. 42.
[90] 'Jugoslavija bez književnosti', *Sabrana djela*, vol. 12, p. 37.
[91] 'Politička inteligencija omladine', *Sabrana djela,* vol. 10, p. 318.
[92] Ibid.

None the less, even in moments of general resignation at the situation, Ujević speaks of the possibility of 'the Resurrection of the Idol'.[93] In his opinion, 'salvation may come only from a sincere and capable social democracy, which, through rapid evolution, through progress, culture and freedom, might lead the people to an intimate integration.'[94] This would involve the defence of personal freedom, the right to work and a minimum of prosperity for each working individual.[95] He was to supplement this text, written in 1921, in the following year with an optimistic, almost prophetic vision of the future in which his leaning towards communism is clearly present in its final form: 'I do, nevertheless, believe that, given favourable conditions, for winds tend to vary, ... it is possible that a federative and unitarian Soviet Republic might be proclaimed in Yugoslavia (or Yugoslavias) in some twenty years' time, in other words around 1942.'[96]

Regardless of this late (for him) optimistic note, it is certain that his disillusion, not with the Yugoslav idea, but with the form in which the new state had realised the idea, directed Ujević's subsequent literary and personal life. It was to take a different direction - towards pure aestheticism. The poet himself would express this in a painful farewell to his former self:

> “I am dead, readers, if you do not already know it: I am dead; I rest deeper in my sadness and misery than Lazarus in the grave from which the voice of the Saviour roused him ... Softly, inaudibly, the event took place, preceded by much suffering and anguish, but one day it happened, without any doubt. Augustin Ujević has indeed died and this man who breathes in his body and puts on his clothes is just one of his intimate friends or even his secretary, who knows some of his secrets, but he is not he”.[97]

[93] Ibid.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.
[96] 'Prilog ka kritici društvene reakcije', Ibid., p. 322.
[97] 'Ispit savjesti', *Sabrana djela*, vol. 6, Zagreb 1965, p. 283.

Ivo Andrić and the Jews

In the last chapter of *Bosnian Story (Travnička hronika)* Salomon Atijas, 'the most prominent of the Atijas brothers and the head of the whole prolific tribe of the Travnik Atijases'[1], comes to pay his farewell visit to the departing French Consul, Monsieur Daville. He comes unexpectedly to offer 'what little he possessed or could do'[2] to help the Frenchman - who had treated them, the Travnik Jews, as men, without any discrimination - out of his financial difficulties. While the Sarajevo Jews, who used to make loans to the Consulate in better days, now, at a moment of great changes in the world and in France, become distrustful and unwilling to offer a helping hand, Master Salomon brings tears of emotion to Daville's eyes by his embarrassed gesture of compassion and friendship, in the form of the offer of a loan of twenty-five Imperial ducats.

'Daville, who had thought at first that Atijas had come to request or ask something from him, was surprised and touched'.[3] However, in his words of thanks Daville confines himself to 'general and indefinite phrases', speaking of his 'sympathy and his understanding towards the Jews, of humanity and the need for people to comprehend and help each other, without distinction'[4].

Encouraged by Daville's kindness and the admiration he expressed for the resilience of the Travnik Jews who had managed to defend and preserve themselves against all the ills brought upon them by the whims of history and the persecution of greedy Pashas, Salomon discards his protective shield of caution and starts to speak, 'to utter his complaint, to commend and explain himself, like a man who is given a unique opportunity, a few precious minutes only, for an important and urgent message'[5]. But Daville's benevolent laughter, provoked by the words of a Jewish saying, makes Atijas stop short in his confession, while a 'worried and fearful expression'[6] returned to his face. 'He was frightened that he might have gone too far and said what he should not', and that 'what he had said was not what he had meant to say'[7].

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[1] *Bosnian Story,* p. 446.
[2] Ibid., p. 447.
[3] Ibid., p. 447.
[4] Ibid., p. 447.
[5] Ibid., p. 449.
[6] Ibid., p. 449.
[7] Ibid., p. 449.

But this Jew who brings with himself, besides his offer of money, 'a scent of garlic and untanned skins'[8] and a 'worried expression of animal melancholy'[9] in his eyes, has an important message to deliver to the departing stranger. He feels uncomfortable in Daville's clean and comely world. But in spite of his shyness and his fear he cannot resist the desire 'to say something further, about himself and his people, something urgent and secret, from his great hole of Travnik, from the damp storehouse where one lived hard, without honour or justice, without beauty or order, without judge or witness'[10]. He wants his message to be addressed 'to some better, more orderly, more enlightened world beyond'[11].

But instead of a message with a 'great and general'[12] meaning about his own existence and the suffering of the Travnik Jews, he is able to utter only 'confused and disjointed words'[13]. Unable to express 'briefly and worthily'[14] what he wanted to say about his people - because he 'does not know a single one of this world's languages properly'[15] - he departs with 'broken words which came to his tongue'[16].

'It will never be told', comments the author, 'what was choking Salomon Atijas at that moment, what was bringing tears to his eyes and excited trembling to his whole body'[17]. But in a moving gesture of identification with his character, Andrić continues: 'Had he known how, had he, in general, been able to speak, he would have said something like this...'[18] And there follows a long passage of Salomon Atijas's unspoken message which has been rightly described as one of the best and emotionally most powerful passages in the whole of Andrić's writing and in Yugoslav literature in general. The tone, the content, and the whole character of the passage do not differ in any significant way from some of Andrić's more direct and more personal utterances on the 'Jewish theme' in his essays. But Salomon Atijas's unspoken 'heartfelt plea'[19] is not only of contextual but also of great symbolic importance.

What the author says on behalf of his character is not actually what Salomon would have said himself, because what lay within him as a living burden had not been 'quite clear or definite in his own mind, still less was it ripe for utterance'[20]. And so the author 'mediates' between Salomon's 'best feelings and best longings'[21] and their unspoken expression. But it

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[8] Ibid., p. 446.
[9] Ibid., p. 448.
[10] Ibid., p. 450.
[11] Ibid., p. 450.
[12] Ibid., p. 450.
[13] Ibid., p. 451.
[14] Ibid., p. 450.
[15] Ibid., p. 453.
[16] Ibid., p. 450.
[17] Ibid., p. 451.
[18] Ibid., p. 451.
[19] Ibid., p. 453.
[20] Ibid., p. 453.
[21] Ibid., p. 453.

is not only the linguistic inadequacy of a Spanish Jew living in Bosnia which prevents Salomon from turning his feelings into a coherent statement of great emotional importance. It is a long inheritance of fear and insecurity haunting the man who, even in his cradle, was never permitted to 'weep aloud, let alone talk freely and clearly during his lifetime'[22].

Although, as Andrić says, 'no one, almost no one' manages to express 'his best feelings and his best longings' in his lifetime, Salomon succeeds where so many have failed, in spite of all his inadequacies, because the author has identified with him, giving him his voice and his moral concern.

So Ivo Andrić has shown himself to be a writer who was willing both to write about Jews and to speak for them at a time when such support was their 'real need'[23]. *Bosnian Story* was finished in April 1942. And there is no doubt that in the mind of this 'master of the unspoken', as Andrić has been called by the American critic John Simon,[24] the 'terrible, senseless, fratricidal hurricane which even today we cannot comprehend and which to this day has never understood itself'[25] - about which Salomon Atijas would have spoken if he had dared and known how - the hurricane which had torn the Spanish Jews from Andalusia and brought them to the Balkans, making them 'beggars whom not even gold can help'[26], was a part of the same historical process which was killing Jews while the novel was being written.

It was that 'tragic and inexorable'[27] historical process Andrić refers to in his essay on Kalmi Baruh (1896-1945), his Jewish friend who perished 'with thousands and millions of others like a predestined victim of brutal racism'[28]. However, Andrić reminds us that the Jews were not the only ones who fell victim in the same historical drama which, as he has put it, 'it seems, has no end'[29]. Those 'others', non-Jews, were also 'without guilt or defence'[30].

By identifying Jews and non-Jews in their historical destiny it would seem that Ivo Andrić has tried to reiterate, in a manner appropriate for a creative artist, Leo Straus' conviction that 'the Jewish people were the chosen people in the sense, at least, that the Jewish problem is the most manifest symbol of the human problem as a social or political problem'[31]. The same feeling, common to many enlightened European writers, has found its expression in the words of the exiled Czech author Milan Kundera (b. 1929), who said that in

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[22] Ibid., p. 453.
[23] Ibid., p. 453.
[24] John Simon, 'Bosnia through the Ages'. *The New York Times Book Review,* 28 July 1968, p. 4.
[25] *Bosnian Story,* p. 451.
[26] Ibid., p. 451.
[27] 'Pomen Kalmiju Baruhu'. In *Umetnik i njegovo delo. Sabrana dela,* Belgrade 1977,Vol. XIII, p. 217.
[28] Ibid., p. 217.
[29] Ibid., p. 217.
[30] Ibid., p. 217.
[31] Leo Straus, *Spinoza's Critique of Religion.* Preface to the English Edition, New York, 1965, p. 6.

the destiny of the Jewish people 'the fate of Central Europe seems to be concentrated, reflected and to have found its symbolic image'[32].

Do we need a more telling example of this allusive identification of the destiny of Jews and non-Jews in Andrić's work than the one we are offered in the story *The "Titanic" Bar (Bife "Titanik"),* one of Andrić's very few stories which deal with World War Two. It is enough that it is Mento Papo, 'a Jew without any ties with the Jewish community, alone, without money, without respect, without property, naked, mute and helpless'[33], who has been chosen as a symbolic representative of those thousands and millions who have suffered and perished 'without guilt and without defence'. Mento Papo, faced with his Croatian ustasha murderer, becomes in his danse macabre no less symbolic than Aska, the little lamb followed by the bloodthirsty wolf, in her dance of life and survival. Just as Aska knew that 'in order to live, she had to dance'[34], so did Mento know that 'talking meant... living'[35]. However, his 'pitiful, ridiculous, and improbable leaps'[36] did not have any chance of succeeding in the world of irrational hatred and self-generating evil.

Prior to Andrić's both extensive and sympathetic treatment of the Jews, they had received but scant attention in the literature of the peoples of former Yugoslavia. As in all European literatures, biblical inspiration has been prominent in the writing of numerous Yugoslav writers ever since the first books were written in the Middle Ages, and this interest has been maintained, though on a much smaller scale, ever since. But the writers who have used biblical and apocryphal subjects have not generally associated the people of the Book with the Jews of their times. They either tended to use them to express some general philosophical ideas, or as symbols of their own fate and aspirations. On the other hand, the Jews who occasionally appear in folk literature are usually presented, under the influence of religious prejudice and intolerance, as objects of ridicule, contempt and derision. One folk song, exceptionally, contains qualified praise for the young Jewish girl who wishes to marry Kraljević Marko, the Balkan folk hero. Similarly sympathetic treatment of the Jews appears in the Slovene France Prešern's (1800-1849) poem *Jewish Girl (Judovsko dekle),* where a Jewish girl abandons her Christian sweetheart because of the religious barrier.

However, anti-Semitism never struck deep roots in Yugoslavia, and when it did exist it was usually in the form of what David Goldstein in his book on Dostoyevsky and the Jews[37] calls conventional anti-Semitism - the widespread belief that the Jews are cursed and cruel masters of craft and deceit and unscrupulous exploiters of others. It has been established that

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[32] Milan Kundera, 'A Kidnapped West or Culture Bows Out'. *Granta,* 11, 1984, p. 108, p. 6.
[33] 'Bife "Titanik"'. In *Nemirna godina. Sabrana dela.* Vol. V, p. 197.
[34] 'Aska i vuk'. In *Deca. Sabrana dela.* Vol. IX, p. 191.
[35] 'Bife "Titanik"', In *Nemirna godina,* p. 220.
[36] Ibid., p. 221.
[37] David I. Goldstein, *Dostoyevsky and the Jews,* University of Texas Press, 1981.

'such anti-Semitism as did exist was more apparent in the ex-Habsburg territories than in the Serbian or former Ottoman areas. Hence, it was more directed against Ashkenazim than Sephardim, the former being considered foreign and the latter native'.[38]

Understandably, some of those anti-Semitic sentiments have found their expression in the form of anti-Jewish slurs and slanders scattered in the works of some 19th and 20th century Yugoslav writers, in which the Jews played only minor or episodic roles. They were generally presented as stereotypes - shopkeepers, moneylenders or publicans - and were referred to disparagingly and depicted as representatives of the forces instrumental in precipitating the disintegration of native rural society and its values. Some anti-Semitic remarks are placed in the mouths of negative, deranged or degenerate characters, and cannot be attributed to the writers themselves[39]. It is not uncommon to find them even in some of Andrić's works, because he realized that without them his whole picture of the complex ethnic scene of Bosnia would have been less convincing.

The fact that among Yugoslav writers there were only a few non-representative figures who were openly and strongly anti-Semitic can be explained by the circumstances of the Jews being few in numbers, inconspicuous, living largely their own separate existence cut off from gentile society. For the indigenous Slav population they never represented a dark and sinister force detrimental to its own interests, as was the case in some other European countries. So the Jews rarely inspired strong feelings and their individual and communal lives were neglected as a literary theme.

Consequently, before the Second World War, Jews were central characters only in the works of Jewish writers, such as Haim S. Davičo (1854-1918), Isak Samokovlija (1889-1955), Hinko Gottlieb (1886-1948) and Žak Konfino (1892-1975). Ivo Andrić was the only exception, and the first Yugoslav non-Jewish writer to treat the Jews with a real creative interest.

Ever since Andrić introduced 'the passionate and devious Jewess'[40] in his story of Ali Djerzelez, a steady stream of Jewish characters has continued to populate his prose: Josif Baruh, Mordo and Salomon Atijas in *Bosnian Story*; Mordo and Santo Papo, Elias and David Levi and Lotika in *The Bridge on the Drina (Na Drini ćuprija);* Rafo Konforti in *The Woman from Sarajevo (Gospodjica);* Haim in *Devil's Yard (Prokleta avlija);* Rifka Papo in *Love in a Country Town (Ljubav u kasabi);* Salomon Kamhi in *Under the Hornbeam Tree (San i java pod grabićem);* Mento Papo in *The "Titanic" Bar (Bife "Titanik");* and Maks Levenfeld *in Letter from the Year 1920 (Pismo iz 1920)* are the most prominent ones. Both in his fiction and in

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[38] Harriet Pass Freidenreich, *The Jews of Yugoslavia.* The Jewish Publication Society of America. Philadelphia, 1979, p. 189.

[39] 'Yugoslav Literature', *Encyclopaedia Judaica.* Jerusalem, 1971, Vol. 16, pp. 885-892. Miroslav Pantić, 'Jevreji u dubrovačkoj književnosti'. *Zbornik Jevrejskog istorijskog muzeja.* Belgrade, 1971, pp. 211-238.

[40] 'Put Alije Djerzeleza'. In *Znakovi. Sabrana dela,* Vol. VIII, p. 31.

his essays Andrić has sustained his continuous interest in, as he used to call them affectionately, 'our Jews'.

It has been claimed that Jews are so manifestly absent from Dostoyevsky's novels, in spite of his deep involvement with the 'Jewish question' in his non-fictional prose, because he did not have - nor could he have had - any direct experience of Jews, as St. Petersburg counted very few Jews among its residents[41]. Jews play such an important part in Andrić's work because he did have first-hand knowledge of their way of life from his frequent contacts with them, first in his early days in Višegrad and later in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Split. These contacts established a very deep personal bond between him and both those Jews who had settled in Bosnia after their expulsion from Spain in the 16th century, and those who came later from Central and Eastern Europe. The roots of that bond could be traced to his early childhood, as his story *Children (Deca)* suggests. The narrator, a 'greyish engineer'[42], revives an episode from his youth, when he refused to take part in the battering of Jewish children, a cruel game in which some of his friends participated with great relish, at the price of being ridiculed and ostracised by his comrades in play. He could not, and did not know how, to beat the Jews. A Jewish boy kept appearing in his dreams being chased by his friends, while he would let him pass unchallenged. With his 'tormented face' the Jewish boy seemed to him 'light and unrestrainable as an angel'[43].

Andrić, who was so reluctant to comment on the works of his colleagues and contemporaries, did not decline to write about his two Jewish friends, Isak Samokovlija and Kalmi Baruh. And what is even more symptomatic, he published two texts about each of them respectively. But the dominant theme of these essays concerns not so much - if at all, particularly in Samokovlija's case, - their individual talents and achievements, as the tragic predicament of the people they belonged to, and its characteristic ambiguous position in the wider Bosnian context.

The most eloquent statement of Andrić's pro-Semitic sentiments can be found in his piece on the Sarajevo Jewish cemetery, which, he pointed out, he had visited several times on several consecutive days. In this affectionate and evocative text, Andrić surveys the four centuries of the history of the Sephardic Jews on Bosnian soil and emphasizes the identity of their historical situation with that of all ‘rayah’ in the Ottoman Empire. But at the same time he points out their more precarious and exposed position brought about by their ethnic and linguistic isolation and the religious prejudice and superstitions of their Christian fellow-sufferers. Forced to hide behind their own traditions, beliefs and prejudices out of need and

[41] David I. Goldstein, *Dostoyevsky and the Jews,* p. 4.
[42] 'Deca'. In *Deca. Sabrana dela.* Vol. IX, p. 47.
[43] Ibid., p. 54.

through the instinct of self-defence, the Jews did represent a world in itself, but they were at the same time, as Andrić puts it, a living part of 'our wider community'[44].

In his book *Defenses of the Imagination*, the American critic Robert Alter says that if the Jews have a historical destiny, it is to be at 'the crossroads of trouble', and that 'that destiny has been fulfilled time after time not only in the realm of geo-politics but also in the Christian imagination'[45]. Is not this metaphor - 'at the crossroads of trouble' - exactly applicable to what Andrić has considered to be a major feature of his native Bosnia; and, having that in mind, might it not be said that the Jews in Andrić's work are shown to fulfil their historical destiny not only by sharing the fate of the oppressed people of Bosnia, but by being presented as symbolic of that fate?

Throughout his work Andrić attributes to the Jews many of the features of the Levantines, as defined by Cologna in his conversation with Des Fossés in *Bosnian Story.* They have two homes and yet none, 'being at home everywhere, yet always remaining a stranger'[46]; they are 'men who know many languages but have no language of their own'[47]; they are 'equally despised and mistrusted'[48] on both the East and the West; 'they are a little humanity on its own, staggering under a double original sin'[49]; they are often given the role of 'interpreters and go-betweens'[50] mediating between peoples of opposed civilizations and cultures. In *Bosnian Story* there are several Jews who have that role: a Jew from Split by the name of Pardo, Juso Atijas, Josif Baruh and Rafo Atijas.

But, in a few instances, the function of intermediary they are given goes beyond the simple task of interpreting, as they are put in charge of some rather special assignments. Maks Levenfeld, born into a family of Jews converted to Catholicism, conveys in *Letter from the Year 1920 (Pismo iz 1920)* Andrić's most succinct archetypal image of Bosnia, and it is implied in the text that Levenfeld's congenital restlessness and his cravings for a better world, a world without hatred (the same world about which Salomon Atijas dreams in Travnik), have their roots in his discarded Jewishness.

In *Devil's Yard (Prokleta avlija)* it is Haim, a Jew from Smyrna, a compulsive talker, who mediates between the world of reality and the world of fiction; and, moreover, by his ability to know everything and foresee everything ('although not always accurately'[51]), between

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[44] 'Na Jevrejskom groblju u Sarajevu'. In *Znakovi. Sabrana dela.* Vol. VIII, p. 216.
[45] Robert Alter, *Defenses of the Imagination.* The Jewish Publication Society of America. Philadelphia, 1977, p. 151.
[46] *Bosnian Story,* p. 285.
[47] Ibid., p. 286.
[48] Ibid., p. 286.
[49] Ibid., p. 286.
[50] Ibid., p. 286.
[51] *Devil's Yard,* p. 72.

the present and the future. Even his 'gloomy tales and imaginary fears'[52] are a typical expression of his Jewish inheritance.

Sometimes, that role is more specifically personal and limited, but equally tragic, as it can be seen in the history of Rifka Papo who, in *Love in a Country Town (Ljubav u kasabi),* attempted to cross the barrier of religion and prejudice. In the mind of Ledenik, her flippant Christian lover, she is closely related, and almost identified, with the image of the Višegrad bridge. For him they are the only two things capable of comforting him and cheering him in his Bosnian desolation. This identification is suggestive of the similarities in the symbolic roles ascribed by Andrić to bridges and the Jews in a wider context. Elsewhere Andrić even points out that the Jews had first settled in Višegrad about the time the bridge had been built[53].

Even a superficial insight into Andrić's works would suggest that his presentation of the complete ethnic spectrum of Bosnia offers a thematic and moral balance, and that his compassionate treatment of the Jews is symptomatic of the general humanistic values operating in his work. It would seem, however, that, at least in some of the episodes where the Jews appear as protagonists and where they are compared with and contrasted to his gentile characters, Andrić weighted the emotional scale in favour of the Jews.

Throughout *Bosnian Story*, for instance, the Jews are shown to possess more moral courage and humane responsiveness in their relations with the French than is the case with members of other ethnic groups. They are the only ones who are willing to offer Daville their hospitality upon his arrival in Travnik, and their help before his departure. This tendency of Andrić's to recognize in his Jewish characters some of the positive features his other protagonists are denied is best exemplified in those parts of his work in which he deals with the personalities who have identified their lives with money.

In the vision of Vitomir Tasovac, Salomon Kamhi from *Under the Hornbeam Tree (San i java pod grabićem)* may seem the epitome of a Jewish shopkeeper disposed to cunning and trickery, but it is gazda Jevrem from *An Uneasy Year (Nemirna godina)* who is described as an archetypal usurer. The comparative presentation of Rajka Radaković and Rafo Konforti, in *The Woman from Sarajevo*, is particularly illuminating in the section of the novel covering 1917, when the war brings hunger and misery upon thousands of people. Rafo's compassion and Rajka's insensitivity are directly juxtaposed. For Rafo, 'a hungry people, that's the worst thing there is'[54]. Rajka is unable to find understanding for Rafo's 'unexpected explosion of indignation, or see what possible connection she, Rajka, and her business had with the question of whether the people were hungry or full'[55]. While Rafo, who was falling apart, 'had

[52] Ibid., p. 120.
[53] *The Bridge on the Drina,* p. 176.
[54] *The Woman from Sarajevo,* p. 119.
[55] Ibid., p. 119.

a compulsive need to talk of the hunger and poverty of the great mass of people and of the grave consequences this would be bound to have for the state, the economy, and the individual'[56], Rajka only noticed that the signs of destitution were 'more numerous than she would have wanted'[57]. While Rafo donates food to the neediest and buys various provisions in order to 'sell them to the people at the unusually low price'[58], or hands out the food without charge, Rajka continues to count her money, 'insensible to most of the rules of the community and to the moral feelings and responses of an individual'[59]. Rafo suffers his final downfall in the form of a complete breakdown and is taken to a mental institution; Rajka justifies her earlier reputation of being 'Shylock in petticoats'[60]. Throughout this comparative analysis Andrić has reserved for Rajka a tone of chilly detachment, while Rafo has been observed with humorous compassion and, even, affection.

However, the character for whom Andrić shows the greatest amount of sympathy is the 'beautiful Jewess from Tarnovo' in *The Bridge on the Drina,* Lotika, 'that untiring and adroit woman of chilled senses, quick intelligence and masculine heart'[61]. Although she 'earned very much'[62] practising a trade which was 'neither pleasant nor particularly chaste'[63], and took good care of her money, she is presented as a woman of an exceptionally 'compassionate heart and kind nature'[64], ready to help complete strangers as much as her own kith and kin. She does believe in 'the law of profit and loss'[65] ('that divine law which had always controlled human activities'[66]), but it is not money for money's sake which controls her life. 'She directed the destinies'[67] of the Jewish poor scattered throughout Galicia, Austria and Hungary, but her counsels were always accompanied by 'a money order for a sum sufficient to ensure that her advice was listened to'[68].

When, finally, she makes her last exit in Chapter Twenty-three of *The Bridge on the Drina,* her 'despairing scream'[69] is mingled with the 'muffled thunder of the guns... which showed... that universal and individual misfortune was nearer and greater that it seemed'[70]. While elaborating this idea, with a varying degree of emphasis, in his novels, short stories and

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[56] Ibid., p. 125.
[57] Ibid., p. 120.
[58] Ibid., p. 126.
[59] Ibid., p. 141.
[60] Ibid., p. 78.
[61] *The Bridge on the Drina,* p. 178.
[62] Ibid., p. 179.
[63] Ibid., p. 179.
[64] Ibid., p. 179.
[65] Ibid., p. 258.
[66] Ibid., p. 258.
[67] Ibid., p. 180.
[68] Ibid., p. 180.
[69] Ibid., p. 302.
[70] Ibid., p. 302.

essays, Ivo Andrić has shown that, in the words of Robert Alter, 'what a writer has to say about Jews, carefully considered, can sometimes provide a key to the underlying aims and even methods in his work, and an insight into his relation to the larger culture around him'[71].

[71] *Defenses of the Imagination,* p. 137.

The Echoes of the Second World War in Ivo Andrić's Prose

Writing about Ivo Andrić's attitude toward history, the Serbian historian Radovan Samardžić noted that, 'judging by his poetry and, maybe even more, by the testimonies of those who were with him in captivity', Andrić experienced the First World War 'with so much painful opposition that later he was probably in no condition to proceed with a wider and more realistic recreation of that horrific reality. The war did not provoke an immediate narrative response in Andrić, since he had no strength for that, but, however, the sense of the violence of that war entered into some of his characters from the distant past and into their actions... Ivo Andrić was a writer who, totally shaken by the war, in fact shunned its reality'[1].

Andrić was to occupy himself with some aspects of the First World War more thoroughly only in works written between 1941 and 1944, primarily in the novels *Gospođica* and *Na Drini ćuprija*. It is without doubt, however, that the horrors of the immediate reality in which Andrić worked during those years of war similarly found their indirect echo in these works, as in the novel *Travnička hronika*, but in a more precise manner than had been the case with the echoes of the First World War in his early narratives. These are evident, first of all, in numerous general observations and in the tone in which some characters and events are described in the novels. Although an analysis of these indirect responses to the Second World War in Andrić's prose is not actually the topic, or rather not the central topic of this essay, I will, for purposes of illustration, mention several of the more obvious examples.

In the novel *Na Drini ćuprija*, for instance, Andrić remarks that 'always when an overwhelming enemy is near and great defeat certain' in every doomed society there 'appear fratricidal hatreds and mutual quarrels'[2]. Describing, in the same novel, how, during the persecution of Serbs after the Sarajevo assassination of Franz Ferdinand in 1914, 'the whole of a society could, in a single day, be transformed'[3], Andrić says:

> “As has so often happened in the history of man, permission was tacitly granted for acts of violence and plunder, even for murder, if they were carried out in the name of higher interests, according to established rules, and against a limited number of men

[1] 'Andrić i istorija', *Delo Ive Andrića u kontekstu evropske književnosti i kulture,* Belgrade, SANU, 1981, p. 498.
[2] *The Bridge on the Drina,* London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., p. 118.
[3] Ibid., pp. 282-283.

> of a particular type and belief... In a few minutes the business quarter, based on centuries of tradition, was wiped out."[4]

Although these observations obviously have an independent function in the context of the episodes in which they appear, they are at least partly coloured by the writer's state of shock caused by the events in the country at the time of writing. It is very probable that those pages which, in *Na Drini ćuprija*, depict 'a generation of rebel angels'[5] would have been stripped of their bitter anticipation of things to come had the Second World War not happened:

> "What could especially be said of them was that there had not been for a long time past a generation which with a greater boldness had dreamed and spoken about life, enjoyment and freedom and which had received less life, suffered worse, laboured more hardly and died more often than this one."[6]

In the last chapter of *Travnička hronika*, the narrative time begins, so to speak, to flow in parallel with the narrator's time, in the narrator's unique identification with a character of the novel. I refer, of course, to the farewell visit of Salomon Atijas to the French consul, when the writer, taking over from the confused and inarticulate Jewish elder, evokes the historical Jewish destiny on powerful and moving pages. In them the tragedy of the Jews during the Second World War is, through historical references and parallels, felt in every sentence as if it were the writer's own. In various essays written immediately after the war - on Kalmi Baruh, Isak Samokovlija or the Jewish cemetery in Sarajevo, for instance - one also senses a similar emotional tone and the same moral conscience as that which, during the war, in a gesture of defiance at and rebellion against inhumanity, gave expression to the sentences of Atijas's 'heartfelt plea'[7]. In a series of works which do not deal with the historical destiny of the Jews or the individual fates of Andrić's Jewish friends, certain more general experiences of the Second World War essentially determined both the meaning and the tone of the texts, as could be seen, for example, in *Pismo iz 1920 (A Letter from the Year 1920)* and *Noćni razgovor 1941 (A Night Conversation in 1941).*

In contrast to the First World War, the Second World War evoked in Andrić an immediate narrative response, although the resonance of its echoes is felt weakly in some writings and strongly in others. In the story *Djordje Djordjević,* for example, the war is only mentioned in one short remark: 'The Second World War disclosed to him the interrelationship

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[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid., p. 232.
[6] Ibid., p. 234.
[7] *Bosnian Story,* London, Lincoln-Prager, 1958, p. 453.

of a man's personal destiny to everything happening in the world. There no longer exist, so to speak, sheltered places and isolated points'[8]. In *Porodična slika* one of the author's war experiences 'frames' the story about a wealthy Belgrade merchant family, but without affecting its essence. In May 1944, 'after the second heavy American air-raid'[9], the narrator spends the night,'due to strange circumstances', in a 'half demolished house'[10]. Whilst in a state of 'excitement, worry and total wakefulness', he observes in the candlelight 'a pile of small and large objects... covered with an old layer of dust and showered with a new layer of plaster from this morning's bomb explosions'[11]. His attention is drawn to a 'large family picture in a heavy gold plated frame'[12]. Having examined it thoroughly and 'read' its meaning, he decides to introduce the individual characters to the reader, since 'the faces on it, for those who knew them when they were alive or knew how to bring them back to life, are still more eloquent than either their speech or their silence'[13].

Of the remaining stories which are set during the Second World War, all are, except for one - *Bife "Titanik"* which is set in Sarajevo - wholly or partly located in occupied Belgrade and reflect many of the events which Andrić personally experienced and of which he left traces in his notebooks. Andrić's conviction that the author's life and personality should not be an object of literature is well known. 'A writer should write and tell stories, but he should not turn his own life into a story', was what he wrote in *Znakovi pored puta (Signs by the Roadside)*[14]. But even a wholly superficial inspection of his personal notes and observations from the time of the Second World War, and their comparison with the stories topically connected to the time of the war, disclose direct links between the wartime adventures of his literary heroes and the wartime experiences of the author himself, and for some it can be established that they are literally autobiographical.

Northrop Frye (1912-1991) argues that autobiography cannot avoid behaving like fiction. In support of this claim may be cited many of Andrić's observations from his *Sveske (Notebooks), Znakovi pored puta and Ratni dnevnik (The War Diary).* Some of them were more or less mechanically transferred into larger narratives with very few changes; the others were developed from that embryo-like state of a personal document into more detailed accounts in which the writer, contrary to his convictions, 'makes a story out of his life' all the same. But, one might add, in a manner consonant with the restrained and reserved Andrić:

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[8] *Znakovi,* p. 76. Unless otherwise noted, all citations are from Ivo Andrić's *Sabrana dela,* Belgrade, Prosveta, 1981.
[9] Ibid., p. 273.
[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p. 274.
[13] Ibid.
[14] p. 329.

> "I am used to talking about the events of my life as if they were something strange and distant, and about my life generally as if it were something which has passed or something which only might have happened. From the beginning."[15]

In his *Komentar uz "Ratni dnevnik" Ive Andrića (Comments to "The War Diary" of Ivo Andrić)* Predrag Palavestra has, by a comparative analysis of the original notes in the diary and the text of the story *Zeko (Bunny),* illuminated 'the course of the transformation of a personal experience into a work of art'[16] and has established that 'the personal notes, with their images and observations inscribed deeply in the consciousness, had a decisive effect on the writer's imagination'[17]. It would seem pointless to repeat in this short essay what Palavestra has already discovered, especially since Andrić's work offers further interesting and, as far as I know, as yet unnoticed 'similarities' between his notes and his stories in which the main character appears as someone who is not, it seems, the writer himself.

For example, the following passage from *Znakovi pored puta* has been extended into a story, *Taj dan (That Day),* which was published with other unfinished narratives in *Kuća na osami (The House on Its Own):*

> "I think that I may claim to know how a man feels who, having been blind, regains his sight, or who becomes deaf and lives like that for some time, only to find that his hearing has suddenly been restored.
>
> For more than two months I lived - so to speak - the life of a dead man whose death had remained unnoticed and whom they had not, only for that reason, buried. A sleep-walker who having been awoken has not yet cried out or fallen. A deceased person whose death is unmourned so that he carries it inside him like a shameful secret. I walked and spoke, I ate and slept, asking myself at every moment the reason for doing all that, constantly considering throwing it all off myself in one motion to show everybody that I have for a long time been lost, that my existence is only an illusion.
>
> And then suddenly, inexplicably and unexpectedly, the whole burden fell off me, I was resurrected from that condition between life and death and I returned to the path of my old and well-known existence. I felt again the heavy human anxiety but also a radiant desire for movement, world and deed, I heard again what the water said with its gurgle. The days were again lit up with meaning and the path with joy.

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[15] *Znakovi pored puta,* p. 31.
[16] *Sveske Zadužbine Ive Andrića,* Belgrade, 1, 1982, p. 296.
[17] Ibid., p. 295.

> And I marched forward - once again; forward - not remembering any of what I was leaving behind and not thinking about anything which lay ahead."[18]

Petar Malbašić, the main character of the story *Taj dan*[19], experiences an identical spiritual transformation. After living for a long time 'in total despair very close to suicide', he gradually, making friends first with books and then more and more with people, discovers 'the basic self-respect without which life was impossible, the honest and true explanation of all actions as well as all the debris and disorder around him'[20]. Having lost 'his old meaning of himself'[21], he discovers the magical, salutary word 'forward', which 'solves everything'[22].

> "That word, in apparent opposition to the laws of physics, returns permanence to all things, a meaning to each movement and breath to the excited man by making everything move in the same direction, along the shortest existing line and with the greatest possible speed. Forward![23]

Here the relationship between the notes and the text of the story is totally different from the relationship between parts of *Ratni dnevnik* and some of the passages from *Zeko*. While parts of the diary were transferred into *Zeko* with small alternations, in the story *Taj dan* one single observation of a mental state is narratively enriched, made meaningful and extended with a series of details which probably also originated from the writer's wartime experience. It is as if Andrić were applying here one of his narrative formulae: 'It is necessary to illuminate everything from all sides, to show it as it really was and, if required, to add to it'[24].

This conviction is confirmed even more by the unfinished story *S ljudima (With the people)*[25], in which the main character is also called Petar and which the editors of Andrić's collected works rightly assume to make one narrative unit with the story *Taj dan*. The comparison of this text and that of *Ratni dnevnik* reveals its source to be Andrić's note dated 19 May, 1944. All important details of the diary observations have found their place in the story. Peter discovers his desert island and spends several calm summer weeks in a lonely villa which the owner deserted in fear of air-raids and which appears very similar to the one in which Andrić himself 'spent about ten days in peace and cleanliness'[26]. Both in the story and

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[18] *Znakovi pored puta,* pp. 95-96.
[19] *Kuća na osami,* pp. 367-373.
[20] Ibid., p. 371.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid., p. 369.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid., p. 62.
[25] Ibid., p. pp. 358-366.
[26] 'Ratni dnevnik', *Sveske Zadužbine Ive Andrića,* 1, 1982, p. 285.

in the diary there appear the identical characters of the cooks - Vasilija and Stojanija respectively - in whom the bombing excites the same feeling of fear. The descriptions of the bombing itself coincide at numerous points, although the one in the story is more elaborate and richer in detail. Both Andrić and Petar Malbašić watch the bombing from the front door of the villa, in the company of an unknown young man.

Ratni dnevnik:

"At that moment full explosions began to be heard around us. One second passed during which, as far as I can remember, I felt nothing except a desire to flee. Then silence fell. The young man next to me was completely white from plaster and lime, just like me."[27]

S ljudima:

"The giant crack of the whip died away quickly, but Petar couldn't understand what had happened, since the event which had occurred did not correspond to any of his ideas about bombing. He stood, leaning against the wall, unhurt, only totally covered in grey plaster. In front of him, underneath the stairs, he noticed a young man who was also leaning against a wall and was completely grey and white, and whose long hair covered his face like a mask"[28].

The effects of the bombing are also identical.

Ratni dnevnik:

"With that same young man I went out in front of the house. There we stopped in surprise. At the entrance to the garden which separated the villa from the street there gaped a large crater into which had collapsed the iron door of the gateway, along with the stone door-posts and a pile of broken tiles. The major part of the wire fence was crushed or knocked down."[29]

S ljudima:

"Together they appeared at the door which they could hardly open because of the soil and gravel piled up outside. They went out into the garden in front of the house. An unfamiliar view opened up to them. All the garden was covered in piles of dirt, tiles and stones, with torn off branches and objects of unknown origin. At the place where

[27] Ibid.
[28] *Kuća na osami* p. 361.
[29] 'Ratni dnevnik', p. 286.

> the entrance to the garden once stood was now a huge and deep crater-like hole which had swallowed the major half of the fence, together with its iron door..."[30]

There are also similarities in other less important details.

> *Ratni dnevnik:*
>
> "Underneath the chair the landlord's small fox-terrier called Johnny was whining softly.[31]
>
> *S ljudima:*
>
> "Around his feet was moving the little white dog belonging to the owner of the house. Its hair standing on end, its eyes full of that same fear."[32]

In this story Andrić also used an anecdote about a drunken beggar who shouted after people who never gave him anything, 'You will die tomorrow'[33], which had earlier been included both in *Ratni dnevnik*[34] and in *Sveske (Notebooks*)[35].

In *Omerpaša Latas* Andrić notes that 'it can be said that each person consists of three aspects and that everybody appears, firstly, as he would like to be, that is, as he poses and presents himself; secondly, as others perceive him to be; and finally, as he really is'[36]. It is quite understandable that a writer who observed man in this triple projection made the drama of human identity one of his central themes. In the stories in which events from the Second World War find their narrative, echoes that drama which has been given a particularly sharp focus, for all the characters described in them find themselves in thrall to one dominant feeling - fear. Fears, writes Andrić in the story *Razaranja (Destructions),* cause the destruction of characters and they

> "strip even the final mask from a person, churn his insides and reveal unexpected traits, contrary to everything that was known and thought about that person and to all that he believed about himself; they affect relationships in families and change

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[30] *Kuća na osami,* p. 362.
[31] Ratni dnevnik, p. 286.
[32] *Kuća na osami,* p. 363.
[33] Ibid., p. 365.
[34] P. 288.
[35] Pp. 36-37.
[36] P. 203.

> established social norms and relations, even those which thought to be eternal and unchangable, like the relationship between the sexes".[37]

After his general observation, he sets about depicting two characters distorted by fear - one being the 'pale tall judge in whom animal-like fear had killed that little bit of human being left inside him'[38], and the other young man in a cellar who, frightened by the bombing, 'quietly sobs with his eyes closed and an expression of deathly fear on his pale face'[39], while his tiny and calm wife 'holds him to her, comforts him and gives him courage so that he does not collapse like a helpless mass to the ground and begin to wail loudly... After that both of them quickly re-enter their false and lifelong respective roles of the self-confident man and the weak woman'[40].

In the story *Zatvorena vrata (The Closed Door)* fear tears off the mask from the woman's face in a different way. The husband's readiness to offer a bed to the young man who was obviously involved in dangerous and clandestine affairs during curfew, and the wife's hysterical refusal to come to terms with that fact, result in a family drama in which both husband and wife are revealed in a completely new light. While the husband emerges more self-assured and confident than he was before, his wife is revealed to him as a totally unknown person once the mask she has been wearing all her life has been torn off by fear:

> "Roaming around the room, she hissed in some new voice some new words, words without a mask, naked, words-facts, words-punches. He had never heard such words coming from her and he would never have thought that she knew them."[41]

Writing about a time which was dominated by an atmosphere 'of fear, worry and depression'[42], of smelly cellars, air-raids and general uncertainty, Andrić carefully analysed the behaviour of people:

> "In exceptional and fateful events as were these bombardments from the air, as well as in times of heavy political persecution, people behave in similar ways. To those easily frightened and selfish it appears as if everything that is happening - every detail - is aimed against them personally. Slow-witted people, as well as those who are by nature frivolous and carefree, do not think about these events at all, at least

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[37] *Nemirna godina,* p. 184.
[38] Ibid., p. 185.
[39] Ibid., p. 186.
[40] Ibid., p. 186.
[41] *Znakovi,* p. 270.
[42] Ibid., p. 264.

> until they feel them against their own skin. Only the sensible man attempts to watch all the changes in society and public life cold-bloodedly and to interpret them correctly, first noting and judging their general meaning, and only afterwards questioning the extent to which these events might affect him personally and then trying to hide and protect himself - as long as this is possible and morally permissible".[43]

So wrote Andrić in 1944.

It is possible to define the protagonists of more or less all of Andrić's wartime stories against these types of behaviour, both in those stories which have already been mentioned and in those which have not, the characters like Zeko, Mento Papo from *Bife "Titanik"* or Stevan Karajan from *Slučaj Stevana Karajana (The Case of Stevan Karajan)*. While people of 'limited spiritual outlook and of great moral indifference'[44] (like Stevan Karajan), when confronted with imminent threats to their lives or overpowering feelings of fear, experience mental breakdowns of an enormous and tragic extent, those who are either frightened or ashamed to be afraid go through beneficial changes, overcoming that feeling and accepting life 'with new self-knowledge and vague, solemn decisions within themselves'[45]. Although Andrić 'lends' some of his war experiences to the former - 'the freezing wind' which passed 'between the skull and the skin on the head' of Stevan Karajan[46] is identical to the 'strange wind which whips you across the back of the head when a bomb is falling nearby'[47] recorded by Andrić in his *Ratni dnevnik* - he literally identifies with the latter.

However large the similarities between the visual perceptions and the external events in Andrić's notes and in his narrative texts, there are even larger and more important similarities between the spiritual changes which both Andrić and his characters experience. Palavestra observes that at the time of writing *Ratni dnevnik* 'there most probably occurred in Andrić's spiritual outlook and in his views significant turns and transformations'[48]. In Sokobanja on 12 July, 1942, Andrić notes how 'a feeling of total helplessness has already for a long time been my usual state of mind'[49]; while in Belgrade, on 18 April, 1944, he writes:

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[43] *Znakovi pored puta,* p. 38.
[44] 'Slučaj Stevana Karajana', *Kuća na osami*, p. 214.
[45] *Kuća na osami,* p. 366.
[46] Ibid, p. 219.
[47] *Sveske zadužbine Ive Andrića,* 1, 1982, p. 287.
[48] Ibid., p. 294.
[49] *Sveske Zadužbine Ive Andrića,* p. 218.

> "I know that around me there have happened important and terrible things, but I am alive and well, and I have by-passed death calmly. I have a need to converse and to joke, to help and encourage others, to give advice and opinions".[50]

That same curve which both joins and separates two states of existence also marks the character not only of Petar Malbašić, Andrić's fictional double, but also of Zeko, a character with whom at first sight Andrić seems to have very little in common:

> "He was realizing that knowledge must go as far as a deed, that a deed must have a determined aim, and that courage itself must have some use to be able to bear that name lawfully, and that only according to the nature of the things which it serves does it gain its full value and real meaning. In short, it is necessary to work on human things, to be tied to people... Yet, in the fire of this war everything flowers, ripens and bears fruit very quickly. Zeko was not the only one for whom these dark and inhuman times opened the eyes and showed the way!"[51]

The last sentence, which ends with an exclamation mark, seems to be saying more than appears at first sight and, when brought into the context which is being discussed, urges the conclusion - however cautiously - that Andrić identifies spiritually and emotionally with Zeko, and that the writing of the story about him was an attempt on Andrić's part 'to work on human things' in a way rather different from those in his pre-war narratives. Is there any evidence to prove this, or does the claim have to remain unsubstantiated?

René Wellek (1903-1995) and Austin Warren (1899-1986), in their Theory of Literature, emphasize that the 'naming''of characters is the simplest form of characterization: 'Each "appellation" is a form of vivifying, animating, individualizing'.[52] From the name of a character the reader can in advance acquire an impression about some fundamental traits of his or her personality, as well as about likely behaviour in certain situations. Andrić did not consider generally the 'Cognomen syndrome' to be of major significance, and he did not enjoy onomastic games. But he put a lot of effort into introducing the characters in *Zeko* as a 'menagerie'. Between Kobra's (Cobra), Tigar's (Tiger) and Zeko's (Bunny) names and their behaviour exists an ironic relation, as the story and the changes in their personalities suggest. Zeko, having overcome his anxieties and thoughts about suicide, discovers the meaning of life in useful work for others and gets killed; while Kobra and Tigar, with their Philistine egoism and absence of a moral sense, fall prey to fear but survive.

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[50] Ibid., p. 281.
[51] *Nemirna godina,* p. 301.
[52] London, 1966, p. 219.

'Although he had a good masculine name, Isidor, his wife nicknamed him Zeko'[53]. Andrić says about his hero: 'Like many people who pass us by in the street, Isidor Katanić was better and unhappier than his appearance would suggest'[54]. It is precisely these words - 'better... than his appearance would suggest' - which led me to search underneath the letters making up his name and look whether there was something 'better' hidden beneath them. What did I discover? That in an anagram of Zeko's real name - ISIDOR KATANIĆ - are contained the words ISTI KAO ANDRIĆ or I TI SI KAO ANDRIĆ (THE SAME AS ANDRIĆ or YOU ARE ALSO LIKE ANDRIĆ). Is this a matter of accident, subconscious choice, or one of those games which authors so eagerly and so often play with their readers[55]? It is impossible to answer with certainty. But I believe that it is necessary to read this often disputed and denigrated story of Andrić's in this new light, bearing in mind at the same time the dictum of the American critic John P. Sisk[56] that war stories rarely manage to resist the presence of the melodramatic.

[53] *Nemirna godina,* p. 227.
[54] Ibid., p. 229.
[55] See, Peter Hutchinson, *Games Authors Play,* London & New York, Methuen, 1983.
[56] John P. Sisk, 'War Fictions', *Commentary,* August 1973, p. 60.

The Exile and Loneliness in A Novel about London by Miloš Crnjanski

The wanderings of the Russian prince Nikolai Radionovich Ryepnin end in suicide. 'The collision of two worlds and the collision between a man and a mighty city'[1] ends in the only possible and logical outcome - the triumph of the destructive forces of life over the despair of the lonely man and over the bravery of the heretic.

Roman o Londonu (A Novel about London) is a work of simple structure but of rich and original expression and of complex existential significance. The living drama of prince Ryepnin who, faced with poverty and age, finds a way out in voluntary death, goes beyond the framework of an individual fate and an individual tragedy. By this fate through which is written 'yet another, disgusting tragi-comedy of a Russian emigrant in London - who knows for the how-manieth time'[2] - Crnjanski has achieved far more than this: he has given to Serbian literature an engaging and suggestive story of the dread loneliness of the human individual in the modern world and of his inability to resist the destructive forces of civilisation personified in the polyp-like nature of a city of millions.

Around this central theme of the novel Crnjanski has portrayed a luxurious, cosmopolitan fresco constructed of a multiplicity of human fates which serve as a background on which unfolds the drama of a man's lost being, of his resignation, alienation, disappointment, aging and poverty in all their tragic complexity. Portraying the 'helplessness in a foreign country'[3] of the exile, Crnjanski has achieved a masterly penetration of the inner life of the personality who, in the nightmares between the past and the present, in the insatiable longing for his native land and limitless devotion to a beloved being, prepares for his departure from the stage of life with the calm of dignified despair and the icy peace of an honest man determined to preserve his moral integrity. The narrative, the thought, the psychological and poetic currents of *Roman o Londonu* come together in a many-layered, multi-significant structure which not only ennobles the reader, but disturbs and activates him intellectually - as does every good book.

In the very first pages of the novel Ryepnin is presented as a person that, by its poetic subtext, suggests the internal complexity and defeat of an individual lost in a cold, selfish and insensible world. 'Snow-flakes lingered longer on that face than on those of others - as if on

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[1] Miloš Crnjanski, *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, Belgrade, 1971, p. 21.
[2] Ibid., p. 236.
[3] Ibid., p. 67.

the face of some frozen man'.[4] This sentence, however, tells the reader something more: namely that Ryepnin's internal frigidity that transfers to his face is the cold of a man determined on death. Reconciled with death as the sole way out, Ryepnin is indeed partly already dead. There remain just some matters to settle which will make his death less painful - for others. Here, then, is clearly hinted what will be later definitely stated; that he thinks of his own death 'as if it referred to another man'.[5] Ryepnin's very face is presented as a map of his fate. There may be read 'a weariness of life'[6] and the hovering expression 'of sadness and despair'.[7] Eyes fixed upon the endless and well-known wasteland of the abyss, he looks about him 'as if the world were a dream and not reality'.[8] Ryepnin leaves this world as though believing that one dream replaces another.

In the first chapter the writer, invisible, accompanies 'a human shadow in a worn overcoat'.[9] In 'the train that charged underground'[10] that living corpse 'cried out, dumbly'[11] of equality and brotherhood, ironically completing the writer's initial thought of the world as a huge, strange stage on which each plays his role, God knows why, and whence he goes, God knows whither, and that only in this final parting 'do all the kings and beggars come together'.[12] Ryepnin is a lost and imperceptible particle of pride and suffering in 'the astronomical conglomerate'[13] of London. He, 'no matter who',[14] is the desperate exile troubled by the fear of the future on the burned embers of ruined illusions. 'That very winter - the last winter of the war - England had shown him of what she was capable, if she willed it'.[15] He was past fifty, with a wife he loved and for whom he could not ensure a normal and decent life since he was unemployed and he saw only one way out that was acceptable to his moral standards - an honourable and voluntary death.

Already in the introductory chapter, in which the writer presents Ryepnin in a cluster of intertwined and whirling pictures, the thread may be seen that will run through the entire novel as its basic leitmotif: the fateful destructiveness of human loneliness. Ryepnin is alone and mute in the roaring compartment of the underground railway, isolated before the station deep in snow; not only is he without anyone to greet him, but nobody notices him, his name

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[4] Ibid., p. 37.
[5] Ibid., p. 384.
[6] Ibid., p. 39
[7] Ibid., p. 37.
[8] Ibid., p. 36.
[9] Ibid., p. 14.
[10] Ibid., p. 10.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid., p. 9.
[13] Ibid., p. 16.
[14] Ibid., p. 14.
[15] Ibid., p. 12.

is known to no one.[16] Nobody ever calls at the house where he and his wife live, not the milkman, not the postman, not the newspaper deliverer, not even the dustman. 'For a whole year no one has asked whether they were alive'.[17]

Although with this series of images he has prepared the reader for a direct and closer encounter with his hero, the writer lays his cards on the table and warns the reader that his book will possess several layers of meaning.

> This will be a book not only about this man in London and about his wife, not only about their love, but also about other Russians who had arrived in London, before them, many years ago. They all of them were 'displaced' persons. On the other hand, it will not merely be a tale about them, but also about that London world that, packed like sardines, travels to London in the morning to work and in the evening returns from London, with its back turned to it. And, most of all, it will speak of that immense city whose embrace has proved fatal to so many men and women, - and which watches all this dumbly, like some massive sphinx, listening to passer-by after passer-by asking: Where here is there happiness? Where, in this ingress and egress of passers-by, in crowds and in isolation, -four, eight, fourteen million of them, - is the sense?[18]

In *Roman o Londonu*, then, several thematic lines are interwoven. They do not flow in parallel or rhythmically smoothly. Their appearance and disappearance are governed by the moods and momentary pre-occupations of the central hero, whom the invisible writer, stubbornly follows from the first page to the last, expressing himself only occasionally with brief interventions and leaving him only at the moment before death to make, without a single witness, the fateful step into the brotherhood and equality of extinction. The thematic lines appear with the regularity of a leitmotif. At times they even have a certain element of monotony. This monotony, however, has its profound psychological justification. A man who is prepared to die, being convinced that there is no other way out of the misery in which he finds himself, is apt to be preoccupied with several basic thoughts. In his consciousness they succeed one another, follow on and cross over in a nightmarish resolution and clarification of the dilemma.

We have seen that Ryepnin is clearly defined on the first pages of the novel. His relation to the obsessive preoccupations of his own consciousness will scarcely change even later, since his behaviour, his attitudes and experiences are determined by clear and unambiguous feelings. These feelings which, at times, turn into moral principles to which he

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[16] Ibid., p. 15.
[17] Ibid., p. 18.
[18] Ibid., p. 21.

holds firmly, to some great extent, although not completely, determine his fate. Ryepnin's life ends in suicide not merely because he is unable to alter certain basic existential suppositions, but also because he does not wish to change them at the price of moral compromise. Therefore he sees his life situation as being to such an extent unchangeable and final that he sees in suicide the sole solution which will guarantee Nadya, his beloved wife, security. By this act he would liberate himself from moral compromise and from dependence on the humiliating charity of others.

In the web of relationships that determine Ryepnin's inner life and physical existence, several basic circles stand out in which his intellectual and moral consistency of character are clearly portrayed. These circles are distinctly demarcated and may be defined as his relation to loneliness, suicide, old age, his wife, his past in Russia, the emigrant Organisation, England and the English, free will etc.

Everything that Ryepnin thinks, says or does evolves out of these clear attitudes towards his surrounding and towards his personal fate. Although at times, both by himself and through his wife's suggestion, he comes to the idea that perhaps there exists some way of making his situation less burdensome, he rejects all such thoughts with a defiant pride. For Ryepnin the awareness of his own dignity is a part of his class complex which is so strong that he even dislikes the thought of entering love relations with middle-class women.[19]

The Ryepnins begin to feel their 'helplessness in a foreign country'[20] only when they face poverty. In *Roman o Londonu* loneliness is experienced as the direct result of poverty. 'Since they had fallen into this state of want, they sensed how isolated they were in a foreign country'.[21] Repeating, with almost the identical example, the existential parabola of Pavle Isakovič, Ryepnin comes to the same knowledge as does Isakovič in the second book of the novel *Seobe (The Migrations),* when, on arriving in Russia he says: 'We have not even brethren when we are gripped by misfortune. A man is alone in poverty'.[22] In *Roman o Londonu* poverty is indicated in various places as the principle cause of isolation. When the Ryepnins arrived in England they had plenty of friends, but the number lessened 'as their bank account dropped'.[23] 'Once they had invitations from the Court. Then, for years, they received invitations from several generals and many officers, both Russian and English. Even English women whom she knew kept in touch with Nadya. Later only Ordinsky kept in touch. Then only the butcher, the greengrocer and the baker. Then even they stopped'.[24]

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[19] Ibid., p. 305.
[20] Ibid., p. 67.
[21] Ibid., p. 43.
[22] *Seobe i Druga knjiga Seoba,* Belgrade, 1962, p. 311.
[23] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 104.
[24] Ibid.

Though Ryepnin felt that the status of a 'displaced person' in a foreign country had an influence on their isolated fate, he knew that the principle factor was money. He defines his experience thus:

> "A man is not isolated because he's a foreigner, - a foreigner, if he has money, is nowhere more welcome than in London. Everybody crowds around such a foreigner. But this extremely wealthy metropolis possesses a dreadfully strong heart towards the unfortunate man and people in poverty".[25]

Still earlier Ryepnin states that he knew little of this vast mastodon of a city until he remained 'a beggar on the street, in the gutter'.[26] Only then did he discover the power of money. 'Money, in the time in which we live, has the power of the sun, a power that tears no longer have. Man's happiness is now in money'.[27] His wife, Nadya, finds it hard to be reconciled to her husband's belief. To accept such a concept would mean being reconciled to his idea of suicide, to his indifference, his apathetic depressions, his inactivity and lack of will to act. On various occasions she knows a vitality which is foreign to Ryepnin and a brightness that he has long rejected. But even she cannot dissuade him from the thought in which his bitter experience is crystallized, from the idea which he expresses in the eloquent metaphor: 'Here, darling, money has the might of thunder. The warmth of spring'.[28]

Isolation is something that Ryepnin finds hard to accept, but to which, in time, he grows accustomed. The hellish paradox of their fate lies in the fact that they are isolated amid a multitude of people. This makes their isolation yet more depressing. The ambiguity of Ryepnin's attitude to loneliness is well illustrated by the following passage:

> "We must get used to the feeling that we are completely alone on a desert island, on which live fifty million people, men and women. Just imagine, utterly alone, with nobody. Nobody asks about us, nobody among those millions of men and women cares a rap for us. All around us houses, streets, trains rumble. They pass and pass, men, women, laughing, crying, pairing. There's fog, it rains and now it snows. So many ports, so many ships that come and go. And not soul asks about us".[29]

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[25] Ibid., p. 192.
[26] Ibid., p. 45.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., p. 124.

Ryepnin comes to universal truths about life in the natural way, through his own experience. At one moment he states: 'Life was always like this, only we did not know it. Misfortune came so suddenly. Now we know'.[30] Although he utters these words not only to lend courage to Nadya, but also to himself, such realisation can change nothing. It merely leads him to pour all his experience of solitude into the bitter thought: 'No, there is no community of people. It's all a tale. All there is is man's loneliness'.[31]

From the painful present Ryepnin can escape only into the past, into memory. Yet he is aware that the hours of escape into reminiscence are no more than distracting self-deception, a deceptive dream and that, afterwards, in hours of painful sobering, the present would be all the harder to bear. Though he seeks solace in days gone by, he is aware that to live in the past is impossible. Loneliness, poverty, unemployment make of his life 'a dreadful dream from which there was no awakening'.[32] For such a life, 'strange, senseless and unreal',[33] there is no point in struggling.

When a man has once grown used to loneliness and accepts it with a philosophically based fatalism, he is not willing to replace it with any manner of human society for which, perhaps, he has previously yearned. In this sense the episode of Ryepnin's summer holiday in Cornwall is especially indicative. The days in London combined into a horrific nightmare of loneliness that weighed down on him with its poisoning silence. Finding himself in the hotel 'Crimea', among a pack of vulgar, jolly people who expect him to join in their amusements and who seek his society, Ryepnin feels a deep revulsion for these tiresome individuals who threaten his loneliness. 'To Ryepnin, who desired solitude and peace, all this seemed boring, foolish'.[34] Once, deep within himself, reconciled with his own loneliness, once again, as earlier in London, he experiences what had become clear to him then, - that 'it is not so easy as he'd thought to move from one life to another'.[35]

When, after his holiday, Ryepnin moves from the suburbs to the centre of London, he feels the change yet more intensively. 'He desired to be alone. He no longer wanted to go out into London'.[36] Nadya, on the other hand, wanted company,[37] yet even she could not free him from the 'mad impression'[38] that all London consisted 'of cells, prisons, in which only individuals dwelt - each a male and a female on their own'.[39]

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[30] Ibid., p. 41.
[31] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, Belgrade, 1971, p. 270.
[32] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 54.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid., p. 302.
[35] Ibid., p. 115.
[36] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, p. 11.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.

In those moments of reconciliation with loneliness, Ryepnin realises that there are worse things than poverty. 'The dread city'[40] had robbed them of will, 'that last thing in human life that presents something bright'.[41] Then loneliness ceases to be unbearable; on the contrary it turned into an inner requirement for the being condemned to living without others. 'There are isolated people on earth. And he is one of them'[42] Ryepnin reasoned. Later, however, he would realise that a belief in the will was also a phantom all too easily dispersed. All his ambitions aimed at showing that a Russian possessed an iron will[43] end in defeat. Ryepnin is a man who believes not in the will, but in suffering. 'The will cannot change the world',[44] it can only, like a blind weapon of suffering, aid a man to leave it'. Ryepnin proves his strength of will only by the single act of suicide, yet another ironic significance in his fate. He believes not in free will but in geographical fate[45] and in chance, that life is, in this novel as in *Seobe,* 'the greatest comedian in the lives of people and nations'.[46] He is struck by the fact that such changes may turn the rich and famous man into an attendant in public lavatories[47] and consciously chooses death rather than agree to humiliating metamorphoses.

The theme of loneliness is more clearly and expressively presented in the first part of *Roman o Londonu* than in the second. Gradually it flows into another Leitmotif, that of suicide. Ryepnin's suicide is first mentioned as a thought occurring to Nadya.[48] She knows that this idea dominates her husband and tries to avoid it. For this reason she agrees to go to her aunt in America, where she will be more or less secure. Though, at first, he opposes the idea, Ryepnin gradually comes to see it as an important factor in his suicidal plan; once she is secure, then nothing stands in the way of his killing himself. Nadya reasons differently. If she is secure, he will no longer have a reason for killing himself. Both he and she are motivated in their behaviour by the idea of mutual sacrifice; once more ironic significance in their fate.

Behind Ryepnin's idea of suicide stands 'a strange, mad desire to sacrifice himself for the woman whom he loved and who loved him'[49] as also a passionate inner need 'to save her from poverty, humiliation, old age in London and from beggary'.[50] Ryepnin first directly links his isolation with the idea of suicide while returning from one of his vain visits to the Ministry of Labour where he had gone to seek employment. As, in desperation, he travels home, he

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[40] Ibid., p. 13.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid. p. 75.
[43] Ibid., p. 210.
[44] Ibid., 213.
[45] Ibid., p. 320.
[46] *Seobe i Druga knjiga Seoba,* p. 1054.
[47] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, pp. 273-74.
[48] Ibid., p. 42.
[49] Ibid., p. 282.
[50] Ibid.

reminds himself that he is awaited by his wife whom he loves and by his books, his only friends in his isolation, but friends that tell him it is not difficult to die. When, finally, Nadya leaves for America, Ryepnin feels a joyous peace and a calming relief. Although his divided personality conducts endless dialogues on the subject of death, he feels no regrets regarding himself and his fate. The certainty that nothing can change his life strengthens his fatalistic determination.[51] Yet, still, in the last days of life, there appears a certain resistance to death. The roots of such resistance do not rest in cowardice, nor in the desire to continue living, but in a sense of shame that he leaves his wife on her own and in fear lest his suicide might not lead to her voluntary departure into death. Thus, Ryepnin dies only for himself. For others he merely 'disappears'.[52] He goes to death, as if to a party; his only sign of stress are hands moist from excitement. Even the writer does not accompany him on this journey to final and absolute loneliness. He simply disappears 'into the green, in the darkness'.[53] What the final act of his drama was like one may conclude only on the basis of discrete hints with which Crnjanski masterfully concludes his novel.[54]

An important, though not absolute reason for Ryepnin's suicidal decisions was the sense of the inevitable and inexorable approach of old age. The first thought of aging comes to him as one of those lightening, side questions that one puts to oneself, seeking to find the causes of one's states of gloom. Later the idea would impinge more and more upon his consciousness. For Ryepnin the onset of old age is 'one of the most dreadful experiences in the life of every man'.[55] This feeling which came upon him 'stealthily, like an unexpected visit',[56] becomes one of his most unbearable obsessions. At first he conceals it as a great secret, a massive pain, but, with time, he grows accustomed to it, without ceasing to feel a resistance. It is the type of resistance that in suicide sees a cure for the weakening of vital energies.

Ryepnin is condemned to the fate of a victim not only because he is a poverty-stricken emigrant, but also because he is a proud heretic. His heresy is of a noble kind, for it is nurtured by a love for fatherland, which, for him, is stronger than his own fortune and émigré complex. Although he meets his fellow countrymen with whom he shares the same fate of an emigrant, Ryepnin leaves their organisation and refuses to return to it at any price. He is aware that to return to the old flock would improve his material position, but his entire being revolts against such a return. Such a step would be a two-fold betrayal. Firstly, the betrayal of his own moral codex and the besmirching of his aristocratic dignity. Then, a betrayal of his love for Russia,

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[51] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, p. 347.
[52] Ibid., p. 382.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Ibid., pp. 382-3.ž
[55] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 124.
[56] Ibid.

of the Russia which is a reality and not a fiction. Ryepnin does not hide the fact that he belongs to the 'white' Russians, but neither does he conceal that he loves the Russia of the present. He replaces hatred with forgiveness, the sense of defeat with reconciliation. Bitter émigré experience strengthens him in the certainty that 'to live in one's own country is logical, no matter what life may be. To live in a foreign land, never'.[57] Though he knows that a return to the fatherland is an 'empty phantom, a hallucination, a fever of the mind, beside a sea of reminiscences',[58] he cannot free himself of the thought and even in death sees the possibility of return there where a return in life is impossible: 'Thus we all return there'.[59] His heretical patriotic philosophy is compressed in the thought that 'no one has the right to treason' and to the service of the foreigner, and that injustice, which has ever been on the earth, can be no justification for treachery.[60]

The confusion and crisis of Ryepnin's being Crnjanski portrays not merely with descriptive means, with penetration into his psyche and his own commentary on his faith. He does it also by means of some suggestive pictures which, in the course of the novel, occur with an irregular frequency. It is clear that the author, from the beginning, insists on Ryepnin's 'underground' nature. The reader encounters him often in a compartment of the underground railway madly thundering on its way. The escalator carries him into 'the underground that, as a fast stream, bears away a wreckage'[61] and one emerges from that underground 'as from the grave'.[62] When he gets the job of bookkeeper in a fashionable shoemakers, Ryepnin sits in a cellar which reminds him of the catacombs.[63] Even his work in the bookshop is linked with being underground.[64]

The significance of a clear symbol is given to the gutter. The picture of a drain that carries all who are defeated away into the filthy underground appears whenever Ryepnin is gripped by grim forebodings. His suicidal determination is no more than a decision to avoid the fate of a man who ends in the gutter.

Ryepnin's essential absence from real living is emphasised by the constant employment of theatrical terminology. The central hero not only regards himself as a character in a senseless theatrical production, but also the people he meets he sees as though they were playing roles imposed upon them. He feels himself humiliated by life because he becomes aware that fate is a game in which he is ever turned into somebody he not even

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[57] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, p. 78.
[58] Ibid., p. 118.
[59] Ibid., p. 379.
[60] Ibid., p. 318.
[61] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 96.
[62] Ibid., p. 163.
[63] Ibid., p. 157.
[64] Roman o Londonu, Vol. 2, p. 168.

desired to be.[65] Even in suicide, he sees the possibility 'simply to vanish from the stage'.[66] Sometimes he sees himself as a wax doll.[67] All this enriches the basic picture of Ryepnin, created in the first chapters of the novel.

As a counter-balance to the negative values of life in *Roman o Londonu*, at various times, there appear 'points of brightness' which give moments of joy and repose to the main hero. Ryepnin's last days, devoted to work, bring him 'complete happiness'.[68] Once decided that he will re-decorate the flat lent him for a short time, he gives himself passionately to the work. The feeling of great satisfaction which gripped him had its roots in the knowledge that at last he was doing something 'that had meaning'.[69] Otherwise, throughout the novel, Ryepnin attributes his failure to the fact that, among other things, he is not a 'useful' person. Although he knew that, as soon as he had completed the work, death was waiting, still he felt that 'around him, his life, his intention to kill himself, there, on the walls, was being created - created by him - a world of his thought, a world of peace, of consolation, of the play of the intellect and of a brief rest from life'.[70] In this he saw 'an introduction into some better life and some better world'.[71] He had a similar experience during his holiday when he saw the old gardener calmly pursuing his work 'as though there were nothing else on earth'.[72] 'That strong old man seemed to him a picture of rationality pursuing something useful and satisfying'.[73]

The better to set Ryepnin's psychological profile in this context, one must recall yet another scene from the holiday. This is the picture of the volunteer lifesavers who defy the storm to aid a boat in trouble. These people 'driven by a strange instinct to care for others'[74] and 'a certain deep desire in people to help others'[75] become for the desperate and disappointed Ryepnin 'the root of all things'.[76] At first it may seem surprising that Ryepnin who receives help from others, should marvel at people being ready to help others in trouble. Yet, for him, this is a 'point of brightness', for in their unselfishness he sees an instinct and not an interest, a hand sincerely extended and not humiliating support, brotherly aid and not morally doubtful Samaritans. Had there been more of such 'points of brightness', even Ryepnin's fate might have been different.

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[65] Ibid., p. 362.
[66] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 383.
[67] Ibid., p. 145.
[68] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, p. 343.
[69] Ibid., p. 342.
[70] Ibid., p. 343.
[71] Ibid., p. 344.
[72] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 366.
[73] Ibid.
[74] Ibid., p. 360.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.

Over all Ryepnin's fate as an emigrant there hovers, as an ever present experience, the bitter disappointment of a man who in the collision with the realities of life experiences the harsh destruction of his youthful illusions. Ryepnin's father had been an anglophile. In his house they drank only English tea. He, like an Englishman, first played lawn tennis. He was the first to import English boats for the rowing club.[77] Ryepnin too had inherited his father's devotion to all that was English. But direct contacts with that country and with that nation quickly brought a bitter awakening. After seven years in England, his feelings had completely changed. Love had been replaced by hatred. This hatred he conceals by regarding everything English with a cynicism and superior irony. In England his ideal of humanity becomes the Russian muzhik, while the serpentine embrace of London for him personifies the harsh indifference of an ungrateful England. 'I did not know that people were like this, nor that there existed such a huge city in which people greeted one another so nicely - and all told lies',[78] says Ryepnin. He pays for his mistaken devotion just as painfully as does Pavle Isakovič his.

Seobe, as is well known, remained an unfinished torso. That torso is indirectly completed by *Roman o Londonu*. With the history of the wanderings of the Russian prince Ryepnin the tale of the wanderings of the Serb Pavle Isakovič is completed, with an identical parabola of experience. *Roman o Londonu* finalises the theme of migrations with a sobering realisation. 'There were migrations and there always will be',[79] but 'to live in one's country is logical, no matter what life may be. To live in a foreign land is not.'[80]

[77] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, p. 59.
[78] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 1, p. 74.
[79] *Seobe i Druga knjiga Seoba,* p. 1074.
[80] *Roman o Londonu,* Vol. 2, p. 78.

Miloš Crnjanski's Links with England

Miloš Crnjanski's (1893-1977) links with England began long before he came 'temporarily'[1] to London in August 1941, summoned by the Yugoslav Premier, General Simović (1882-1962), to work in the legation as his 'press counsellor'[2]. There are no records of Crnjanski's father having been an Anglophile; it is certainly not the case that only English tea was drunk in his household, as it was in the family of the Russian prince Nikolaj Rjepnin in *Roman o Londonu (The Novel about London).* We know, however, that Crnjanski's interest in England began while he was still a boy; on the other hand, he did not take from home a devotion to everything English, as was the case with Rjepnin, whose story would later become instrumental in expressing Crnjanski's disappointment with England.

Crnjanski began to learn English when he was thirteen[3]. In the 1920s and 1930s he occasionally wrote about English authors and even translated from English, but when, in 1941, he found himself in Bristol, in a situation which, according to his friend Milenko Popović, 'started the war between Miloš Crnjanski and Great Britain'[4], he 'stuttered' when he spoke English. 'I know English well, but I still speak it with difficulty', he explained to the detectives who questioned him upon his arrival from Lisbon. They were surprised that a man who, as they had been informed, had a good knowledge of their language was answering their question with difficulty[5].

Crnjanski felt that his knowledge of English was inadequate for the jobs in which he was involved in the 1930s as a diplomat, declining a transfer from Berlin to London in 1938 because he could not speak English well and later acquired a teacher of English in Rome (1939-40). These facts indicate that Crnjanski's interest in English language and literature was continuous although relatively marginal. His pre-war texts, in which one can notice the first traces of his interest in England, indicate how far this was secondary, relative to his central concerns, and that the knowledge he had was fragmentary, superficial and gathered mainly from non-English sources.

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[1] *Embahade IV, Izabrana dela,* Belgrade, Nolit, 1983, Vol. XIV, p. 36)
[2] Ibid., p. 64.
[3] Ibid., p. 33.
[4] Milenko Popović, *Crnjanski izmedju dva sveta,* Belgrade, 1984, p. 89.
[5] *Embahade IV,* p. 33.

At the time when Crnjanski was starting to make his mark in literature, there were very few people in Yugoslavia who had an expert knowledge of English language, literature and theatre. A man as vain as the young Crnjanski undoubtedly enjoyed flaunting his exotic erudition. As early as 1921, in *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću (The Diary about Čarnojević),* for instance, Crnjanski refers to English literature (Yorick, Romeo and Juliet, Lord Byron, Elizabeth Browning), and skillfully incorporates two English phrases (Thou art hearing,[6] and mad, bad and dangerous to know[7]) in describing the encounter in Vienna between the narrator of the novel and his 'double', the young 'Sumatraist' from Dalmatia. Similar examples of erudite pretentiousness occur in his *Priče o muškom (The Tales about the Male),* particularly in the stories *O bogovima (About Gods)* - the British Museum, bush of feathers, burgonet, crest[8] - and *Legenda (A Legend).*

Legenda is certainly the most English of all the texts mentioned above. This story of the shameless love of Queen Elizabeth for a young monk who 'does not have the desire for a woman's body'[9] and rejects her royal charms, yet out of mere pity succumbs to the pressures of the lowest harbour whore, is a belated example of decadent fin de siecle literature. This lascivious melodrama, where the lyrical and the erotic complement and support each other, gave Crnjanski the opportunity to flaunt his erudition again. An enormous number of both historical and pseudo-historical characters, both from England and the continent, are mentioned without any substantial narrative justification. From all the pages of this lyrical legend, in which the author self-consciously employs features of the chronique scandaleuse, the most impressive paragraph is a short description of the English capital which directly anticipates the later, and far more complex and comprehensive vision of that town, as developed in his *Roman o Londonu:*

> "Then, London, in the fog, was fathomless and shapeless, and was black and dark like a sea gulf, full of rocks, and black unfortunate galleys. Their masts, piercing the dark sky, did not fly the happy, silk banners of the blue heaven. London was black and stank like a huge corpse... Only in the afternoon the sun would some out, exhausted and bleeding from the fight with the fog. Then the crowd would happily rush around and stop in front of shacks resounding with laughter. There, an actor called Shakespeare made up all sorts of farces, so that one could burst with laughter and cry to one's heart's content until it was pitch-dark..."[10]

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[6] *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću, Izabrana dela,* Vol. II
[7] Ibid., p.
[8] *Izabrana dela,* Vol. II
[9] *Izabrana dela,* Vol. II
[10] Ibid. p. 178-9.

How much Crnjanski held to his early links with English literature is evident in the fact that many years later he proudly remembered that he was the first to translate Shakespeare's sonnets in the prestigious Belgrade literary review *Srpski književni glasnik*[11], or that 'already in 1920', in some magazine, he had mentioned John Donne[12]. However, in a long text on Shakespeare's sonnets, published in 1930 in *Srpski književni glasnik,* except for sincere admiration for the English poet and his style, there was nothing which was Crnjanski's own or original. He himself admits that everything in that text was either translated or taken from the two-volume work on Shakespeare by the German critic Gustav Landauer[13]. One critic, hostile towards Crnjanski, saw in this detailed summary of Landauer's book only a 'high-school compilation on Shakespeare'.[14] In her essay on Crnjanski's non-fictional prose, the Serbian literary historian Ivanka Udovički (1932-1992) notices that this essay is 'weaker than other Crnjanski essays... because here the author did not give free rein to his artistic imagination'[15]. However, she analyses it with full respect and claims that Crnjanski's conviction of 'the close connection between the artist's experience and the act of creation' has here been transformed into 'a particular methodological procedure'[16]. On the other hand, she admits that Crnjanski, 'in the major part of the text... does not make any comments but only states ideas which are not his own'[17]. However, she considers this essay important for scholars who wish to examine the author's poetics, his creative impulses, motivation, and methods of writing some of his essays[18]. Ivanka Udovički approaches this text as a eulogist of Crnjanski and with a distinct absence of critical rigour, attributing to it a greater importance than it actually deserves. Before proceeding with a discussion of the scope and importance attributed by her to this essay, one should perform a detailed comparative analysis of Landauer's original text, as well as of Crnjanski's adaptation, which he himself calls 'a mere review'[19].

Summarizing Landauer's book, Crnjanski also incorporates into his 'review' a large number of Shakespeare's sonnets, in the original and in translation.

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[11] *Embahade IV,* p. 33.
[12] *Eseji, Izabrana dela,* Vol. XII, p. 173.
[13] Ibid., p. 198.
[14] Novak Simić, 'Miloš Crnjanski - u povodu putopisa *Ljubav i Toskani', Književnik,* No. 9 (1930). Quoted in Vladimir Bunjac, *Kamenovani Crnjanski,* Valjevo, 1986, p. 84.
[15] Ivanka Udovički, 'Eseji Miloša Crnjanskog', in *Književno delo Miloša Crnjanskog,* P. Palavestra & S. Radulovic (Eds.), Belgrade, 1972, p. 326.
[16] Ibid, p. 327.
[17] Ibid., p. 326.
[18] Ibid., p. 327.
[19] *Eseji, Izabrana dela,* Vol. XII, p. 271.

> “Only the original, and in no way can the translation reveal those unforgettable verses of the English 16th century. Our only intention is, by quoting an approximate translation of these words, to evoke in the reader the inkling of the boundless beauty of these sonnets”.[20]

In order to make his reader better understand why Shakespearean sonnets can often be translated only approximately and why translation is sometimes completely impossible, Crnjanski points out that for some English words it is often difficult to find an appropriate equivalent in Serbo-Croat. He lingers especially at the 45th sonnet, and the words like slight air, purging fire and these present-absent.[21] It is certainly true that Crnjanski used the German translation from Landauer's book, and maybe even some renderings into French which he also mentions, while translating the complex and difficult language of Shakespeare. This conclusion can be drawn from errors and imprecisions in his translations, which are more likely the result of his following other translators than of his own incapacity to comprehend the original text.

In his other two texts about English writers - a very short one on William Blake (1757-1827), and another, about twelve pages long, on Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) Crnjanski mainly summarizes what he has read in other writers' books. 'One should be familiar with the life of Wilde in order to enjoy his books,'[22] he wrote in 1920, in the introduction to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, the work which was for him 'the most brilliant novel about decadent English aristocracy'[23]. Giving, in the first place, a sympathetic description of the life of the author who was for him primarily an aesthete, but also 'an ironic psychologist and impetuous moralist'[24], Crnjanski did not try to moderate his opinion of Wilde: 'No one has ever, with so much irony and wit, exposed morality and laws and stripped off their false masks', claims Crnjanski[25]. He does not even try to analyse or critically assess the works that he mentions, but mainly delights in them.

> “There is no other book which could show art as more mysterious and magical than this one. It is full of sentences which could be engraved in gold and marble plaques. It is full of sentences which reveal new worlds in art; it is full of thoughts the likes of which nobody before him, or after him, has even expressed”[26],

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[20] Ibid., p. 218.
[21] Ibid., p.
[22] Ibid., p. 256.
[23] Ibid., p. 259.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid., p. 256.
[26] Ibid., p. 258.

he says of *Intentions*, unaware of how much Wilde had borrowed from Charles Baudelaire, (1821-1867) Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) and the American painter James McNeall Whistler (1834-1903) in the writing of these essays. Exaggerations and inaccuracies of this sort have their origins in the books which Crnjanski consulted and which he scrupulously refers to, either in the footnotes or in the texts themselves.

Before the Second World War, Crnjanski published three theatre reviews on the production of Shakespeare's plays: *King Lear (1924), Julius Caesar (1925) and The Taming of the Shrew (1927).* In this area Crnjanski writes with much more self-assurance, critical self-consciousness and originality. He was undoubtedly well acquainted with the European theatre, and he knew something about the production of Shakespeare's tragedies and comedies on the London stage. There is a thought running through all three texts that 'in spite of all necessary innovations'[27] it is indispensable to perform the authentic Shakespeare, and that every 'severance' of his plays from the spirit and atmosphere of the time in which they originated is totally absurd. The European theatre of his time, he claims, is dominated by directors whose treatment of Shakespeare's works is completely arbitrary.[28] For Crnjanski, Shakespeare was first and foremost an actor, a man of the theatre, and he writes accordingly about all these productions.

> "Shakespeare loved acting for the sake of acting, an actor for an actor, a role for the sake of a role, a mask and poetry. The relationship to the age, reality and history is totally obscure. The Elizabethan theatre cannot be used in the same way as Greek tragedy, which was written and performed for thousands and thousands of spectators; otherwise it leads to the false and the absurd".[29]

In his reviews, Crnjanski does not touch upon the text, the literary basis of the performance.

Comparing the Belgrade productions of Shakespeare's plays with the performances he saw in European capitals, Crnjanski gives the most praise to Branko Gavela's (1885-1962) direction of *The Taming of the Shrew,* because in that production there was 'something which resembled the stage of Elizabethan times'[30]. His general attitude towards Shakespeare is most succinctly expressed in the following words: 'Shakespeare is baroque English theatre, and it is less absurd to produce him in contemporary costumes, as they do in London,

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[27] Ibid., p. 306.
[28] Ibid., p. 305.
[29] Ibid., p. 302.
[30] Ibid., p. 307.

nowadays, than to turn him into a huge historical reality, for the masses, and for the sake of the masses'[31].

Crnjanski visited Britain for the first time in August 1937, on his way to Iceland. The visit was recorded in three articles which he published in the Belgrade daily paper *Vreme.* The first is political *Engleska ratna industrija uposlila je mase besposlenih (English War Industry has Employed the Masses of the Unemployed,* 31 August); the other two deal with Scotland - *Impresije iz Škotske (Impressions from Scotland*, 29 August) and *U gradu Marije Stjuart (In the town of Mary Steward*, 30 August). At that time he never even dreamed that he would return to Britain so soon and live in London for some twenty-five years (1941-1965).

The basic facts from the London part of Crnjanski's biography are too well known to be repeated here in any detail. The accumulated unpleasant experiences of England and the English, as well as of Yugoslav émigré circles; unsuccessful attempts to find a job which he could perform with pride and dignity; his failure to establish himself as a writer; the very status of a displaced person, all resulted in the bitterness and despair of a vulnerable and overly sensitive man. He poured out his feelings onto the pages of *Roman o Londonu,* the book which is the most comprehensive recreation and transposition of the English experiences of Miloš Crnjanski and his links with England. However, I propose not to discuss this novel, firstly, because it deals with the experiences of a Russian prince rather than a Serbian writer; and, secondly, because I have written about it elsewhere.[32]

Nevertheless, one episode should be mentioned. It was, according to Crnjanski's friend Milenko Popović, the most decisive for Crnjanski's attitude towards Great Britain. All the more so because Crnjanski himself writes about it in the fourth volume of his diplomatic memoirs, *Embahade (Embassies).* His version of the story is less dramatic but more or less identical with Popović's interpretation. Although he was invited by the Premier of an allied government, Crnjanski arrived in Britain branded as a Fascist. He was aware of this while still in Lisbon[33] and attributed this label to the intrigue of his Yugoslav compatriots. He never even suspected that the British, who questioned him on 21 August, 1941, upon his landing in Bristol, could have some other intelligence information of their own about his pre-war activities in Belgrade and abroad.

This is how Crnjanski remembers his first day in England:

> "There the police took us over and led us for questioning to a hut, both myself and my wife. Two detectives and a young officer questioned me, courteously but offensively.

[31] Ibid., p. 302.
[32] 'Izgnanik ili problem samoće u *Romanu u Londonu,* in *Književno delo Miloša Crnjanskog,* pp. 269-280.
[33] *Embahade IV,* p. 27.

> They took away all my books, all my papers. They broke open the cigarettes which they found in a porte cigarettes in a suitcase. Perhaps they thought that poets put their spy reports in cigarettes? I held a diplomatic passport, and protested, but they did their job totally phlegmatically. Later, all my papers were returned to me in order.
>
> They questioned me especially about my acquaintances in Rome - and about Count Ciano...
>
> The detectives became increasingly rough, and even wanted to open sealed diplomatic mail, which I was taking from Lisbon to General Simović. The young officer prevented this, cut short the questioning and brought in my wife. He put us politely onto a bus and took us to a hotel in Bristol".[34]

This kind of welcome, says Crnjanski, devastated his wife, while he himself, who had lain in Austrian prisons, accepted this 'with disgust, but calmly'. And he adds: 'I say that we should consider this a silly comedy'[35]. Popović claims that this interrogation, and particularly the tearing of cigarettes lengthwise, and the spilling of the tobacco onto a newspaper had far more serious consequences than one would conclude from reading the description of the event in *Embahade.*

> "At first, comforting myself, I thought that he wished to see whether something was written on the cigarette paper. But he did not even look at the paper. He was calmly tearing the cigarettes apart, watching me with one eye and the window behind my back with the other,

Popović quotes Crnjanski[36] and continues:

> "Perhaps the interrogator was at that moment, for whatever reason, mentally absent; perhaps it was his personal disposition; perhaps Great Britain was not behind the way he behaved; but Miloš Crnjanski, a mature man with a firmly established outlook, an intellectual individualist with precisely moulded rules of fair play, was offended to the core of his being, and so the war started between Miloš Crnjanski and Great Britain...

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[34] Ibid., p. 33-34.
[35] Ibid., p. 34.
[36] Popović, *Op. cit.,* p. 88.

> Others, whether Yugoslav or foreign, would have got over it quickly, but not Miloš Crnjanski. Perhaps the English later forgot everything, but Crnjanski not a bit. He complained on many occasions about those cigarettes".[37]

However, that was not the only unpleasant surprise awaiting him as he took his first steps in England. He experienced Bristol, all in ruins, as a phantasmagoria; the old, smoky, and sooty Bristol railway station reminded him of a Dickens novel. 'We had expected it to be like the modern ones in Leipzig or Rome'. From the train, Bath appeared to him 'as a red row of brick houses which resembled hen-coops', while London suburbs were 'all identical, all the same, ugly. England is full of such surprises'[38], says Crnjanski as he sums up his first impressions, suggesting that surprises of this and other sorts were to be found wherever one turned.

Crnjanski arrived in London in a state of increasing irritation with England and the English. And since his first official assignment in London ended in a 'catastrophe'[39], it is not surprising that his irritation only increased in the years to come; it was made worse by his conviction that he was constantly under police surveillance, followed and watched.[40] He thought that BBC radio programmes for Yugoslavia were very bad, and so he expressed his dissatisfaction to Simović. Eventually he discussed the matter with Miss Elizabeth Hill (1900-1996), a lecturer in Russian the University of Cambridge and the head of a department in the Ministry of Propaganda. 'She speaks our language, as the Russians do', comments Crnjanski. Miss Hill rejected his criticism, arguing that her London friends, the press attaché Jeftić and the poet and philosopher Dimitrije Mitrinović (1888-1953), 'claim that we have a very good programme'. But this was not the end of the conversation. Miss Hill at first tried to get rid of him, giving the excuse of being 'very busy'; then she let him know that she had heard that as attaché in Rome he was 'very enthusiastic about Fascism'; and worst of all, she later complained to his superiors, accusing him of demanding, on behalf of Simović, that the Yugoslav section of the BBC be handed over to him. Afterwards he was upbraided by Simović, and almost resigned his post. 'My VOICE was never heard on London radio', says Crnjanski with characteristic bitterness. 'Today, I am pleased about that'[41].

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[37] Ibid., p. 34.
[38] *Embahade IV,* p. 35.
[39] Ibid., p. 42.
[40] When I met Crnjanski in London, in June 1965, he claimed that he never drank tap-water, because he was certain that it was poisoned; and that he was constantly disturbed in his apartment on Queensway by the people living below and above him. He implied that behind these 'sinister forces' was either British Intelligence or hostile Yugoslav emigré circles.
[41] *Embahade IV,* p. 40-42.

Immediately afterwards, in the section of his memoirs which follow the account of this 'catastrophe', with a disdain typical of his writing about England, Crnjanski, without mentioning her by name, attempts to disqualify Miss Hill as a person appropriate for her job. He writes:

> "I was a student at Vienna University, so I had the opportunity to see Slavonic studies in Vienna. I was also a student at the University of Berlin, and saw Slavonic studies there as well.
>
> Working in the legation in Rome, I had the opportunity to meet professors of literature and Slavonic languages in Rome, too, and I find that their knowledge of the Slavs was of a very high standard.
>
> I was also, for some time, a student at the Sorbonne in Paris, and Slavonic studies are of a very high standard there as well. They are, in my opinion, worst at the University of Cambridge and Oxford, and as far as the interest for Slavonic studies is concerned, in 1947 there were 3, literally three students who were interested in Slavonic studies in England, excluding Russian studies, for which no greater interest was shown.
>
> This fact can explain a lot of things top the reader of these memoirs".[42]

There is undoubtedly some truth in his words, but they are aimed not only against Miss Hill. They are also a result of Crnjanski's accumulated dissatisfaction with his circumstances in England. One should not forget that Crnjanski himself unsuccessfully attempted to obtain a post as a lecturer in Serbo-Croat in Cambridge, and that, instead of him, the position was given to a Serbian Orthodox priest, Irinej Djordjević, former vladika of Dalmatia. Such a cynical and jesting attitude towards the British who had anything to do with Yugoslavia was conditioned by his conviction that among them there was practically nobody for whom it could be said that they were right for the job they were doing. 'Europeans are often wrong about the English, and they are wrong about who is important for the English. However, English people, even when they want to, often do not know who is who', Crnjanski writes in the volume four of his *Embahade.* 'In any case, confusions are, in English heads, common'. To prove this, he quotes some mistakes from Encyclopaedia Britannica, 'which is considered in Europe, the gospel of English knowledge and accurate facts'[43].

In about twenty articles, published as an appendix to the volume 4 of *Embahade,* Crnjanski mercilessly exposes those 'confusions'. Filled with destructive, negative charges, his pen notes mainly those details which deserve to be ridiculed. Whether he translates or

[42] Ibid., p. 41.
[43] Ibid., p. 80.

summarizes them, Crnjanski rarely comments on them; he is convinced that anyone who reads them will be on the same wave-length as he, and that they will feel the same revulsion towards that sort of 'expert opinion'. He thinks that it is sufficient for him to emphasize those funny examples of ignorance or animosity towards Serbs, and to a lesser extent Croats, by printing them in capital letters or accompanying them with exclamation and question marks. But when he does decide to comment upon them, he is either scathingly mocking, or destructively critical. For example, *The General Histories of the Turks* by Richard Knolles (c.1550-1610) is 'a galimatias... of archaisms, mixed up geographical and personal names, titles and correct facts of the time'[44], while in the text of the comical opera *The Siege of Belgrade*, by an anonymous author, there dominates 'a characteristic muddle of brains and morality'[45].

Neither has he a single word of approval for Rebecca West's (1892-1983) *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*. His comment on this book, which he admits is 'considered... a classical work about our country and our people'[46], consists of a list of curiosities in which he recognizes a characteristic lack of knowledge and understanding of the country she writes about. He finds a similar list in reading a book about village life in Yugoslavia, written by Olive Lodge (1915-1953) who in 1941 'as "our friend and expert"'[47], was employed in the Yugoslav government information department; the same applies to *There a German Just Behind Me* by Claire Hollingworth[48], who happened to be in Yugoslavia at the time of the German attack on 6 April, 1941. Here are some representative examples of Crnjanski's criticism by quotation:

> “The most dangerous occupation in Yugoslavia, according to Miss Lodge, is not to fight the battle at the "Slivica". The most dangerous occupation in our country is to be a teacher. Pupils' pistols explode at the end of the school year, and so the teachers have to carry pistols as well.
>
> In Priština, she says, the people say that "bed-bugs bring luck".
>
> She says that (in 1929) on Macedonian railways she read the following inscription: "Kill bed-bugs, the dead ones should be shown to the ticket collector!"
>
> In Serbia, she says, pigs are treated as members of the family! In the case of emergency they are saved BEFORE CHILDREN.
>
> Dogs in Serbia are kept hungry. They let them loose only at night to guard the house from wolves, BEARS and the like”.[49]

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[44] Ibid., p. 120.
[45] Ibid., p. 130.
[46] Ibid., p.
[47] Ibid., p.
[48] Ibid., p. 166-67.
[49] Ibid. p.

Crnjanski is equally hurt, or cheered up as he puts it, by writing of Claire Hollingworth. Copying and translating from her book, he writes in brackets the original English phrases which, obviously, irritate him the most:

> "In Dalmatia peasants live along the coast, but up in the mountains are people who are practically cannibals".
>
> She says, however, that "Hungarians have a charming English-speaking aristocracy".
>
> "Maček is", as she says, "a stupid old man".
>
> She had a lunch with him...
>
> When Stojadinović was having lunch with Prince Paul, the Prince was constantly afraid that Stojadin would drink the water meant for washing one's fingers in.
>
> On the day she writes all this she admits that SHE DID NOT WASH HER FACE.
>
> "Belgrade", she says,"is a monstrosity of a modern city", and "she could feel little sadness that the Germans have now destroyed it by bombing!"[50]

Quoting these words, Crnjanski is asking himself what kind of a person could have written such a sentence during a war in which the city where the book was published had itself suffered tragic losses from German bombs. Crnjanski suggests that the lack of basic human decency and sympathy for the victims of that bombing, and the apparent lack of awareness that they even exist, make Claire Hollingworth's writing a drastic example of inhumanity.

However, he not only criticizes those texts in which his country and people are treated arrogantly, with lack of respect, with derision and in a misleading way. He is equally censorious towards those historians, politicians and political commentators in whose actions and words was reflected the traditionally hostile policies of Great Britain towards Serbia and Yugoslavia. 'England, throughout the 19th century, has been not only the best ally of Turkey and the worst enemy of Serbia - in the diplomatic area - but also of Montenegro and the Montenegrins'[51], he says, stating an undeniable historical fact. He notes the continuation of that policy into the 20th century.

For instance, in order to prepare his readers for Winston Churchill's (1874-1965) books about the Second World War, he offers a few examples from Churchill's *The World Crisis*

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[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., p. 138.

which show clearly that during the First World War the British statesman sided with Bulgaria, and against Serbia, and from *The Unknown War* in which the author viewed the question of the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina by the Austrians in 1908 exclusively from the point of view of British interests. What embittered him particularly was Churchill's unfounded claim that the Serbian Prime minister Nikola Pašić (1845-1926) knew about the preparations for the assassination of Franz Ferdinand (1863-1914) in Sarajevo, and his assertion that a monument erected by Gavrilo Princip's (1894-1918) fellow countrymen 'records his infamy and their own'[52]. In a similar ironic way, Crnjanski draws our attention to Stanley Casson's statement, 'worthy of attention'[53], that the glory for all the victories in the Balkan wars and on the Salonica front in First World War should be attributed to the Greeks; he reserves a similar comment for the work of Henry Baerlein, *A Difficult Frontier*, which, in his mind, clearly shows that England was 'the main enemy of Serbia in the matter of the border with Albania'[54].

When, in the few books written by more objective and less anti-Serb writers, Crnjanski came across confirmation of his deeply felt belief that the English had dealt unjustly with his country, he quotes from them as if they were precious allies in the crusade against England. One of these writers was the British diplomat Sir Neville Henderson (1882-1942). In his two books of diplomatic memoirs, *Water Under the Bridges* and *Failure of a Mission*, he talks 'very warmly' about the days he spent both in Serbia, before the First World War, and in Yugoslavia after the war. Crnjanski approvingly quotes Henderson's claims[55] that for years it was expected of him to 'exert pressure in Belgrade in support of Bulgaria'; that the British press was always anti-Yugoslav and 'far more friendly towards our late enemies, either Bulgars or Hungarians, than our gallant and loyal allies the Serbs'; 'as for the Foreign Office, almost anybody was to be preferred to our late allies the Serbs'[56]. Crnjanski twice refers to Henderson's claim that the English King George V (1865-1936) liked the Bulgarian King Boris (1894-1943), because he could speak English, but that he did not care for the Serbian King Aleksandar Karadjordjević (1888-1934) because he could not, and also he considered him the 'murderer' of King Aleksandar Obrenović (1876-1903) and his wife Draga (1866-1903). Prejudices and half-truths, the lack of understanding for the historical role and interests of his country, the ignorance of its idiosyncrasies and the absence of a sincere effort to investigate it objectively, provided a polemical reader like Crnjanski with an abundance of material for his critical analysis.

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[52] Ibid., p. 149-51.
[53] Ibid., p. 165.
[54] Ibid., p. 157.
[55] Ibid., p. 171-75.
[56] Ibid., p.

But in writing about the links between his country and England, Crnjanski did not always take this hostile position. When he moved away from the sensitive areas of history, politics, and current affairs, he wrote with less polemical fervour, although he continued to be as passionate and probing as before. In the four texts published in the Belgrade weekly *Nin* in 1964[57], investigating the prehistoric links between the Balkans and the British Isles, Crnjanski rediscovered his youthful interest in archeology.

Inspired by the conviction of the American archeologist, Professor Albright, that the names of hills and rivers 'are sometimes preserved for thousands of years' - Crnjanski read Ptolemy's antique maps and studied ancient monuments of Ireland, Wales, England and Scotland, discovering parallels between 'philological traces in the names of hills and rivers' in Britain and the Balkans.[58] 'The majority of British hills were later, following invasions from the North, given Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon names, but in antique maps... they are still Celtic', Crnjanski discovers.[59] On the other hand, the Slav archeologists who researched the settling of the Balkans argue that geographical names in the area were of purely Slavonic origin. However, Crnjanski maintains that they are almost all Celtic. 'Every philologist will easily and immediately notice that... The illusion that the names Sava, Drava, and the like are Slavonic is dispelled by the mere fact that "aw" and "dur" are Celtic roots in those names, meaning water'[60].

Crnjanski gives long lists of names of rivers, mountains and islands discovered in ancient maps of the British Isles, and established the phonetic similarities between their roots and those in the geographic names used in the Balkans. These common Celtic features 'should not, perhaps, by themselves be so unusual... What is surprising is their Slavophony'[61]. For example, the names of the two Scottish rivers, Derwent and Ram, 'are not only Slavophonic, but they can be found in Bosnia, an eminently Celtic area in prehistory'[62]. For a British professor, the prehistoric names of the tiny Scottish rivers, Lado and Malena, were 'simply fun'; Crnjanski, however, is convinced that they are Slavonic. He thinks that this Slavophony certainly cannot be accidental, and it proves 'prehistoric contacts and links' caused by migrations.[63] He himself attributed great importance to these investigations. Writing about them, he rediscovered the importance of migrations - the central theme of his literature - in the history of mankind, and found tangible evidence for what he himself considered his

[57] 'Prvi pomeni Srba u Engleskoj', No. 703, 28 June; 'Arheoloske veze Balkana', No. 711, 23 August; 'Vendski trag u Britaniji', No. 717, 4 October; 'Otkud potiču imena naših reka i brda', No. 721, 1 November.
[58] 'Otkud potiču imena naših reka i brda', *Nin,* No. 721, 1 November 1964.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.
[63] 'Vendski trag u Britaniji', *Nin,* No. 717, 4 October, 1964.

'crazy' Sumatraist theory of hidden links between apparently distant and unrelated phenomena.

One feels that Crnjanski had to leave England in order to be able to stop writing and thinking about it in a hostile way. Only a few years after his return to his native country in 1965, he published in the Belgrade literary paper *Književne novine*, in 1973, a series of essays on his favourite English poets: Geoffrey Chaucer (1340-1400), Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), Walter Raleigh (1552-1618), John Donne (1572-1631), P. B. Shelley (1792-1822), as well on some of the features of contemporary English poetry.[64] The overall title of these essays, *Moji engleski pesnici (My English Poets*), itself suggests that between Crnjanski and the writers he discussed there existed a close relationship, something which linked them not only in a literary and intellectual way, but also in intimate human terms. 'What primarily attracted me to these poets is their poetical destiny, their personal tragedies in their poetry, what the English call personal feeling'.[65] And when he writes about their work, Crnjanski emphasizes first of all those elements which are similar to traits in his own poetry. The very poets that he writes about are his chosen kin.

In Chaucer, for example, Crnjanski saw the first English poet who was primarily European; what attracted him to his poetry was his love of nature, the combination of lyrical melancholy and despair, 'the gait of the drunken man who knows that somewhere he has a house, but doesn't know how to find it'[66]. Marlowe was attractive to Crnjanski because of the way in which his own personality was incarnated in the characters of his plays, and because he was once 'clothed in silk, and later had to beg'[67]; besides, he was 'a thorn in the side of some ruffians from the Court'[68], as well as an 'intellectual and a melancholic'[69]. Raleigh, on the other hand, brought into his poetry 'his life, his wars, his victories, his tragedies, and turned them all into verse'[70]; his is the poetry of 'a man of action, of adventures, of an important historical and intellectual character, who knows the world and its people, and life'[71]. This man, 'even when he was in disgrace, and in a dungeon... had a constant desire to return to his homeland'[72], although many people ridiculed 'this provincial love'[73].

Crnjanski had a special liking for John Donne. He admired Donne's intellectualism, his passion for learning, his morbid sadness, his melancholy, his cynicism and his modern, almost

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[64] They were later included in his *Eseji, Izabrana dela.* Vol. XII, pp. 138-93.
[65] Ibid. p. 142.
[66] Ibid., p. 140.
[67] Ibid. p. 143.
[68] Ibid., p. 149.
[69] Ibid. p. 149
[70] Ibid. p. 153.
[71] Ibid. p. 151.
[72] Ibid. p. 150.
[73] Ibid., p. 150-58.

Kierkegaardian sense of the passage of time. Above all, he was fascinated by the 'duality' of his life - 'the first half, when he was young, was spent in romantic adventures, in the revolt against his own world. In the second half he became a preacher of human death'[74].

Among the English Romantics, Shelley, as a poet attached to Italy, was Crnjanski's favourite, and his poetry, 'obviously the result of an absurd life'[75], was the closest to him, particularly those stanzas which 'reveal an emigrant from England who is aware that he has lost his native land for ever'[76]. Shelley was a lonely intellectual, a poet whom 'a foreign country... exile'[77] changed greatly, and who achieved 'the peak of his poetic ideals'[78] when away from home. Like Crnjanski.

Crnjanski, symptomatically, concludes his survey of the poets who made their mark in modern English poetry with an analysis of a poem by John Fuller. *In a Railway Compartment* is, as Crnjanski describes it, 'a gruesome poem about a sex-maniac'[79] who becomes 'a symbol of the dark side of the London moonlight'[80]. The life of a poet is identified both with the life of a modern industrial metropolis, and with that of the lonely individual living there amongst millions.[81] John Fuller's contemporary London does not differ much from the London of Crnjanski's novel.

In his stimulating account of his English poets, Crnjanski evokes one of his essential English experiences: 'During the twenty years I spent in London, I came to the conclusion that those deep rifts between generations do not exist, but that the past returns into the present - although it changes into something else'[82].

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[74] Ibid., p. 167.
[75] Ibid., p. 176.
[76] Ibid., p. 180.
[77] Ibid., p. 182.
[78] Ibid., p. 182.
[79] Ibid., p. 192.
[80] Ibid., p. 193.
[81] Ibid., p. 192.
[82] Ibid., p. 183.

Populism and Socialism

The movement for social literature in Yugoslavia, 1928-1941

The strong politicisation of a part of the literary avant-garde, which took place in Yugoslavia at the end of the 1920s, was due to both internal and external factors. Although earlier, among the young writers, at the end of the First World War, there had been those who openly supported revolution and the formation of a republic, glorifying Lenin and the revolutionary changes in Russia (Krleža and Cesarec for example), for the majority of the members of the literary avant-garde the primary question was that of a purely literary revolution. Even when they spoke of political revolution, they did so in the framework of fashionable, anarchistic trends, characteristic of many young European intellectuals of that period.

The change of attitude took place at the end of 1928 and beginning of 1929 when, under the influence of a growing economic crisis, of an ever more aggressive upsurge of Fascism, the dissolution of parliament, the introduction of a royal dictatorship and the impossibility of any political activity within the country, literature became the means of political action. Many writers began to search for social and political programmes in which literature played a pragmatic role, in this way drawing close to the position of the Communist Party. At the same time, this new direction was, to a greater or lesser extent, a reflection of a trend in the so-called "Left" literature of the time, especially in the Soviet Union, Germany and France. For this reason it is necessary to cast a glance, however brief, at these.

In the framework of the varied and intensely vital years immediately following the revolution, an extremely energetic group of cultural activities centred themselves on the organisation known as 'Proletkult' (short for Proletarian Culture). Directed towards, above all, cultural-educational aims and towards the creation of a mass culture, the activities of 'Proletkult' were within the realm of conceptions formulated by their leading theoretician, Alexander Bogdanov. Bogdanov linked the entire idea of culture, including literature, with the productive activity of the industrial proletariat, emphasising as its essential elements the cult of labour, pride in work and collectivism and the destruction of all authorities and fetishes. Literature and art should be a purely proletarian creation, without any connection with the traditional, classical culture of the past, rejected as a part of the bourgeois inheritance. On the other hand, in its activities 'Proletkult' often made use of shockingly modernistic and experimental forms and emphasised the parallelism of political and cultural revolution. Out of step with the ideas of some of the leading personalities of the Russian revolution (for example,

Trotsky in his book *Literature and Revolution* denied the possibility of creating a new proletarian culture and Lenin was inclined towards the traditional values of classical, realist literature), in 1923 'Proletkult' was declared 'a dangerous deviation' and dissolved.[1]

The role of revolutionising literature and culture then passed to an organisation close to 'Proletkult', founded in 1920 under the name of RAPP (an acronym for The Russian Association of Proletarian Writers). The task of RAPP was to carry out certain ideas of 'Proletkult' in a less drastic and more refined form. The writers gathered around this association stood for the propaganda function of literature and called for a literature that would portray the life and psychology of the workers in the process of work. They went even so far as to proclaim for example that the literature portrayal of the working of The Five-Year Plan was the sole interesting theme for Soviet literature and that 'the existence of the Revolution' was the only problem 'to occupy literature'.[2]

Both 'Proletkult' and RAPP nurtured the ambition of imposing their ideas upon the 'proletarian literature' of the world and their attempts to do so led to certain definite results. In 1920 the International Bureau of Proletkult was founded in Moscow with the task of gathering together the 'progressive' writers of the world. RAPP's International Bureau for Ties with the Revolutionary Writers of the World, founded in 1925, had the identical task. The First Conference of the International Organisation of Revolutionary Writers was held in Moscow in 1927; the International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature was formed and in Kharkov in 1930, in cooperation with RAPP, it prepared The Second Conference of the International Organisation of Revolutionary Writers. It was at this conference that the so-called 'Kharkov line' was formulated, which, in fact, represented a variant of RAPP's concept of art and revolution and amounted to a primitive and narrowly interpreted didacticism (in the sense of political propaganda) and dogmatic utilitarianism. Resolutions were passed which insisted upon the importance of dialectical materialism and upon the possibility of developing a proletarian literature under capitalism. It was emphasised that literature should be redolent of the great battle of the proletariat and should deal with themes that aided it on its difficult but victorious path. Proletarian literature should be a part of the general proletarian struggle and, as a counter-balance to the erstwhile bourgeois literature, in it the main role should belong to proletarian writers. In the resolution devoted to 'Questions of Proletarian and Revolutionary Literature in the Balkan Countries' it was emphasised that in the Balkans 'literary movement is the sole arena of political activity'.[3]

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[1] See Stanko Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928-1952*, Liber, Zagreb 1970, pp. 27-38 and Vlado Madjarević, *Književnost i revolucija,* August Cesarec, Zagreb 1974, pp. 118-125.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Stanko Lasić, Op. c., p. 33.

This dogmatic 'Kharkov line' dominated RAPP and the International Organisation of Revolutionary Writers for almost two years, until April 29th 1932, when by the decision of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party all literary groups were dissolved, including unions of proletarian writers, and a single Union of Soviet Writers formed. This arose because all such organisations had, in the estimation of the Central Committee, 'become too narrow and were an obstruction to the serious development of artistic creation'.[4] However, though abolished and repressed in the Soviet Union, the ideas of the Kharkov Conference continued to exist among 'Left' writers outside the Soviet Union for another two years, until 1934 when, at the first Congress of the Union of Soviet Writers, this radical, proletarian line was entirely rejected in favour of a broader and more structured concept of 'socialist realism' which would combine all previous groups and directions.

At first, at least on the part of some participants in the congress (Buharin, Malraux, Gorky, Babel), 'socialist realism' was not conceived of as 'a dogma, but as a creative method which was to mobilise artistic freedom and not to restrict it'.[5] However, that same year, Zhdanov announced that literature in the USSR must support the Party line and be tendentious, while Aragon, at the International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture held in Paris in April 1935, so narrowed the concept of socialist realism as to bring it close to the pragmatism of the Kharkov Conference. The process of the ideologisation of socialist realism was to be completed at the plenum of the Union of Soviet Writers in Minsk at the beginning of 1936. 'Thus the circle begun by RAPP was closed and new movements would take place on this, more solid, basis: socialist realism had become the fundamental synthesis of art and revolution, the synthesis in which the Stalinist vision of revolution gained its full confirmation and its clearest expression.'[6]

The polemics in Germany between two groups formed within the Union of German Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers also had considerable echoes among left-wing intellectuals in Yugoslavia. An added reason for the interest of Yugoslav writers for events in Germany was the presence of two Yugoslav writers who were communists, Dragutin Fodor and Oto Bihalji-Merin, in one of the two conflicting groups.[7] Though both these groups accepted the need and possibility of creating a 'proletarian' literature, they disagreed on how and on what basis this could be achieved. One group around George Lukács held the view that a revolutionary, anti-Fascist literature for the proletarian masses could be built exclusively in the traditions and devices of realism. The other group, headed by Berthold Brecht and Walter Benjamin, believed that the revolutionary content of the new literature demanded new

[4] Ibid., p. 32.
[5] Stanko Lasić, Op. c., p. 32.
[6] Ibid., p. 33.
[7] Vlado Madjarević, Op. c., p. 127.

forms of expression which were to be found in Expressionism (as Brecht stated) and in the new means of the production of works of art - the film, the radio, photography and gramophone records (as Benjamin believed).

This controversy was to culminate in the 'great quarrel' over Expressionism which was begun in 1934 with Lukács article 'The Greatness and the Fall of Expressionism' and continued during 1937 and 1939 among the German writer exiled in Moscow, first with the polemic between Anna Segers and Brecht and then between Ernst Bloch and Lukács. The question was whether Expressionism and the avant-garde in general could become a constitutive part of the 'progressive' socialist literature. Lukács rejected Expressionism as the expression of a decadent artistic spirit and (because the poet Gottfried Benn sympathised with the ideology of the fascist state and put himself at the disposal of Hitler's radio propaganda) maintained that such a literary movement led directly to fascism. Ernst Bloch pointed to the revolutionary value of Expressionism in which he saw the main reason for the fact that fascist ideologists branded it as an example of degenerate art and ordered the burning of expressionist works.

Similar conflict and division arose in France, among the surrealists, when Aragon inclined to the idea of the synthesis of art and revolution (in other words the theory of socialist realism) while Breton continued to defend the purity of the surrealist experiment, convinced that, in this way, he could continue to serve the same cause. Due to the close ties between Serbian surrealists with the French, this conflict went far to producing a split between the writers of the Belgrade surrealist circle. While some deserted poetry and took to politics (Koča Popović), others rejected surrealism and turned to socialist realism (Djordje Jovanović), while others remained faithful to poetry and revolution in the Breton sense (Marko Ristić, Oskar Davičo and Milan Dedinac).

The movement known by the common term 'socialist literature' had in Yugoslavia two clearly defined stages. First, under the same title, embraces the period from 1928 to 1933 and, in the narrowest sense, represents a literary movement whose theoretical basis included the ideas of 'Proletkult', RAPP and the Kharkov conference, but also an inheritance from the earlier modernistic literature. The second period from 1934 to 1941, known as 'the new realism', was under the direct influence of the doctrine of socialist realism and in it the orthodox pragmatism of the earlier social literature was changed somewhat. A more positive attitude was taken to tradition and realism was accepted as the basic literary method. But, regardless of the differences which exist between social literature as a movement in the narrow sense and the new realism, what is certain is that their stylistic and theoretical bases were identical

in essence and that they were linked with an attempt to act from an aesthetic platform in whose foundations were the ideas of dialectical materialism and Marxist populism.[8]

At the moment when it came to a politicisation of the avant-garde, the political left in Yugoslavia found itself in a particularly unenviable situation. As early as 1920 the Communist Party had been outlawed following the assassination of the minister Milorad Drašković committed by one of its members. Its leadership was abroad. Many of its members, because of illegal political actions, were imprisoned, while the party was split by fractionary struggles. Fierce ideological conflicts were taking place both among those members of the party at liberty and those who were in prison. The movement of social literature, in these circumstances, was subordinated to the political struggle and became its weapon. Once freedom of the press and freedom of speech became limited, the left wing began to avail itself of literary means and of an Aesopian language.

On the literary Left, during its early phase, several clearly defined literary groups were active: the surrealists (with their periodical *Nadrealizam danas i ovde*); 'the hard core' of social literature, gathered around the periodicals *Stožer*) and *Nova literatura* published in Belgrade and *Kritika, Literatura and Kultura* that were published in Zagreb; a group of so-called 'simulants of social literature' centred on the periodical *Socijalna misao*; and, lastly, a group of independent writers, among whom was Miroslav Krleža, the most independent of them all, the forerunner and creator of social literature who was, later, to engage in fierce and uncompromising conflict with the group that formed its 'hard core'. The polemics between the members of these various groups took place on the pages of the above mentioned periodicals as well as some others. However, due to a lack of information on the theoretical bases of the conflicts among the European Left, these discussions were often lacking in academic dignity and, in the words of the Croatian literary critic Vlado Madjarević, amounted to 'banal and aggressive personal settling of accounts and defamatory, politically coloured "Balkan squabbles"',[9] whose results continued to be felt even after the Second World War.

Summing up the basic characteristics of social literature during its first period, Radovan Vučković in the forward to his book *Modern Trends in Literature* describes it thus: 'Though grown out gradually from a multitude of contradictions, through discussions, polemics and disagreement, it attained a massiveness that no movement in Yugoslavia before it had ever had. It spread across the whole country... All changes in style that began to take place as early as the middle twenties, led to a respect for reality, to a desire to portray artistically social conflicts and to overcome the solipsistic and abstract style of Expressionism and similar movements. At the very beginning of social literature the frontiers were not strictly

[8] Stanko Lasić, Op. c., pp. 33-40.
[9] Vlado Madjarević, *Književnost i revolucija,* August Cesarec, Zagreb 1974, p. 63.

demarcated: there was a desire to synthesize the avant-garde technique of their forerunners with the ideology of revolutionary politics. At that time brief documentary reportage on the plight and humiliation of the lower classes was of more importance and relevance than the theme of the arrogance of the rich. Themes from proletarian life were dominant, as were descriptions of factory floors and suburban housing estates.'[10]

A representative example of this literary movement should be the almanac of Yugoslav social poetry *Knjiga drugova (The Book of Comrades*), edited by Jovan Popović and Novak Simić. Published January 6th 1929, on the very day of the abolition of the constitution and the proclamation of a dictatorship, the almanac was banned on the day it appeared and many of its contributors were arrested and hailed before the courts. The editors demanded that every poem offered for publication in the almanac should be 'strictly social', but that account would also be taken of its literary value. A glance at the almanac's contents and at the titles of the poems is sufficient to make it clear what were the dominant themes of social literature and that among the published poems there were more 'strictly social' than poems of literary value. Here are the titles of some of the poems published in either Serbo-Croat or Slovene: *The Proletarians, The Banners of the Crushed, Streets, The Peasants, Factories, The Miner, The Singing Miners, The Song of a Working Man's Son*, *The Suburb, Hunger, Working Class Wives, A Miner's Christmas, A Miner on the Jetty, Waggoners, The Morgue for the Paupers, The Land of an old Peasant, The Song of a Bricklayer, Small-town Landscapes, The Songs of the Chimney-sweeps, The Suffering Tribe, Down with the Masks, To a Worker, The Mother of Future Generations, Song of the Twentieth Century, Dawn Breaks*.[11]

Much attention was paid to foreign literatures. From December 1928 till March 1930 the periodical *Nova literatura* came out in Belgrade. Its editorial board counted many foreign artists and scholars: Albert Einstein, Maksim Gorky, George Grosz, Panait Istrati, E. E. Kisch and Upton Sinclair. The periodical was addressed 'to the active forces of thinking youth'[12] in its struggle against 'conservative paralysis and economic oppression',[13] and, apart from contributions from Yugoslavia, included contributions by Barbis, Brecht, Dreiser, Eisenstein, Gorky, Hašek, Jack London and Sinclair as also artistic reproductions by Daumier, Gross, Picasso and Corbusier. The Publishing house *Nolit*, which was run by the same group, published works of a large number of left oriented writers, especially American, Russian and German.

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[10] Radovan Vučković, *Moderni pravci u književnosti,* Prosveta-Nolit-Zavod za udžbenike, Beograd, 1984, pp. 43-45.
[11] Vasilije Kalezić, *U Krležinom sazvježdju,* August Cesarec, Zagreb 1982, pp. 241-42.
[12] Vasilije Kalezić, Op. c., p. 15.
[13] Ibid., p. 15-16.

The changes which arose in social literature with the transition to the phase of socialist, that is 'new' realism, around 1934, did not lead merely to the ignoring of the experimental in the sphere of literary form and the insistence on an extremely realist portrayal of literary themes. The attitude to the literary hero also changed. In prose works attention was rarely directed towards a central 'hero', but several personages appeared in parallel, equally bearing the main theme. Writers ceased to direct attention to the psychological element of personality, but generally defined characters by their occupation and by the milieu from which they came and in which they acted. Naturalistic detail was also avoided and the aim was to portray the 'typical'. 'Artistic facts indicate the essential phenomena that oppressed the artist and it seemed as if he feared to enter upon the various aspects which would render visible the complexity and contradictions and so draw attention away from and betray the essential theme... In poetry there was mainly a wafting of the bleak breath of dissatisfaction that the personality, bound by the circumstances of its milieu and of its time was unable to spread its wings, to experience the vital passions, sorrows and disappointments which human nature and fate demand and offer. Even the ecstasies of love were overshadowed by the sufferings of others and the lovers start at the roar of the cannonade of the Spanish Civil War or else their loves are marred by thoughts of the unfortunate to whom society has refused the pleasures of living. There is little joy or happiness, yet still there is no place for pessimism. Optimism lies in the poetic flow that bears the faith and hope that the indicated causes for gloom shall be destroyed.'[14] For this reason both prose and poetry are redolent of 'revolutionary rhetoric'.

Since the aim was to present the themes taken from contemporary life in the simplest possible manner, so as to be accessible to the broadest mass of readers, special attention was paid to language. Clearly efforts were made to follow the instructions of a document of the Communist Party issued in 1934 entitled 'The Resolution concerning the Press and Literature', in which it is noted with dissatisfaction 'that writers use an insufficiently popular language' which is 'insufficiently comprehensible' not only to the 'broad masses' but also 'to the less educated Party members'.[15] One of the leading literary theorists of social literature, the erstwhile surrealist Djordje Jovanović, affirmed that 'the spoken language is becoming a completely faithful expression of reality, not merely a tool by which it is depicted, but a significant fact about reality itself... The main thing is that style should no longer be considered an unfathomable mystery of an alchemy of words and metaphor, a mystery which has hitherto often portrayed reality itself as an unfathomable mystery.'[16] In order to strengthen the illusion of reality a wide lexical diapason was employed - not merely words and expressions from

[14] Slobodan Ž. Marković, *Književni pokreti i tokovi izmedju dva svetska rata,* Obelisk, Beograd, 1970, p. 118.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Quoted from Slobodan Marković, Op. c., p. 118-119.

everyday life, but from scientific literature, from the speech of various professions, political jargon and street slang, and all this in order to fulfil the stylistic slogan of Maxim Gorky that the language of literature should be clear, precise and penetrating, in such a way as to establish a link with the broadest possible number of readers.

One of the greatest paradoxes of social literature in Yugoslavia lies in the fact that its 'forerunner and creator' and, without doubt, its greatest literary name, the Croatian writer Miroslav Krleža, never belonged to it. From the time of his early, as he termed it, 'romantic Marxism', Krleža was clearly defined as a Leftist, close to the communist movement. But the narrow and ill-informed pragmatism of his self-styled pupils and followers irritated him to so a great an extent that during the period under review in this lecture, he took no part in a single leftist literary paper or magazine in which editors or contributors were social writers or in which the communist party had any influence. Instead, he founded and edited his own periodicals (which were generally of short duration) often filling them almost entirely with his own contributions, with the support of a handful of 'independent marksmen' and the few surrealists who did not lean to the concept of social literature. For the writers who were populistically inclined, on the other hand, Krleža's unwillingness, when writing of literature, even to mention classes and the meaning of social struggle, as also his denial of the wider accessibility of art to the masses and of any influence of art on the masses made him one with those who denied to art any social revolutionary role whatsoever.

Concerning Krleža's relations with the supporters of social literature, with the Communist Party and with Tito there is an extensive literature and it is the subject that requires its own separate and thorough treatment. I must, however, no matter how superficially, touch upon two key episodes in the complex confrontations which gave basic characteristic to what was later to be called 'the conflict on the literary Left'. The reference is to the events linked with two of Krleža's texts; the first published as a forward to the *Podravski motivi (Podravian Motifs*) by Krsto Hegedušić of 1933 and the second, *Dijalektički antibarbarus (The Dialectical Antibarbarus*), published as a complete volume of Krleža's periodical *Pečat* in 1939. Beside Hegedušić's 34 sketches which portray village life in the Drava valley as a series of comments on bleak, toilsome and poverty-stricken reality, Krleža added some five pages in which, only at the very end, did he refer to Hegedušić and his work, having first expressed his own ideas concerning art and painting in general.

Some of these ideas cannot have been for his colleagues, the social writers, matters for controversy. For instance, Krleža rejected the idea of the beautiful as something 'supernatural', divine or mysterious; he accepted the view that tendentiousness in art was as old as art itself and that it expressed the totality of life and of man - as well as ideologies, religious views, and fashions and artistic tastes and programmes. Yet, at the same time, Krleža spoke of the surprising qualities of art, of the mysterious by which our excitements of

'today' and 'then' are carried over 'through the centuries' and continue to live 'just as intensively as they existed today'. He affirmed that 'everything was once, that the phenomena and concepts close like the closing of circles, that artists are born by natural forces like husks on the wind, and that artists are stirred in their own personal helplessness, speaking to us like living graves, that the life forces flow through our flesh, through our ideas as the sun's rays flow through plants and animals'. He saw 'the basic inspiration' in all art as 'fear of everything that lives before the fact of annihilation in the ephemerity of time'. He particularly emphasised 'the animal significance of our lives' and the struggle of art against it as also the cult of strength that dominates in art 'through the ages'. For him art is the expression of the gifted individual and of complex life and the 'subjective feature' in artistic creation is 'the one and only signpost, like the sense of smell for the dog and instinct for all beasts'. He rejected 'rational resolutions' and 'directives', the primacy of the will in creativity, 'programmes', 'aesthetic systems' and 'tendentious dogmas'. To the class function of art Krleža opposed - 'irrationality' and 'gut feeling'; to ideological programmes - 'the movement of the bowels', 'instincts' and 'nerves'; to the will and reason - the eternal turning in circles and the hopelessness, the temperament and talent. This theoretical discussion was not, be it said in passing, bereft of a personal and even insulting tone: 'Dithering with phrases from dialectical materialism, under the mask of a fictitious artistic Leftism, the public is mystified by those who write of things of which they lack the most elementary understanding, such pens serve only to compromise the clear and positive artistic ideas and principles that are dear to us to allow them to be distorted by incompetent hands.'[17]

Krleža did not have to wait long for the reply of the 'materialistic star-gazers'[18] as he sarcastically called, in a moment of polemical fervour his ill-learned colleagues. In the fourth number of the Zagreb periodical *Kultura*, began in the same year, 1933, behind which was the communist party, there appeared an article entitled *Quo Vadis, Krleža?,* signed by the initials A.B.C., which concealed Bogomir Herman, the author of numerous texts distinguished by their polemical zeal. He minced no words in dealing with Krleža. In Krleža's writing and in his literary ideas, Herman found 'an obvious move to the right' and in his attitude to 'the concrete events and problems of space and time' - 'an aristocratic indifference, a reaction and support for Art for Art's Sake.' His conclusions regarding the class function of art were erroneous and his attack on social literature 'absurd' and 'reactionary', although, as Herman admits, 'our young friends' have committed 'large errors of principle in their treatment of the problems of artistic creation'. Although social literature is 'the most important event in our literary sphere', Krleža has no idea whatsoever 'of this perspective of the future'.' 'Rather

[17] Miroslav Krleža, 'Predgovor Podravskim motivima Krste Hegedušića', Eseji i putopisi, Matica hrvatska-Zora 1973, pp. 195-225. See also, Vasilije Kalezić, Op. c., pp. 102-108.
[18] See, Vasilije Kalezić, Op. c., p. 107.

disastrous for Krleža is also the fact that all this goes on despite him, for he should have been its main bearer and interpreter... Full of love for the living and faith in life, we continue on our way with Krleža or without him and, if necessary, against him',[19] Herman concluded.

Herman's attack on Krleža had wide repercussions and faced the Communist Party itself with considerable problems. Krleža was too valuable to be lightly dispensed with and there was an immediate effort to avoid such a danger. In the following number of *Kultura* there appeared a 'Letter to the editor' from 'a group of writers of social literature',[20] in which a lecture, in tone of superiority, was read both to Krleža and to his opponents. Though admitting that they themselves 'comprehend little of the finesses of high style',[21] the authors of the letter in a tone of some reconciliation set the balance between the two opposing sides, dividing both objections and recognition between the two. Literary historians who have examined this subject more closely consider that the supposition that this letter 'stemmed from the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the General Secretary or other important party leaders'[22] to be not without foundation.

Following the publication of this letter for a time nothing more appeared on the subject of Krleža's conflict with the social writers. Krleža's rejection of the invitation from *Kultura* to reply to its attack may have been seen by the Party as 'a compromise and an acceptance of reconciliation'.[23] All the same, the conflict was far from at an end: 'it remained beneath the surface, apparently settled, forcibly repressed only - at the first possible moment - to break out once more'.[24] This occurred at the beginning of 1934 when, in Belgrade (together with Milan Bogdanović) Krleža began the periodical *Danas,* which was banned after its fifth number. In its second issue, for February, the surrealist poet and theoretician Marko Ristić took up Krleža's defence in an article entitled *Jedan nov primer* nerazumevanja dijalektike (A.B.C.)' (Another Example of the Misunderstanding of *Dialectics. (ABC)),* while Krleža himself turned arrogantly and polemically against Herman's article already in the first number of his periodical with the text *Najnovija anatema moje malenkosti (Yet Another Anathema upon My Humble Self).* 'All these gentlemen, magnates, litterateurs and Pharisees, these legitimate representatives of all our ‘lords and commoners’ saw fit to sign and publicly to announce: in the name of God and our ancestral traditions and of Croatian nationality, in the name of Marx and Marxism, of our social literature and faithful, socio-literary Left, in the name of higher morality and metaphysical beauty as much as in the name of social tendentiousness in literature... that I, unworthy among even our right and left mortals the most unworthy toiler and

[19] See, Vasilije Kalezić, Op. c., pp. 109-112.
[20] Ibid., p 112.
[21] Ibid., p. 113.
[22] Ibid., p. 117.
[23] Ibid., p. 118.
[24] Ibid.

slaver, am unworthy to live and exist, be it in literature or morally.' Addressing the 'one-eyed *Kultura*' (where Herman had published his attack on him) Krleža announced that he was 'tired of watching the intellectual monkey-tricks that pretend to be a volcano and, if I give its childish, dialectical pot a good kick, I shall have a perfect right, since I have remained patiently silent for a full six years, constantly provoked by these bothersome children that shout in the first fever of a miasmatic enthusiasm and who speak of things of which they have no understanding so loudly and so unoriginally, that it is high time they were told to stop their childish racket.'[25]

After the banning of *Danas* more was said of the controversy between social writers in party documents than in public organs, but it is symptomatic that in the left periodicals in both Zagreb and Belgrade, both legal and illegal, Krleža's name cannot be found among the list of contributors. On the other hand he, in February 1939, in Zagreb, began a new periodical, *Pečat,* which in its first double number recommenced the counter-attacks begun in *Danas.* Krleža's programmatic article *Svrha Pečata i o njojzi besjeda (The Aim of the Pečat and a Discussion of it*), begins with the statement that 'the state of our literature is pathetic'.[26] 'The mulish mentation and pettifogging of scribblers over the dead word, that is our "literature" of today... In the general chaos surrounding the concept of beauty in recent times there has appeared also the phrase “social literature". Let us be realistic! For example, what use can the so-called social literature have from such strict literary arbitrators as...'[27] and Krleža mentions by name several of its most prominent representatives, likening them to a group of the most right-wing intellectuals while, at the same time, attacking the left-wing periodical *Naša stvarnost*. This, together with other writings published in *Pečat*, provoked a barrage of violent attacks from almost all the left-wing periodicals (*Mlada kultura, Umetnost i kritika, Naša stvarnost* and *Izraz*). Even the General Secretary of the Yugoslav Communist Party wrote in the Party organ Proleter extremely critically and with great acerbity of certain contributors to *Pečat* (Ristić, Richtman and Bogdanov). Although he did not mention Krleža by name, this article was undoubtedly meant as a warning to him.[28] Krleža, on the other hand, in the June number of *Pečat* published a 'Statement'[29] in which he expressed complete solidarity with his contributors and rejected all accusations made against them. At the end he announced that, in one of the following numbers of the periodical, he would publish 'a final analysis of these pathetic phenomena'.[30] This 'final analysis' was the 160 pages long *Dialectical Antibarbarus* which filled the entire double issue of *Pečat* for December 1939. Krleža not only again

[25] Ibid., pp. 254-255.
[26] Ibid., p. 260.
[27] Ibid., p. 261.
[28] Ibid., p. 263.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid., p. 264

defended his contributors and attacked the writing of rival periodicals, but indirectly set himself against even the General Secretary of the Communist Party himself. In addition to this and with extreme acerbity, with sarcasm and belittlement, he squared accounts with almost all the representatives of social literature, surrendering himself uncontrollably to his pamphleteering euphoria. For Krleža his opponents are: 'insane liars', 'illiterates and ignoramuses', 'literary vampires', 'the nigh-owls of various left and half-left periodicals', 'barbaric scribblers', 'mannequins', 'dwarfs' and suchlike. Their writings are 'so-called dialectical mischieviousness', 'monumental vacuities', 'rotting material', 'the abstract schematics of a brain incapable of expression, in other words, of thought.' None of them 'has an idea, for they are deaf and blind to such things and, by all appearances, will remain so to the grave.'[31]

To Krleža's 160 pages of text the Party replied with 311 pages of its own, the whole of the collection of articles entitled *Književne sveske*, published in the summer of 1940 in Zagreb. Apart from attacks on Krleža which had appeared earlier and were reprinted here, several new works had been specially written. Among the authors who constituted the political and literary elite of the Communist Party (Edvard Kardelj, Milovan Djilas, Koča Popović, Ognjen Prica, Otokar Keršovani, Stefan Mitrović) was the Bulgarian Marxist Todor Pavlov. All their texts were directed against Krleža as the main propagator of ideas that were contradictory to the Party line.

With the publication of *Književne sveske* a period of conflict on the literary left came to an end. Krleža was silent and soon the war broke out and interrupted all literary activities of this type. Discussions on this theme would be resumed only after the war in entirely changed circumstances and would end with a victory for Krleža's ideas only after the break of Yugoslavia from the countries of the Eastern bloc in 1948. But this is another story!

[31] Ibid., pp. 265.

Tradition and Change in Serbian and Croatian Prose (1945 - 1966)

The literature of the post Second World War Yugoslavia presents a certain paradox. At a moment that was far from propitious for great artistic ventures, there appeared works that are among the most remarkable in all Yugoslav literature. In 1945, in his novels *Na Drini ćuprija (The Bridge on the Drina)* and *Travnička hronika (Bosnian Story)*, Ivo Andrić (1892-1975) created that epic evocation of the history of a people whose destiny was worked out on the windswept area between East and West, a contribution that was to bring him the Nobel prize for literature in 1961. These novels were, however, met with a relative silence – almost certainly a calculated lack of interest. Written during the war, yet infinitely removed in subject matter from those events of blood and pain, his books were beyond the central concern of the critics. Literary criticism of that time centred upon those works which endeavoured to alter literature according to the laws which altered the life describing it.

At about the same time, another eminent writer, Miroslav Krleža (1893-1981), in his essay *Literature today*, addressed a word of warning to writers: “Literature ought to pose the question: are there genuine and profound causes for all that exists, and the way that it exists?” But it is evident that this moment was in no way a time of ‘genuine’ and ‘profound’ causes in the history of Serbian and Croatian literature, nor could it have been. It was an age, above all, of political activity, and writers were not only expected, but indeed required, to continue to be committed soldiers in the revolution, merely exchanging the rifle for the pen. Unfortunately, the concept of committal in that time of far-reaching social metamorphosis was misinterpreted: empty slogans were worth more than complex accounts of life; hackneyed phrases carried more weight than efforts to examine the harsh and bitter pain of the truth from various sides; literature was subordinated to propaganda, political instructions and ideological utility, scant in ideas, with simplified phychology and formal poverty. The prose produced in the first post-war years (1944-1950) remains barren evidence of the fallacy that a dictated aesthetic, regardless of aims behind it, can creatively enrich literature by bringing it to what is, aesthetically speaking, an atmosphere of rarefied air and limited horizons. Shallow illustration triumphed over imagination; pale, one-dimensional description triumphed over genuine creativity. The warnings of ‘extreme formalism’ and ‘lack of direction in thought’ rose up as a threat to any who might attempt to return literature to the essential qualities it had forsaken.

At the same time, however, there were voices that opposed such narrowly conceived and poorly realized literary pragmatism. There were writers who were aware that they would serve their country and its literature far more usefully if they spoke out in their own voices, if

they added to the volumes of pale socialist-realist chronicles their attempts to see life in a more individual way.

The Croatian writer Petar Šegedin (1909-1998), for example, was an exceptionally sensitive and contemplative novelist who synthesized the introspective searchings and webs of reminiscences of his characters with a penetrating analytic intellect. He was concerned with a world very far removed from revolutionary pathos, wartime heroism and consequent narrative banality. In his novel *Djeca božja (Children of God,* 1946) the author dissected the inner worlds of his characters, who were burdened by religious prejudice, hopeless fear, hallucination, dreams and repression. *Osamljenici (The Lonely*, 1947) is a fine micropsychological study of the impossibility of human contact – personalities hopelessly shut off, doomed to morbid self-examination and barren half-existence.

Ranko Marinković (1913-2001) appeared in his collection of short stories *Proze (Prose Pieces,* 1948) as a merciless satirist of human stupidity and hypocrisy, a penetrating analyst of the closed and poisoned petit-bourgeois atmosphere in which his characters live. In the collection of stories *Bezimeni (The Nameless*, 1945), by Ivan Dončević (1909-1982) one can begin to perceive the dilemmas facing revolutionaries when their fight was over.

At the end of the 1940s, Yugoslavia was forced to make a decisive step on the path towards its final poliltical independence. The extent to which literature and politics were closely interwoven is seen in the fact that, following behind politics in some instances, Yugoslav literature gradually came to stand on its own feet. Not without resistance and bitter conflict, it succeeded in recovering its lost and injured dignity. With a new consciousness of involvement, it began to function as a passionate, harsh witness of its age. The break came in the early 1950s. In December of 1949, at the Second Congress of the Association of Yugoslav Writers, Petar Šegedin gave a paper *On Literary Criticism*, and in it, he pledged himself, among other things, to “dignified discussion among men”. At last, some sort of free dialogue began to assert itself, and literary magazines and journals ceased to be quasi official organs in which literary decrees and unrefuted prejudices were voiced; they became increasingly and more openly the battle-fields of opinion, conflicting principles, sharply opposed viewpoints.

A short time after Šegedin’s paper, Mihailo Lalić’s (1914-1992) novel *Svadba (The Wedding,* 1950) appeared. Some critics immediately grasped the transitional significance of this work. Although far from being a masterpiece, *Svadba* brought into the world of literature more complex, unpredictable characters who were primarily human beings and only then heroes. But the real, complete change of direction was brought a year later by Dobrica Ćosić’s (b.1921) novel *Daleko je sunce (Far is the sun*, 1951). Although it was only the first novel of a talented writer, this book showed, by its example of bold confrontation with the moral dilemmas that tormented those who took part in the revolution, the untapped wealth inherent in a genuinely commited literature. Without pathos, without insisting on the ‘positive hero’,

without clouding the truth, Ćosić told the story of the fate of a partisan unit, undermined by disagreement and disillusion, which while retreating, gradually disintegrates. This work opened the doors to 'new possibilities of freedom' in post-war Yugoslav prose, and became the first of a whole series of narrative works in which literature no longer was life's pale reflection, but rather its passionate and pained interpretation.

However, *Svadba* and *Daleko je sunce* represented only occasional eruptions, bold gestures that enriched the material of literature, a rupture with the idealized picture of a world in the process of being built. They did not bring artistic originality or anything formally different and new. Clumsily composed, with obvious traces of an uncertain hand, far from capably dissecting the intricate inner workings of the consciousness (and conscience), these works today have primarily literary-historical significance. But the critics have always found it difficult to speak of them without sentimentality and without conscious critical leniency.

Oscar Davičo's (1909-1989) novel, *Pesma (Poem*, 1952), was able to a far greater extent to satisfy the hunger for new content and new means of expression. An exciting drama of the revolution unfolds in the atmosphere of the German occupied Belgrade, through which the writer establishes his definition of the 'new revolutionary'; free and responsible, consciously subordinated to the aims of the revolution, who fights for his ideals as an independent, creatively inspired, complete human being. This polyphonic, richly layered novel is composed by the most varied creative methods. Inspired poetic passages succeed expressive expository analysis; inner monologues and unrestrained rhythms of association break up the narrative; detailed analysis of the psyche follow introspective meditation; the urgency of the revolutionary action alternates with youthful awakening of sensuality.

The war and the revolution became less and less ends in themselves in literary works; rather, they formed a framework within which questions could be asked about the integral nature of the revolutionary human being and the value of human life in revolution. The boundaries of subject matter and literary technique became quite wide.

Vjekoslav Kaleb (1905-1996), who wrote the novels *Divota prašine (The Glorious Dust*, 1954) and *Bijeli kamen (The White Stone*, 1955) not only deals with specific events of the war, but treats the inner psychological reality of man in such a way as to invest it with the strength of a symbol for the eternal human quest for progress. With an evocative metaphorical technique, Vojin Jelić (1921-2004) concentrated in his novel *Andjeli lijepo pjevaju (Angels Sing Beautifully*, 1953) on the disturbance of the human psyche when brother rages against brother. In *Prolom (The Rapture*, 1952) and *Gluvi barut (Deaf Gunpowder*, 1957), Branko Ćopić, the most outstanding traditionalist in Serbian literature, attempted to create broad frescoes of revolutionary events in his native Bosnia. Without investing his work with deeper imaginative transpositions of reality, he reproduced phenomena which, in individual detail, recall the best of the naturalistic technique. The short story writer Antonije Isaković (1923-

2002) is undoubtedly the most subtle chronicler of the war years. He learned his concentrated narrative style from Hemingway and has removed from his stories, published in the collections *Velika deca (Big Children*, 1955) and *Paprat i vatra (Fern and Fire*, 1962) all admixtures of pathos and naturalism. Erih Koš (1913-2010) brought to life, in his novel *Il Tifo* (1958), the atmosphere of terror and egoism which characterized a partisan unit composed of former Italian soldiers. The dilemma of the intellectual in the city is the prime interest of Aleksandar Vučo (1897-1985) in his novels *Raspust (Holidays*, 1954) and *Mrtve javke (Dead Contacts*, 1957), where the inner moral contradictions of the main character, who attempts to gain admission to a world that is in direct conflict with his class, are exemplified. Mladen Oljača (1926-1994) returned to the revolution in his novel *Molitva za moju braću (A Prayer for My Brethren*, 1957) and in a few retrospective scenes, endeavoured to show to what extent the war is responsible for distorted human relations. The phenomenon of the Četniks as the product of the nationalistic Serbian myth is the subject of *Deobe, I-III (Divisions, I-III*, 1961) by Dobrica Ćosić. Although marked by a lack of stylistic discipline, this work flows like a wide river, cuts across by copious metaphorical driftwood, stream of consciousness, epic narrative and realistic description.

Mihailo Lalić (1914-1992) has written one of the finest novels, possibly the only one genuinely great, about man and revolution. His *Lelejska gora (The Wailing Mountain*, first version 1957, second 1962) is not only one in a series of books about the war, it is 'the allegorical expression of the metaphysical solitude of man'. Lado Tajović, the main character of this work, has been abandoned in enemy territory, exposed to constant pursuits, in perpetual fear of being captured. Increasingly close to despair, he becomes gradually dehumanized. Reduced more and more to his animal essence, to the blind instinct for survival, Lalić's hero formulates the vital question of his solitary existence: is it possible for a man in an inhumanly cruel time to remain human and survive, without himself taking on those norms and threaten his life and his essential humanity? Lalić concludes his tragic vision on the healing accents of hope. Only a writer of truly great gifts could, without detriment to his writing, finish this turbulent, contradictory and complex narrative with the image of a defeated man who nonetheless feels himself triumphant.

Stories and novels of village life gave earlier Serbian and Croatian literature its particular tone. Although there were authors writing of the village who contributed valuable works, like Ćamil Sijarić (1913-1989), with his novel *Bihorci (The People of Bihor*, 1955) and the collection of short stories *Naša snaha i mi momci (Our Sister in Law and Us Lads,* 1962), the majority of contemporary writers return to village subjects with far greater ambitions. Their intentions are to reveal the roots of the national myth and the genesis of urban life – Dobrica Ćosić with his *Koreni (Roots*, 1954); to trace the tragic existence on the land by establishing the relation of village to town – Mirko Božić (1919-1995) with his novels *Kurlani (The Kurlans*,

1952) and *Neisplakani (The Grieving*, 1955); and to search for the elemental instincts of man in his natural state – Slobodan Džunić (1921-1998) in his novels *Vinograd Gospodnji (The Lord's Vineyards*, 1959) *and Pagani* (*The Pagans*, 1964).

Freedom of artistic expression, the rich possibilities in choice of material opportunities for the most varied literary experimentation have offered to contemporary literature in the 1960's Yugoslavia a powerful creative stimulus. Literature in general became increasingly permeated by the infectious breath of urbanization, while pathos and naïve optimism have virtually disappeared in the inescapable presence of sombre visions of life.

Ivo Andrić (1892-1975), Miroslav Krleža (1893-1981) and Miloš Crnjanski (1893-1977) constitute the 'great trio' of contemporary Serbian and Yugoslav literature. All three have enriched their opus in the post-war years with significant works.

Ivo Andrić's *Prokleta avlija (Devil's Yard*, 1955), the story of the tragic fate of a young man from Smyrna "who died once before his death", demonstrates once more the extent to which, as a chronicler of a distant time and milieu, Andrić remains nonetheless essentially free of all that is 'local' and confronts the universal question of human solitude.

Miroslav Krleža published his novel *Zastave (Flags*) in the Zagreb journal *Forum* in 1963-1965. Poet, short story writer, critic, diarist and essayist, and polemicist of great erudition, Krleža created his voluminous prose opus before the war. With equal force he declared himself against militarism, exposed the fateful conflicts of the generations, the liberal urban intelligentsia and the new moneyed aristocracy. *Zastave*, with a broad picture of Croatian urban society on the eve of the First World War as its axis, brings a new intensity to the conflict of two generations. Following them on their path to disillusion, the writer emerges once more as the unsurpassable poet of human illusions. This whole book is a kind of a dialogue between the insurgent and the conquered man, an account of how the rebel is defeated.

Miloš Crnjanski published his *Druga knjiga Seoba (Second Book of Migrations*) in 1962, thereby bringing to a conclusion the work he began with *Seobe (Migrations*) in 1929. In this long novel, the writer considers the tragic displacement of Serbs in Austro-Hungary during the reign of Maria Theresa. In the first part, he wrote of the fate of the Serbian military units who, under the Austro-Hungarian flag, guarded the frontiers of the empire against the Turks or scattered their bones over the battlefields of Western Europe. In the second part, he portrays the period when the Austro-Hungarian authorities wanted to turn soldiers into peasant farmers. His focal point is the resistance of three fighters to the threat to their rights as men. Within this historic framework, the writer illustrates the tragedy of a national destiny.

Vjekoslav Kaleb, Petar Šegedin, Vladan Desnica (1905-1967) and Ranko Marinković, each in his own way, all continue to work in the best traditions of psychological prose. Kaleb, the painter of the defeated and rejected, is trying to broaden his material by taking on urban

themes, suggesting beneath the surface description a web of subtle undercurrents. Šegedin is obsessed with discovering the meaning of human existence. He peoples his dense, evocative prose with deformed, disjointed psyches whose hidden substance he endeavours to penetrate. Marinković, in his novel *Kiklop (Cyclops*, 1965), portrays the period immediately preceding the Second World War, those regions of the modern world through which man roams alienated, intimidated, exposed to the crushing shadow of militarism. In the battle against man's illusions, this writer does not leave the possibility of believing in anything, of hoping for anything. Vladan Desnica, in his novel *Proljeće Ivana Galeba (The Spring of Ivan Galeb*, 1957), gives a subtle psychological study of the fate of a musician in a form almost entirely devoid of narrative. A book of potent contemplative force and penetrating introspection, Desnica's masterpiece is a 'novel of experience' whose discursive structure is given an impeccable coherence by the writer's preoccupation with the problem of existence in the philosophical sense.

While Oskar Davičo has attempted unsuccessfully to repeat the triumphs of *Pesma* with his novels of contemporary life, *Beton i svici (Concrete and Glow-worms*, 1956) and *Radni naslov beskraja (A Working Title of Eternity*, 1958), and the tetralogy *Robija (Captivity*, 1963-66), Erih Koš, in his satires *Veliki Mak (Big Mac*, 1956) and *Vrapci Van Pea* (*The Sparrows of Van Pe*, 1961) has exposed man subject to contemporary mass hysteria and gradual dehumanisation. Branko Ćopić, with partial success, has followed the difficulties of former peasant-soldiers in adapting themselves to the new urban life in *Osma ofanziva (The Eight Offensive*, 1965).

In Serbian literature, a whole list of young writers of the so-called 'middle generation' have affirmed themselves; Miodrag Bulatović (1930-1991), Vojislav Čolanović (b. 1922), Radomir Konstantinović (1928-2011), Momčilo Milankov (1924-1979), Aleksandar Tišma (1924-2003), Risto Trifković (1924-1992), Pavle Ugrinov (1926-2007), Žika Lazić (1933-2009) and others. Writers of different aesthetic alignment, they have, for the most part, confined themselves to the themes of everyday human experience. These attempts consciously eliminate all local determination and temporal coordinates by depicting existences that reach from mild solitary restlessness to the bestial satisfaction of criminal instincts. In the centre of this literature is man, small, lost, an utter failure. Half-existing in a grey world of boredom and emptiness, mercilessly devoid of deeper emotional content, he abandons himself to a flow of memories and musing wishes, endeavouring in this way to fulfil his unsatisfied desires. This world without hope or future. A world of the unusual in the everyday, irresistibly attracts these writers and prevents them from breaking out of a fascinating, but nonetheless cruelly limited circle.

Among them Radomir Konstantinović and Miodrag Bulatović stand out. Radomir Konstantinović is the most consistent avant-guardist in contemporary Serbian literature. While

his allegorial-biblical novels *Izlazak (Exitus*, 1960) and *Ahasver* (1964) are permeated by intellectual unrest, Miodrag Bulatović is preoccupied by the phenomenon of evil. This writer has brought into Serbian literature a dark, monstruous, unbalanced world of unbridled passions and crazed pain, and thereby becomes the generator of a contemporary literature of satanism that has its devotees among some of the younger writers: Mirko Kovač (b.1938), Branimir Ščepanović (b. 1937) and Andjelko Vuletić (b. 1933). In his novel *Heroj na magarcu (Hero on a Donkey*), published in a serial form in 1964 in the magazine *Savremenik,* Bulatović, while still preoccupied with violence, dissolution and human bestiality, has enriched his expression with overtones of grotesque satire and black humour.

The Croatian writers who belong to the corresponding generation – Slobodan Novak (b. 1924), Vojislav Kuzmanović (b.1930), Antun Šoljan (1932-1993), Ivan Slamnig (1930-2001), Čedo Prica (1931-2009), Krsto Špoljar (1930-1977), Fedor Vidas (b. 1924), Ivan Kušan (1933-2012) and others – have set out in directions that are in many ways very different. They are linked far more obviously to the soil from which they sprang and building a literature that is the expression of direct experience of life. Their prose is urbanized, but this is conveyed within a concrete and traditional framework. This is also true of those Croatians who use modern prose methods from American, English and French literature. In these works, reminiscences of childhood alternate with grey tones of contemporary urban landscape. Written for the most part in the first person, disciplined and harsh in expression, a little bizarre in relationship to the outer world, this writing focuses on young men, torn by youthful unrest, sceptical towards their surroundings, indifferent to the great questions of existence, inclined to aimlessness and frivolous waste of time, with deep-rooted habits and established conventions. When they resort to a naturalistic portrayal of the chaotic metropolis and when they are boldly non-conformist in their treatment of contemporary reality, these writers attempt to offer answers valid for a whole generation. Slobodan Novak is the outstanding writer of this group. Although *Tvrdi grad (The Hard City*, 1961) and *Novele (Novellas*, 1963) are fundamentally autobiographical, Novak's short stories are never diaristic. His preoccupation is with the war, the scars of which are still profoundly present.

In recent years, the fundamental tone has been set by the youngest writers; Danilo Kiš (1935-1989), Zvonimir Majdak (b.1938), Branislav Ščepanović, Mirko Kovač, Jozo Laušić (1936-2002), Radomir Smiljanić (b. 1934), Filip David (b.1940), Alojz Majetić (b.1938), Andjelko Vuletić, Borislav Pekić (1930-1992), Nenad Radanović (b.1938), Predrag Jirsak (1941-2011) and others. Their first books show that they have throughly mastered the technique of literary craft. Their choice of subject matter is very wide. While some observe the young man in the nightmare of the metropolis, resigned and subordinate to the apotheosis of solitude and the cult of pleasure; others are more drawn to the double level of allegory and symbol; still others return to their childhood as the theme suited to confessional searching for

identity; while some abandon themselves to the attractions of the bizarre, the strange and shocking. Beneath these most varied forms, however, one can see that all these writers are living according to the rhythm of their age and are committed to their age for their creative material. Their literature, with its expressly dark and even distorted picture of the world, among other things, reflects the conviction that we are living in a world where barriers of language and national frontiers are obstructions to man confronting himself.

There is no doubt that, by the serious nature of their preoccupations, the significance of their ideas and the maturity of their prose style, they have began to open new creative expanses which the increasingly dynamic democratization of Yugoslav life as a whole offers as its contribution to creative freedom.

Literature and Politics in Yugoslavia

In the immediate postwar period, and following the stabilization of the victorious Yugoslav revolution, the leading cultural arbiters used the whole party structure to bring cultural life strictly into the service of the revolution. Literature was subordinated to propaganda, political instructions and ideological utility. Cultural life was under the auspices of ideological commissions, whose functionaries censored literature at all levels, from recruitment of editors and editorial boards, to the selection and revision of texts. Even the 'progressiveness' of a writer was not always a guarantee that a book or a play would be accepted without any reservations by those whose way of thinking was dominated by the concept of ideology as a system of ideas that aspired both to explain the world and change it.

For example, the first postwar Yugoslav production of G. B. Shaw's (1856-1950) *Pygmalion* was banned in Novi Sad because the censors did not approve of Shaw's treatment of the working classes. Or, another example: an actor, playing the role of a priest in the Slovene classic play *Servants* by Ivan Cankar (1876-1918), was expelled from the Communist Party in Slovenia because the leaders of his local party committee decided that, as a communist, he should not play a priest. Moreover, his acting was so convincing that he was applauded more than his fellow actors who played the workers. Nadezhda Mandelstam tells in her memoirs about a similar situation in which Stalin had been involved. Having seen the Ukrainian actor Buchma playing the role of a traitor in a play so successfully, he asked Khruschov and Malenkov to take necessary measures, because, according to him, someone who can play the role of a traitor so well could not be anything else but a traitor in real life.

After the break with the Soviet Union in 1948, a new vision of culture started taking shape. It was built upon the concept of aesthetic pluralism in which the revolution was 'just a red thread' winding through it. The writers' unions ceased merely to transmit the party political decrees, and the creativity of an author increasingly became a matter concerning only himself, his publisher and his public. But there existed some important limitations. "Leave politics to us politicians, while we leave aesthetics to you writers. It is obvious which of these is more important", was a warning issued to the writers by Milovan Djilas (1911-1995) in 1952.

So, after 1955, the party no longer interfered in literary questions, as long as they were purely literary. But apart from some war novels, in which the myth of the revolution was challenged through the writers' illumination of the ethical dilemmas of the fighters imposed upon them by the conflict of ideology and the instincts of their inner humanity, literature of the time was a neutral reflector of its epoch. It lacked contemporary subject-matter, "an established socio-political national theme" (P. Palavestra). In addition to a popular conformist

literary formula, ‘the further into the past and away from the present the better’, the writers used various devices to protect themselves against the risks of touching sensitive topics, which, however, provided enough room for experimentation. In the words of Predrag Palavestra (b. 1930) “an expressive hermeticism of style and dense symbolism of the text” helped them create literature that “defended itself from vulgarity…by mastership of aestheticizing”. The literary critic Borislav Mihajlović (1922-1997) said, in December 1957, that Yugoslavia had some of the most abstract literature in the world.

A new qualitative development took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when a new tone was set by younger writers who gave a concrete form to the background of traumas and unrests which tormented the fictional heroes of their colleagues in their literature of neutral temporality. The call of the day became revival and tranformation of critical realism. Many writers who joined this new ‘black wave’ of contemporary fiction were engaged in an open critical dialogue with their time, leading the moral opposition against the appearance and permanence of evil in human life, and against social and political injustices in the surrounding world. The critical tones of these writers, whose works, in the main, represented the response of literature to the terror of ideology and history, were sometimes over-imbued with dark colours, the crudeness of street language and with naturalism. However, their realism was predominantly ethically and psychologically, and not ideologically motivated. Their publications did not absolutely have to follow the accepted ideological normes, but those found hostile or alien to Yugoslavia’s self-management system might have met with legal restrictions and many other difficulties.

The legislation in the area of literature and culture in general was rather complex. Pre-censorship had practically been abolished in the early 1950s, but the criminal code and the press laws stipulated in detail how publications could be incriminated by actions or writings contrary to, or critical of, unity, independence and state sovereignity, the Yugoslav socialist system, and senior state and party officials. Given such a legal situation, a form of self-censorship was practised. One of the postwar leading dogmatic critics, Velibor Gligorić (1899-1977), used to say cynically that he had never had any problems with censorship because, as he admitted, he had a very fine feeling for self-censorship. However, there were always writers who valued the genuine expression of their thoughts more than the letter of the law. Thus, some authors were prosecuted for their critical or otherwise incriminating writings, and their works were either ‘withdrawn’ from the bookshops or banned by courts.

Yugoslav socialism derived its legitimacy mainly from three ideological themes or ‘mythological structures’. The first one was the role of the Communist Party during the war and the struggle for independence after the break with the USSR in 1948. The second one was the alleged solution of the national question and the Party’s position as ‘the guarantee of social cohesion and political stability’. The third one, closely connected to the other two, was

a specific version of Marxism, the self-management system, as an alternative to both capitalism in the West and bureaucratic socialism in the East. These mythological themes were used, according to the Swedish sociologist Kjell Magnusson, both as 'legends' or 'sacred histories', with their heroes and villains, and as a distinct ideological style which dominated political life.

What happened in Yugoslavia in the late 1970s was that fundamental aspects of the ideological structure started to be questioned, and that a process of 'de-mythologization' reached all areas of political life. This process of secularization concerned both the content of ideology and the forms and language of ideology, touching upon all three sources of legitimation mentioned earlier. Since the late 1970s a formidable stream of books have been published reassessing important aspects of Yugoslavia's past and present, and challenging, both indirectly and directly, the ideological monopoly of the ruling party.

Other topics treated in this type of literature – either in fiction, poetry or in more scholarly works – are the mistakes and excesses of the war; the morally and politically dubious role the party took on many issues in the interwar period (such as the harassment and liquidation of its own top people, the support of the Stalin-Hitler pact, contact with extreme nationalist groups before and with the enemy during the war, and the way it seized power after the war). The purpose of these critical illuminations have been to show that on many occasions the party acted in ways which seemed opposite to its basic beliefs and claims on moral authority. In an increasing number of cases the personality of Tito himself and the myth of his infallibility has been brought into focus. Latent problems regarding the relationship between the arts and artistic criticism on the one hand and the ruling ideology on the other, have been brought to the surface repeatedly, whenever the central theme of a piece of writing concentrated on some social or political phenomena that were otherwise taboo, or has been involved in a criticism of personalities who were considered to be 'untouchable'.

To mention just a few examples: a series of novels exposing the ruthlessness of Yugoslav communists towards their former comrades and their families who, in 1948, sided or were suspected of siding with the Cominform and were sent to a penal colony on an Adriatic island called Goli otok, was met by hostile criticism on the part of some politicians and with enthusiasm by literary critics in the 1970s and early 1980s. Later, however, this subject gained its legitimacy and has been successfully treated in an increasing number of novels, memoirs and historical works. Another sensitive topic, the 'Dachau trials', the execution or life imprisonment of some Slovenian communists who survived the war as inmates of the German concentration camps, but were later accused of collaborating with the Nazis, has also been extensively treated both in fiction and history books, particularly in Slovenia.

Here are a few examples of the 'de-mythologizing' process mentioned above, as reflected in some literary works (not always of a particularly high aesthetic value) and the

events following their publication. The first 'case' may be seen as an illustration of a process in the course of which an isolated dissident voice turned into an official party (or even multi-party) chorus.

On April 1st 1977, Tanasije Mladenović (1913-2003), a sixty-five year old Serbian poet, a party member since before the war, and partisan commissar during the war (but expelled from the party in 1968, published his poem *Triptih (Triptych)* in the Belgrade fortnightly literary paper *Književne novine*. Some lines of the poem gave great offence to party officials, who accused the poet of 'Greater Serbian nationalism'. The proscribed lines run as follows:

"Serbia, poor and wretched…
Will you be able, as in time past,
To renew your strength with a sudden jolt?
Or will you, discouraged and feeble,
Left to the mercy of time,
Disappear among the mountains and the nations
And, in the final thunderstorm,
Torn to pieces by apocalyptic forces,
Sink in on your own self, sink to the bottom?
Serbia, be true to your own self,
And lift your flame as a guard
Against all kinds of weakness…

Mladenović believed that the initiator of the ensuing campaign against him was Josip Vrhovec, who was to be appointed to the post of Yugoslavia's foreign minister a few weeks later (on May 16th). Mladenović wrote to him a letter of criticism, copies of which were sent to other leading politicians. Mladenović complained that his poem had not been analysed "according to poetic standards and means", but that instead, all literary judgement was abandoned in order to throw his poem "into the mud of political reasoning".

Defending his poem, Mladenović claimed that "lies and slanders had been elevated to a 'method' in the political struggle and the political discrimination against a great number of persons". Must a poet be punished because he dared to write about his country and people, "about their trouble and misfortunes, without offending any other nation"?, asked Mladenović, adding that some high party officials had been preaching that "alas, the Serbian people, allegedly because of their 'numerical strength', have become a constant potential danger, producing Greater Serbian hegemony in an uncontrolled way".

It is not difficult, comparing this dissident voice of the late 1970s with what became the official policy of the Serbian Communist Party leadership in the late 1980s (as well as the

leitmotif in the political programmes of other, nationalist Serbian parties), to discover the common denominator. However, this sort of nationalist moaning and lamenting has not been an exclusive Serbian speciality. It could have been heard throughout Yugoslavia.

However, in its closing paragraphs, Mladenović's letter touched upon some wider, more sacrosanct concepts:

> "It is a well-known fact that there exists a group of leading people in our country who reject any idea of respecting what is today called bourgeois democracy, which is the achievement of the great French Revolution; they do this by shrugging their shoulders with contempt and scorn. They simply cannot understand a fact which has been accepted by Eurocommunism, that socialist democracy also 'includes' all achievements of the bourgeois-democratic revolution! They do not realize that there cannot be any real freedom without including the freedom of the individual, regardless of the fact that propaganda is repeated daily about existing freedoms and about the freest society in the world. There exists a huge gap between words and deeds. We must ask again: how could it happen that our new socialist society, since its initial phase, has became so faulty that we have permitted ourselves to get into a situation where - since the last war - freedom has been given to us as 'alms', instead of being a normal presupposition of the whole of our life?"

Mladenović concluded his letter to Vrhovec with the words: "Ergo, I am ripe either for a mental hospital or for a court case!" But it was not Mladenović who found himself in jail, but his fellow poet, Gojko Djogo (b. 1940), three years later. His story is the second, more dramatic example of how literature and politics confronted each other and clashed within the Yugoslav framework.

Djogo emerged as one of the leading figures in Yugoslav poetry when his book *Kukuta (Hemlock)* won, in 1978, a prestigious literary prize (Nagrada udruženih izdavača) established by a group of Belgrade publishing houses. Although stylistic and other debts show in his poetry, he never seems imitative because he has developed a highly personalized poetic idiom rooted in the poetical traditions of the Balkans and their folklore. Motifs from folk legends, fairy tales, rituals, folk wisdom, superstition, and the animal world combine to portray a drama of human misunderstanding and paradox. He finds in them symbols relevant to the collective destiny of his country. In the most natural way, the idiom of the poems acquires the language of the traditional folk literature, but it is used in a parodical and polemical vein. Past and present merge, divide and clash in Djogo's poetry. Its dominant notes of irony and parody alternate between protest and satire. Its message, uncompromisingly against tyranny,

sympathizes with human limitations. He examines critically the forces which undermine and diminish man's potential for dignified existence, and the poet's potential for creative survival.

When, in April 1981, his collection *Vunena vremena (Woolly Times)* was published, it was claimed (by some of his fellow writers from the Prosveta publishing house), that it contained lines not in the approved text, some of which seemed to refer to Tito. The book was banned, Djogo was imprisoned, and in June 1981 put on trial in the District Court of Belgrade. He was indicted for 'maliciously and mendaciously' depicting the social and political circumstances in Yugoslavia "by transparently alluding to and asserting in a specious way, that neither liberty nor democracy exists in this country, that ignorance and indolence have set in, that our society has no future, that our system is based on a reign of terror perpetrated by one person to whom everybody is subordinated, that no one is working and that everything is directed to the glorification of that person. The accused sought to deprecate the achievements of the peoples and nationalities of this country in the postwar building of socialism, negated the gains of our revolution, and grossly offended the values and symbols of our society". Six poems from the collection were singled out as particularly offensive.

In the Djogo case, literature and politics touched and confronted each other most directly and most dramatically. Djogo was the first poet in more than fifty years to be persecuted and imprisoned in Yugoslavia because of his poetry. Some poets found themselves in jail before and after him; however, that was not on account of their poems but their other - non-literary, journalistic or political - activities, qualified usually under Article 133 of the Criminal Code as 'hostile propaganda' as, for instance, had happened to the Croatian poet Vlado Gotovac (1930-2000).

Some of the 'charged' poems were indicted in the characteristic, propagandist manner of a political harangue:

> In his poem *Svetilište oca Crnboga (Temple of the God of Darkness)* he (Djogo) ridicules the state of affairs in this country … and… in a transparent allusion to the late President Tito, he adds: 'Our saint shall never die', and continues to describe how everybody, with the exception of those dead or in chains, dances around this saint singing hymns to his glory while he conceals a viper up his sleeve; he (Djogo) says that all, whites and blacks alike, listen to him as an oracle and that he has determined what the fate of everybody should be … In his poem *Ovidije u Tomima (Ovid in Tomi)* he likewise alludes to the negation of the symbols of our revolution. He says that everybody celebrated 'his' birthday, that these are 'his' times and that the reader waits for 'his' end, concluding that 'It would be better not to live at all than to live in his times …' In his poem *Zver nad zverovima (The Beast of Beasts)* he speaks of a 'big vicious bear', the self-appointed czar who with his iron teeth and

> army, following the urge of his beastly instincts, killed all who had displaced him, strangled at night his best friends and devoured his own children and now lies dead, while the witless animals, thinking that he is not dead but only resting, lick his paws fearing that he will rise and sit on the throne again. This represents a clear allusion to the late President Tito and constitutes a crass insult to his person and the feeling of our people towards him, being an assertion that respect for Tito is compelled by a reign of terror and is false… With the above the accused committed a criminal offence of hostile propaganda, as defined in Article 133 paragraph 1 of the Penal Code of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia."

At the end of the trial, Djogo was found guilty and sentenced to two years in prison. The sentence was later reduced to one year. In his letter of May 23rd 1983, addressed to the Serbian Writers' Association, Djogo gives a graphic account of his Kafkaesque situation after the book was pronounced to be hostile and was destroyed:

> "Like any drowning man I tried to clutch at straws: I contacted the chief editor of my book, expressing a wish to talk to him – he refused; I went to the session of the council which was deciding my fate – they did not let me in; I went to a party meeting – they threw me out; I wrote to the publisher and was deliberately misinterpreted; I wrote a letter to the newspapers – they did not publish it; nobody either invited me or asked me to say a single word. My cries fell on deaf ears, which is why I have come here."

While the Serbian Writers Association vigorously protested, trying to defend the imprisoned poet by sending letters to the Yugoslav Presidency and the Serbian Presidency, and by establishing a Committee for the Protection of Artistic Freedom, the book *Gojko Djogo's Case: The Documents* by the journalist Dragan Antić was banned, and all volumes seized from the publisher, Zapis of Belgrade, for the reason that it included extracts from Djogo's banned poems quoted in the indictment.

One of the 'guilty' poems, *Balada o cesarovoj glavi (The Ballad of the Caesar's Head)*, written 'in front of a bronze replica' reads as follows:

> "One heavy head
> cast in innumerable pieces,
> hard and obstinate – thinks for us.
> Every house, garden and street
> has their own head.
> One lead and zinc mine

and one large foundry in the capital
work just for this head.
So many heads
were toppled from their pedestals,
that this bronze one be screwed
on our shoulders,
so that we bend our backs beneath it,
Gods speak in vain
against the worshipping of dark idols,
in front of the bronze head kneel
solders and priests, servants and judges.
It is praised by the merchants at fairs
and by the sick in their beds.
Those who beg and steal
set aside a percentage for the head.
Owing to its dizziness
bananas are grown in Dalmatia.
We don’t worship the Saviour,
who changed stones into bread
for his people,
we have a similar head:
a teaspoon of its brain
feeds twenty million.
When we slaughter each other at the table,
its thunder reconciles victims and murderers.
While lightning shatters our bones,
it ignites the tar around our hearts,
which tremble with fear
in case the master head does not cool down.
If its battery goes flat,
what would all those heads do?

Those who remember yesterday,
know the end of the story:
They say, ‘Someone will lose his mind
and throw the head in a cauldron to boil,
even its skull will melt

and the Bronze Age will end.'

What of tomorrow
let someone else rack his brain,
the prophets have their relics and their glory,
but I prefer my own head.

As it happened, Djogo spent about three months in jail. During that time, weekly public poetry readings (eleven altogether) were organized by the Serbian Writers' Association to protest against the imprisonment, which was an unprecedented case in post-war Yugoslavia. This, combined with protests from abroad, forced the Yugoslav authorities to change their mind. Djogo was released from prison on the basis of poor health, but his sentence was never officially quashed. After a period of disgrace, he continued to publish his poetry, and his collection, *Izabrane i nove pesme (Selected and New Poems)* was published in 1986. However, *Vunena vremena* remained banned until 1992, when in the changed political climate it was reprinted by the Belgrade publishing house *Srpska književna zadruga.*

Explaining, in his letter to his fellow writers, his motives behind writing this kind of poetry, Djogo said:

> "Within a ten kilometer radius of Terazije, the circle beyond which Belgrade ceased to exist, I wanted fairy tales because for me they have the greatest beauty. I did not wish to write poems whose meaning could be understood only as poetry.
>
> But I have never had the intention of just recounting old themes; therein I looked only for archetypal forms, templates, whose imprints I recognized in our own times, for our fairy tales take place in the streets, in cafes, in playgrounds, in offices and assemblies, our mystical hero travels to the moon, shops in supermarkets and secretly deceives his wife… *Woolly Times* is a book of fear and its poems deal with one of the most terrible diseases of our time… No other time in history has driven so much fear into man, so much 'wool', as our time… I too am afraid and I speak in order to dispel my fear."

Djogo brings to his poetry strong values of compassion. But, having taken on the roles of judge and prophet, he often presents politics in a negative light, and it adds merely a darker shadow to a picture of life generally seen in dark colours.

After his release from prison, Djogo published the poem *Pakao i penkalo (Hell and Fountain Pen)*, dedicated “to the judges of the Supreme Court”. It is autobiographical and confessional in more than one way:

I used to have a pen
which sang and walked on paper
bragging about its letters.
It kept its spine straight
and followed its path
fearlessly.

It was disobedient and stubborn,
writing all sorts of things,
even against my will
- a very unrefined pen.

I sharpened it, ground it, pulled on its ears,
dipped it into imperial ink-pots,
pushed it with red ink
from my own veins,
just for it to see,
to be a pen with eyes,
with clairvoyant letters.
But it digressed more and more,
loitered both left and right, bumping into trouble.
The conceited pen of a fool
- I would relish flinging it to the floor.

I used to show it other pens:
‘Pelicans’, ‘Penguins’, ‘Parrots’
inlaid with gold and silver,
sometimes sporting lead shackles.
Wherever they wander,
the Milky Way trails.
- But look at my scribbling!

My pen can't bear to look,
but sets traps between the lines
to lead me astray.
A magpie is its mother, a blackbird its father,
since it's so black.

One day it broke loose
and flew to heaven.
Now it sings as a bird,
while old men plot against its life.

Now, the third example. When Dobrica Ćosić (b. 1921) published, in 1985, his novel *Grešnik (Sinner)*, in which he dared to expose the pre-war Yugoslav Communist Party as a crude dogmatic organization, completely subservient to the interest of the Comintern, his work was subjected to contradictory interpretations. For some it was a masterly recreation of a crucial episode in recent Yugoslav history; for others, almost an act of treason. *Grešnik* is the first part of a trilogy, the second part of which, *Otpadnik (The Apostate)*, appeared a year later, and the third, *Vernik (The Believer)*, in 1990. In all three novels Ćosić treats critically the phenomenon of Communist dogmatism.

It became more or less generally accepted that Yugoslav society must confront those negative social phenomena which were criticized by fiction writers, dramatists and poets; that a stable society should be able to meet challenges and criticize its own image. However, such general agreement did not exist when it came to deciding whether a work of art, overstepping the thin, sensitive line between the permissible and impermissible, should be banned or whether the political tendencies and messages conveyed in artistic form should be only exposed to political criticism. The situation differed from one part of the country to another and has often depended on the developments peculiar to Yugoslavia's political life, administrative division and general atmosphere dominating cultural life in main political and cultural centres.

One such event was the play *Golubnjača (Pigeon Cave)* by the Belgrade writer Jovan Radulović (b. 1951), about a group of delinquent children who like playing near a pit (called 'Golubnjača') in Hrvatska Zagora, into which the ustashas used to throw the orthodox Serbs after the executions in the Second World War. The play opened in October 1982 in the Novi Sad National Theatre, after having been rejected by the Belgrade theatre 'Boško Buha'. It was performed in Novi Sad for two months, and then banned under the pretext that it was spreading 'a strong nationalistic, greater-Serbian message', in spite of brave attempts by some theatre critics from Belgrade and Novi Sad to defend it and protect its artistic integrity. However, even after the banning in Novi Sad it continued to be performed in other parts of the

country. But after a performance in the Croatian town of Rijeka, two Novi Sad actors were expelled from the party for supporting this illegal play. Many details of the behind the scenes political machinations and the direct involvement of the leading Vojvodina politicians (about one hundred of them) in the banning of *Golubnjača*, were exposed only in December 1988, after the whole political leadership of the province was forced to resign under public pressure.

The Serbian literary critic Petar Džadžić (1929-1996) used a scene from Lenin's life to illustrate 'a paradigmatic aspect of this duality'. Referring to Beethoven's Appassionata as 'divine, superhuman music', Lenin said the following:

> "But I cannot listen to music often, it affects the nerves and I am caught up in the desire to speak tenderly and stroke the head of men who, living in a filthy inferno, can create such beauty. But today you must not stroke anyone's head for he will bite off your hand; you have to hit him on the head, hit him mercilessly, although we are, in principle, against any violence to people. Hm-hm – a devilishly difficult responsibility!"

"We see," says Džadžić, "how tactical needs and strategic concepts oppose each other and even conflict in one and the same thought", and continues:

> "The tactical need says it is necessary to strike. The strategic concept points to the need to abolish violence… This ability of Lenin's to define in one emotional thought, the occasional contradictions in the revolutionary's attitude toward art, was not typical of many of his successors who tried to pass themselves off as his followers. Lenin reveals the possibility of a double point of view in one man. One is the imperative of momentary needs – tactics. The other is the concept of the totality of the undertaking, supported by basic human values – strategy. This duality became the intimate drama of many revolutionaries and many revolutionary periods.
>
> When dogmatism acquired a severe form, this duality was abolished. The perspective of the epoch and the future of man were neglected in favour of the need of the day. Means, gaining an independence of their own, departed from ends.The attitude toward literature became a tactic without a strategy… The old dilemmas appear again."

In the early 1980s Yugoslavia became, as one political commentator put it, 'a publishing Eldorado'. Many taboo themes dealing with the party's or nation's recent past, or controversial memoirs of once prominent party leaders, appeared in print. Not only the articles of scandals, crimes, political 'affairs' and controversies, but even critical analysis of the party's economic, constitutional or national policy and the polemics on "such basic issues as the

future of democratic centralism and the rights of the Churches" (Pedro Ramet) became an everyday feature of the Yugoslav press. The slackness of political control increased the investigative ardour of journalists, but also led to sharp polemics between newspapers from various republican centres (particularly between *Politika* of Belgrade and *Delo* of Ljubljana, or *Oslobodjenje* of Sarajevo and *Politika* of Belgrade), in which the conflicting interests and policies of their respective republics were exposed. This has eventually developed into a series of 'press wars'.

Another form of open and free discussion, in which writers played an important part, and known as 'javne tribine' ('public forums'), gained in popularity at the same time, becoming, as 'the guardians of ideological purity' called them, 'rallying points for the political opposition'. Organized by various professional associations, institutions, schools, or libraries, these gatherings served as venues where the social and political issues were discussed with a surprising openness.

The most interesting aspect of the public forums is that they were not directly controlled by the party, and that the discussions were often dominated by various opposition groups. In Belgrade, for instance, the leading role was played by *Praxis* philosophers, people labelled as nationalists, but also some Orthodox theologians. This made some newspapers complain about an almost total absence and lack of interest in these discussions of leading party theorists, political scientists and philosophers, who were 'in a position to refute some of the unacceptable views and opinions'. But, at the same time, other influential people have defended public forums as 'an exceptional democratic achievement'. A number of writers have played prominent roles in some other non-literary activities: in the signing of petitions, membership of alternative political groups and bodies concerned with human rights, the defence of freedom of thought and expression, or combatting the trend 'towards ethical and territorial fragmentation' of the country (Yugoslav Democratic Initiative Association, founded on 10th January 1988 in Zagreb).

It should be noted that many 'hot' political topics have not been the exclusive domain of literature which, justifiably or unjustifiably, is described as 'serious'. Many of them have been 'taken over' and used by pop and rock musicians in their songs. They were given the most blatantly cynical treatment in the songs of 'the master of verbal terrorism', the pop singer Bora Djordjević (b. 1952). He is the leader of the Belgrade rock group *Riblja čorba (Fish Soup*), whose books and albums of songs have been bestsellers. When in one of his songs he claimed that 'only fools die for ideals' he caused an outcry, and many members of the war veterans' associations protested and asked for the album to be banned. There were even suggestions of putting him in jail. But, convinced that the enormous support of the young people throughout Yugoslavia rendered him 'untouchable', he has continued to challenge the

system with his humour and irony (although not always in good taste!) Commenting on his fans following him wherever he goes, he said in an interview:

> "They trust me, and I trust them. When I talk to them, they know it comes from the heart, and that I am telling them the truth. The Communist press attacks me from time to time, but it doesn't bother me, because I know what I am doing is right and not one of them can look me in the eye and tell me otherwise. I want to open people's eyes."

Asked to give an example of an anti-establishment song, he mentioned one called *Član mafije (Member of the Mafia)*, and continued:

> "It really means 'Member of the Party'. We sang the song to a Caribbean rhythm as if we were singing a Harry Belafonte number. In it we say,
>
> 'I don't want to be a member of the mafia.
> It's the wrong step…
> I don't need a piece of paper
> Where it's written that I am a member of the mafia
> Even if they put me in jail,
> I don't want to be a member of the mafia'.
>
> Earlier in 1985, we did a song about South Africa. Except that it wasn't really about South Africa. It was about Yugoslavia. Everything's a cover, but it is really simple to see through that cover."

Some politicians thought that they did. In an attempt to counter this widespread 'abuse of freedom of creativity' by some writers and intellectuals, the notorious *Bela knjiga (White Book)* was compiled in 1984 at the instigation of Stipe Šuvar, the then main Croatian party ideologue. The book incorporated a wide selection of texts written by 'enemies of socialism' (poems, short stories, essays, book reviews, articles, interviews etc), and published mainly in Belgrade and Ljubljana. In Šuvar's view, this widespread criticism of the party, the revolution, and the leadership constituted "nothing less than a 'spiritual counter-revolution', bolstered by a flood of petitions, committees for the defence of freedom, and the like". As such, this new phenomenon was seen by Šuvar as "clearly anti-Partisan, rightist, and part of a larger world-wide ideological crusade against socialism and communism orchestrated by neo-conservative forces". What Šuvar found particularly distressing was "the fact that even party members were among the signatories of various petitions, thus contributing to denunciations of the country

before the world". Šuvar saw such party members as a 'fifth column', and it was, he suggested, high time for the party to carry out ideological 'differentiation' and thus put its own house in order. (See Oscar Gruenwald, *Yugoslav Camp Literature: Rediscovering the Ghost of a Nations's Past-Present-Future).*

In earlier times, such accusations would have resulted in punitive sanctions. However, it did not take long for the *White Book* to become an object of derision and ridicule, and to be rejected, in the first place by those who found their writings included between its covers as a typical example of the policy of "Stalinist and Stalinism" – as one of the philosophers close to the Zagreb philosophical review *Praxis*, Svetozar Stojanović (1931-2010), described Yugoslavia's party leadership. It was even criticized by other party leaders, particularly in Slovenia and Serbia, and the whole matter "only led to embarrassment for the people involved".

Among the issues involved in the reception of works with problematic, ideologically suspicious themes, is not merely the division between culture and politics but also the division of criticism into crudely dogmatic political commentary on one hand, and an elite formalism on the other. In order to escape the vigilant eye of a politician with the killer-instinct or ideologically biased criticism, literary works had for many years to be camouflaged, allegorical, allusive or eliptical. This kind of 'Aesopian language', in which each detail can be translated into terms of something else – something relevant to the immediate situation – is very intriguing, but it could be irritating as well; although for different reasons. Many a writer, particularly an ingenious writer, would probably agree with Karl Kraus's (1874-1936) statement that "satires which the censor can understand are justly forbidden". But a critic's duty is to understand, analyse and illuminate what seems impenetrable. Functioning within a framework of limited freedom, the critic is faced with a moral dilemma: whether to do his job properly and endanger the writer acting as a 'research assistant' to the politician (or the censor), or to forfeit his duty by pretending not to understand all the implications of the work in question, or resorting to face-saving generalisations or ambiguities which would have to be deciphered by his own readers.

This new literature, critical of the ruling ideology, was written and published at the time when Yugoslavia was going through a very difficult period, with a severe constitutional and economic crisis, social and national tensions and dramatic changes to its political system, but with a seemingly viable prospect of achieving real democracy. However, there was a lurking danger – a rising wave of nationalism used in those stormy times to a very large extent as an argument in political denunciations. In a situation when every issue becomes potentially a national issue, literature itself was in danger of becoming contaminated by a new mutant of an old nationalistic virus. Literature could not resist the pressure, and with a few honourable exceptions, many writers became poisoned by the newly emerging nationalist ideologies.

Satire under the Yugoslav socialism

The title of this paper is slightly misleading. As a matter of fact, when we refer to literary life, we may use the term 'Yugoslav literature' only for the sake of simplicity, and discuss a few separate, independent national literatures: Croatian, Macedonian, Serbian, Slovene. I have found it impossible to cover the satire in all four major literatures of Yugoslavia (some would say that the number is even higher than that). Such a task would be too demanding even if I were writing a book on satire and not a paper which should not take more than one hour to deliver. Therefore, I have imposed upon myself a certain number of limitations. First of all, I have decided to talk only about satire in Serbian and Croatian literatures; secondly, I have chosen to include in my survey only those works which I find purely or predominantly satirical; and thirdly, I have declined to mention those writers who are not the most representative of the satirical genre. In other words, I have attempted to keep the number of literatures, names and titles to the minimum. The most recent anthology of the Serbian satirical short story, for instance, includes not less than 54 names. It might suggest that there is a real proliferation of satire in Serbian literature, but, I must admit, I have found a considerable part of the writings included in it depressingly boring and not very satirical. But, although much of today's satire is self-serving and trivial, there are notable achievements. I have chosen to talk about them.

It is well known that 'the satirical spirit readily combines with those forms of prose fiction that deal with the ugly realities of the world'. I have had to keep many such works out of my analysis. No matter how much they may be imbued with the satirical spirit, I have found that their aims are not primarily satirical. They lack the essential ingredients of wit and use more than a fairly limited range of techniques than the satirists usually use.

The reader will certainly also notice that I shall deal more with Serbian than with Croatian writers. The reason for this is, I think, simple and self-evident: satire has always been more central to Serbian than to Croatian writing. The Croatian critic Branimir Donat (1934-2010), in his essay on humour and satire in the postwar Croatian novel, singles out only three 19th century writers, Ante Starčević (1823-1896), Antun Gustav Matoš (1873-1914) and Ante Kovačić (1873-1889) who deserve to be mentioned as satirists of any value. In Serbia, however, almost all the 19th century major writers put satire if not in the very centre of their interests then at least very close to it. In his study *The First Serbian Satirists* the literary historian Vojislav Djurić asserts that there are satirical elements in the works of Dositej Obradović (1739-1811) and Vuk Karadžić (1787-1864). However, according to him, the first

proper Serbian satirical text was Sterija Popović's (1806-1856) *Laža i paralaža* (*Liar and Superliar*, 1830), and the first Serbian writers to deal with pure satire were the romantic poets Branko Radičević (1824-1853), Jovan Jovanović Zmaj (1833-1904) and Djura Jakšić (1832-1878). It is not my intention to elaborate on the various forms of satirical writing in 19th century Serbian and Croatian literature, but I have to say a few words about Radoje Domanović (1873-1908) who made satire his chief vocation and who achieved more in that area of writing than any other satirist before or after him.

Hegel (1770-1831) claims that the emergence of satire directly corresponds to a certain amount of discord between society and the individual. Domanović based his satire on that discord. The idealization of Serbia's past bravery and heroism versus the banality of contemporary generations has always been a strong motif in early Serbian satirical writing. Serbia of Domanović's stories is an imaginary country called *Stradija* (the story of the same name appeared in 1902), where the loyalty and value of its subjects are estimated according to the amount of oppression they can bear and according to the number of decorations adorning the breasts of their opponents. In this imaginary country the government nominates MPs of both the government and the opposition, the ministers are responsible for jobs absurdly different from what should be their normal duties, parliament is run by the police, high-ranking police officers ride on the back of distinguished patriotic citizens and everyone wants to be branded with a hot iron - the stamp of slavery - in order to gain higher positions. The foundations of Domanović's satirical vision were moral as well as political. He was opposed politically to the absurdities and vices of the regime, but he was opposed morally to the opportunism, apathy, lack of initiative and, most of all, lack of heroism in the Serbia of his times. The example he set has been closely followed by all those who ventured into the realm of satire.

However, the first major wave of satirical writers of real significance abated with the death of this, the most prominent of them, in 1908. The turn of the century witnessed the emergence of a new generation of writers. Instead of the extremes of adoration and criticism that marked their predecessors, the writing of the new generation was characterized by a more sober temperament and more balanced opinions. The advent of this generation of writers coincided, to a certain extent, with the murder of King Alexander Obrenović in 1903, which signified the short lived but intensive political renaissance of Serbia. Under King Peter Karadjordjević, Serbia enjoyed a period of relatively greater stability in which the antagonisms between the individual and the state were not so great and, therefore, not so conducive to satirical literature.

Why the interwar period was even less fertile ground for satire is a question that yet has to be answered. Some critics suggest that one factor contributing to the lack of satire in that period is the fact that the Yugoslav state possibly had too short an existence for any

discord between the individual and society to be defined and expressed artistically. The only satirist of any significance in the interwar period was Stanislav Vinaver (1891-1955). However, society, social morals and national politics were not the subject matter of his writing. The targets of his satire were literature and writers. Therefore he mastered a form of literary parody.

It was not until some years later, after the Second World War and the establishment of the communist regime in Yugoslavia that satirical writing began to flourish again. However, until 1948 the objects of satire did not exceed directorial level and the main targets were 'reactionary forces' and exponents of the capitalist way of life, or harmless opportunists whose main concern was saving their skin during the war. Possibly the most effective contributions to that kind of satire were written by the Croatian writer Slavko Kolar (1891-1963). His satire was directed against a triple target: the indifferent middle class; the educated intellectuals who 'sympathized' with the revolution but did not bother to join it; and the peasant philosophers of the "wait and see policy'. Although his satire is 'constructive' - turned not against the establishment, but against those who could not or would not find their place among those who were ready to fight, Kolar successfully revealed hardships of an era and almost a Chekhovian compassion for man's frailty in a confusing atmosphere of the occupation and civil war.

Soon after the establishment of the new social and political regime the discord between society and the individual emerged again as a powerful source of satirical inspiration. However, this discord was not a conflict between society and the people, but the discord between the ideal of the new social reality that the Yugoslavs had brought with them out of the war and reality itself that fell far short of expectations. Almost all of the satirists of the first postwar generation (Branko Ćopić, Ljubiša Manojlović, Mile Stanković, Erih Koš) based their satirical criticism on the many social anomalies that emerged out of this period, fighting to preserve and affirm the ideal through their criticism. Their brand of moral realism, with its strong undercurrent of invective and wit, found its themes in glaring contradictions of a supposedly egalitarian society. Such contradictions naturally offered a potentially explosive subject for the satirist.

The first writer to expose some of the unsavoury truths of the elitist mentality prevailing among some members of the establishment was Branko Ćopić in his story *Jeretička priča (Heretical story)*, published in 1950 in the Belgrade bi-weekly *Književne novine*.[1]

Jeretička priča opens with the portrayal of a secluded large villa, with a view to the sea. It has a terrace, roofed with an ivy-woven shelter and enclosed by a brass fence. Furthermore, steps from the terrace lead to a private beach, a swimming pool and a mooring jetty for boats. This is the place where government ministers and their aides, along with the

[1] 'Jeretička priča', *Književne novine,* No. 34, 22 August, 1950.

top military men, spend their summer holidays: a motley bunch all pretending to look wise, solemn and important. In this atmosphere of self-importance any spontaneous enjoyment is a rarity. These 'socialist snobs', who indulge in their 'magnificent boredom', hate the very idea of rubbing shoulders with the common mob. (In a discussion about the cafe with the sea view, the aide's wife says she has never been in it because it is always full of the common people. She would like to see admission to the cafe restricted to the elite of society, people of her own rank; then she would be willing to go there.)

The inner conflict of the main character of the story illustrates the dilemma of the elite Ćopić describes. He is a government minister. Although aware of his obligations to the people, he has to restrain himself from mixing with them for fear of losing some of his grandeur and importance. He is left feeling empty and unhappy as a result.

The turning point of the story comes with the arrival of an intruder - a common young worker. His appearance throws the parvenu crowd into disarray. The pejorative word 'njuška' - mug, snout - is used to describe the newcomer who, after innocently asking 'Is there anything cool to drink here?' gets a very cold 'It is forbidden...' as an answer. The confrontation, however, proves to be very embarrassing, particularly for the minister. He recognizes the intruder as a well known 'udarnik' (super productive worker) to whom he personally awarded decorations, but now he drops his head in the hope that the worker doesn't recognize him. He is visibly ashamed, his shame emanating from his own awareness that he has betrayed the principle of equality, but neverthelesss he does not join the worker.

After the minister has gone off and joined his writer friend, who is the only one who does not flatter him, the minister's assistant begins to entertain grandiose dreams for the future. But in order to fulfil his dreams he has first to bury his wife and marry the minister's sister-in-law (in the best tradition of Balkan social-climbing as described so many times by the most popular Serbian comediographer Branislav Nušić (1864-1938) in his popular comedies and humorous sketches.)

However, the two men next to him on the terrace have also their own future designs, but in their dreams the assistant minister has been demoted to some place in industry and they were climbing to the top instead of him. So the whole circle, including the minister's sister-in-law, who is trying to decide whom to choose for her husband, is left jockeying for positions in a mad race to reach to the top where all the privileges are.

The emptiness, hypocrisy, pretence, flattery, greed, lack of comradeship and mutual distrust in these people's lives are contrasted with the primitive but happy mood of the masses, the noisy, roaring, cheerful large beach, where they enjoy the sun and the sand - those simple pleasures 'accessible to all.'

Ćopić was immediately criticized for this scathing attack on the establishment and after a severe critical censure in *Književne novine* he was also reprimanded by his Party

organization. Some of his other stories, written at the same time in a satirical vein, were similarly rebuked. These rebukes were sufficient to halt Ćopić's satirical career. For some time, his subsequent stories were noted more for their humour than their satire. There is no doubt that this case slowed down the development of satire in Yugoslavia for five or six years, because the Yugoslav leaders still lacked confidence and were not ready to tolerate criticism leveled at themselves.

Ćopić's story was satire without an alibi; it was direct; he did not try to restrain himself nor to hide behind a protective shield of inoffensive euphemisms. Those who were described in his story recognized themselves immediately, because the writer meant them to. And they responded as they only knew - arrogantly and ruthlessly. In his attack on his satirical targets Ćopić lacked the sophistication of approach, that special blend of satirical technique and protective devices which would be used by his fellow satirists in the years to come. However, some time later, in the changed atmosphere of increased tolerance and greater freedom, *Jeretička priča* was reprinted and found its place among the most select examples of the satirical genre in Yugoslavia.

Only in 1956 did Erih Koš's (1913-2010) satirical novel *Čudnovata povest o kitu velikom takodje zvanom Veliki Mak (The Miraculous Story about the Large Whale also Known as Big Mac)* open the process of literary and social rehabilitation of satirical literature in Yugoslavia. Reduced to its bare essentials, *Veliki Mak* is a simple enough story. Early in 1953 some Yugoslav fishermen catch a huge whale off-shore near Split. It is put on exhibition in various cities, finally reaching Belgrade. A whale-mania sweeps the city, reaching such proportions that those who criticize it are treated as outcasts. Such individuals are rare, but one of them is the narrator, Rade Despić, a middle-aged bachelor who works as a civil servant. He watches the whale-mania build up, adversely affect the whole community, and turn to sourness as the whale begins to decompose in the spring weather. Finally, the carcass has to be removed, and the way is left open for a new craze to occupy society's attention.

In his numerous essays on satire Koš makes a clear distinction between humorous and satirical literature. The role of the first is merely to be funny, to make people laugh; the role of the second is to be bitter, invective, sarcastic, and to mobilize the reader against the vices of society. Consequently, the subject matter of the satirist is not the individual but the typical, and his main instruments are simplification and stylization, hyperbola and allegory. The satirist distorts the living models in order to reach the deeper truths about their behaviour. He creates a world which is based on reality, but which lives according to the rules imposed by the writer's imagination. Therefore, the elements of the fantastic and the grotesque often prevail in what is supposed to be a realistic description. Koš creates these illogical, unreal situations using a very pedantic, rational style, accumulating details from reality, but putting them into relations which have only a distant, symbolic link with the real world. In other words,

he distorts the preconceived image of reality in order to make it more recognizable within the framework of his satire. Koš is a representative of an anti-romantic trend in Serbian literature and one of the satirical devices he successfully uses has been the parodying of the romantically exalted outlook (of the Maxim Gorky's brand).

Clearly, the story told in *Veliki Mak* is about mass hysteria, but beyond this bare fact it is, obviously, open to interpretation. It is not a particularly subtle novel. But since whatever message it contains is clothed in satirical, symbolic form, it cannot be extracted and expressed in a brief sentence or paragraph. Rather than having one simple 'meaning', the novel has several, at different levels or depths, imperceptibly mingled in the story.

At the most superficial level, *Veliki Mak* provides an insight into the shortcomings of Yugoslavia and certain characteristics of the Yugoslavs. This does not explain the story, but the sum of these observations is considerable. The Belgrade Koš describes is a dreary city, where existence is hard for most - the kind of place where life is dull enough to make people collectively seize on a new sensation, just to brighten the deadening routine. Housing is in short supply and food is rationed. People are not paid enough for their tiresome jobs. There are boring meetings to be attended, most of them compulsory.

The story of the whale contains veiled criticism of society. The distribution of tickets opens the way to extensive corruption and bribery; then when the touts are eliminated by distribution through offices and factories, the process is hopelessly slowed down - the clear reference to the inefficient bureaucracy that still dominated Yugoslavia even after the reforms of 1952-1954. But the corruption goes much further than the 'antisocial elements' who acquire tickets by shady means and then sell them for a fat profit. Near the end, it emerges that the whole Exhibition Committee has been embezzling the takings on a massive scale. There is also a reference to the nasty practice of denunciation to the authorities; the other reference concerns the newspapers' silence about the explosions of gasses inside the rotting whale - a typical example of the tendency of the media to ignore unpleasant news.

Taken together, these remarks constitute an open criticism of life in Yugoslavia. Yet they can hardly be taken as central to the meaning of the story, which describes the effects of the whale's arrival on a whole community. Early on, the excitement over the whale merely represents a fashion. He is a novelty to enliven the drab life of the citizens of Belgrade. Almost everyone is swept away by enthusiasm; even before the whale has arrived, people can talk of little else. The papers are saturated with facts about whales, and the radio has constant broadcasts about it. The visits to the Tašmajdan Park, where *Big Mac* is exhibited, become a matter of social prestige, since tickets at first are limited. (“There was great social significance in being among the first to visit the whale.") No one wants to be left out, since the whale represents what is up to date and fashionable.

Two aspects of this 'sub-level' are worth noting. The first is related specifically to Yugoslavia. During the mid-fifties, when the book was written and published, the country was extending its links with the West, and popular enthusiasm for all things Western became widespread. Among other things, the excitement over the whale satirizes this. The main character's landlady thinks it interesting merely because it is “from foreign parts”. The other point made by Koš's satire of fashions and fads is their connection with common sexuality. Tsana hints that she thinks Rade less of a man because he does not share her enthusiasm for the whale. As she is swept along by the fashion, she becomes lovelier and more alluring; but Koš suggests that there is something false and corrupt in this, as Rade describes her “opening and closing her fat, fleshy knees, which showed under her raised skirt, like a lobster when it catches something in its claws.” Rade suspects his mistress, Desa, has obtained tickets to see the whale by sleeping with someone. The landlady and her roommate quarrel over the tickets “like two women over a lover.”

However, the whale-mania does not remain at the innocuous level of mere fashion. Fashion implies choice - one can be 'with it' or reject it. The whale becomes a cause, something over which people are divided into those who are 'for' it and those who are 'against'. (The development of this menacing aspect is very noticeable in the story). Quite early, the filing clerk, old Bubalo, tries to persuade Rade gently that “people are interested in the whale and it doesn't do to go against public opinion.”[2] (On one poster the whale “looks down at us... and enquires menacingly and censoriously: Is your conscience clear? Hurry! Better today than tomorrow!”[3]) Those who do not conform to the fashion (or to public opinion), like Rade, are ostracized by society.

It becomes impossible to escape from the whale. Everything reflects the whale's influence. The visits to the Tašmajdan Park are organized like army exercises. Yet this is not something the people are dragooned into against their will. On the contrary, the whale becomes virtually an object of worship. It is treated as a symbol of life, hope and plenty. The people stream towards the park unstoppable like “millions of black ants”[4] to 'pay homage' to the whale. The atmosphere around it is described in lofty religious terms; the whale is “like the great Black Stone of Mecca,”[5] while “the people gazed at that black wonder unmoved, spellbound, as if in religious ecstasy…”[6]

The implication is clear. What Koš is alluding to here is something far stranger than fashion. It is significant that the story is set in early 1953, when another object of worship also

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[2] *Big Mac,* Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York. 1962, p. 32.
[3] Ibid., p. 42.
[4] Ibid., p. 68.
[5] Ibid., p. 94.
[6] Ibid., pp. 94-95.

died - Joseph Stalin. Like the whale, his corpse too became an object of pilgrimage. Koš has made the whale and the religious fervour it generates into a symbol of Stalinist totalitarianism and the personality cult.[7]

Yet this is not the end of it. Koš takes his point as far as it can go. Not only does the whale take over the entire life of the city, it also threatens its very existence. It seems to be devouring the people as they enter the enclosure. On Sunday, when entry to Tašmajdan is made unrestricted, and everyone it seems has gone there, Rade wanders alone in Zemun, and is struck by images of St. John's Apocalypse. He sees the coils of smoke from thousands of chimneys merging in “a dark, heavy cloud, puffed up and elongated like a real, enormous whale. Dense and terrifying, it lowered over the city... It threatened to engulf it, swallow it. Its black smoke would poison and choke every living thing and by its weight bury everything beneath it.”[8] Rade repeats to himself, “Armageddon! Armageddon! Armageddon!“[9] And indeed his expectations are fulfilled, for the stench from the decaying carcass almost kills the city. Thus Koš symbolizes the catastrophic destructiveness that mass hysteria can lead to (as had Nazism). This hysteria destroys all, both the 'innocent' and the 'guilty', without discrimination.

This leads to another level which has to be considered. The story is narrated by Rade Despić and it both opens and closes with scenes involving him. It is most striking that the greater proportion of the book concerns the reactions of Rade himself, not the population in general. Rade is a typical Koš hero - or, rather, anti-hero: solitary, grumpy and self-centered. He is very similar to Mihailo Milić in the novel *Imena (Names)*. Both are bachelors, 'small' men in insignificant, unglamorous jobs, and middle-aged, and both have problems adjusting to these deficiencies in their lives. Through them, as through the plumber in *Dosije Hrabak (The Hrabak File)*, Koš explores a favourite theme of his: the position of the individual in modern society.

In *Veliki Mak* the individual character is faced with the pressure towards conformity and the mass hysteria of a society which does not tolerate freedom of choice. Rade is obviously a dissident. Not only does he refuse to conform, he insists on speaking his mind and attacking popular opinion. In this way, he makes himself an outcast, shunned by all, friendless. Yet it is not reasoned principle that makes Rade take his stand, but congenital perversity – “my contrary and ill-humoured nature, which always drives me to belittle anything others praise, that something in me that prevents me from joining in when others shout ‘Long live someone or other’ or ‘Bravo’, a spiteful, secret, destructive urge that makes me jeer when

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[7] First pointed out by Craig Packard in his essay 'Književna i satirična funkcija kita u "Velikom Maku"', *Savremenik*, Vol. 35, No. 4, April 1972, pp. 358-366.
[8] *Big Mac,* pp. 76-77.
[9] Ibid., p. 77.

I should be sad and, against my will, twists my mouth into a smile at any moving or important moment when I ought to be serious and sad like everybody else...'[10] So powerful is this proclivity for awkwardness that Rade is as fanatical in his opposition to *Big Mac* as the whale's devotees are in their homage to it. Rade is a character split by an internal conflict. His insistent talk against the whale only masks the fact that he is as obsessed by it as everyone else. Everything he sees is affected by the whale's mystique. He reads about *Big Mac* in the papers and visits the library in order to know "all that any living man could know about whales: at least more than anyone else in Belgrade, even including those who were the most enthusiastic about them"[11]. Worst of all, he desperately wants to visit the whale - not "hysterically"[12], as he accuses the rest of doing, but in the spirit of a warrior surveying his foe. After struggling long and hard with temptation, he finally finds a pretext for giving in.

By making Rade fatally ambivalent, rather than steadfast in his opposition to the whale-mania, Koš has added an extra dimension to the story and made it much more effective. He underlines the element of vanity in the dissident and martyr; for Rade is incurably proud, and if he is to reconcile his fascination with the whale with his nature, he can only do so by pretending (to himself as much as to others) that he is thoroughly against it. In this way he makes himself different from everyone else, which is his compensation for being nobody. Furthermore, the subjectivity of the whole story - narrated as it is by Rade himself - helps Koš to make his point. How much of it is the 'truth', how much manufactured or coloured by Rade's fantastic imagination? It does not matter, for however much events are distorted by him, this only reflects his own obsession with *Big Mac*. Thus Koš succeeds in simultaneously depicting mass enthusiasm and the difficulty the individual has in escaping it. This gives the novel added strength and poignancy.

Veliki Mak was the first in a series of Koš's satirical novels. As it would take too long to give a detailed analysis of all his satirical writings on the same scale on which I have interpreted his first venture into the satirical realm, I shall just superficially survey the major themes of his satires.

The novel *Sneg i led*[13] *(Snow and Ice)* presents a fantastic vision of an ice age which, caused by distrust and lack of respect among people, eventually destroys the moral standards of the contemporary world. Everyday routine alters and the glacial period brings in new laws and customs; boundaries between states disappear; large apartments which earlier were in great demand, are exchanged for smaller ones; everything undergoes a fundamental change. There is no fuel, so expensive paintings and rare antique furniture and valuable libraries are

[10] Ibid. pp. 12-13.
[11] Ibid., p. 26.
[12] Ibid., p. 65.
[13] *Sneg i led,* Narodna knjiga, Belgrade, 1961.

burned to make people warm. There is no food, so groups of specially trained agitators talk to people and appeal to their patriotism and conscience, recommending a pleasurable, dignified, honourable death 'for the common cause'. It snows constantly and packs of hungry wolves roam the streets; those who survive are desperate, full of greediness, hatred and envy. Whether we look for the origins of this novel in the sphere of politics (the period of cold war) or in an atmosphere of strained inter-human relations (one of the dominant features of contemporary civilization) there is not any doubt that Erih Koš attempts, in his satirical way, to convey a message of love and good will, of decency and humanity.

Vrapci Van Pea[14] *(The Sparrows of Van Pe)* deals with another phenomenon of the modern age. The events in the story, based on a real event that took place in China in the mid-fifties, have their parallels with the role of official propaganda, persecutions, pogroms and genocide in recent history. The action taking place in an imaginary Chinese town is only a conditional framework for recreating an atmosphere of irrational hatred directed towards the innocent. While reading Koš's story, which appears to be a naive and funny narrative about the extermination of sparrows accused for the shortage of food, we bring to mind different kinds of terror in different parts of the world (persecutions of the Jews, the McCarthy era in the USA, purges in the USSR etc). In this novel propaganda is portrayed as a political weapon that cultivates people's prejudices for the ends of a political cause. Koš also makes the point that propaganda tends to base its premises on distortions of the truths in order to preserve discipline, uniformity and conformity. The novel ends on an ironic note: after the extermination of the sparrows people are left numb and empty, reflecting against whom or what the next campaign, which seems inevitable, will be directed. *Vrapci Van Pea* is a novel about a world which has lost its sense of reality, and, consequently, starts to believe in fictions. In order to prevent unpleasant truths rulers invent dangers. Periodic campaigns in the society of irrational tensions are necessary to subordinate the masses to the will of the leadership and so ensure the discipline necessary to control and manipulate people.

It is the problem of reconciling oneself not with love or hate but with indifference, the indifference of contemporary society to the fate of the individual, and of the individual to the ideals on which the society is supposed to be based, that is the central motif of Koš's novel *Imena*[15] *(Names)*. The hero of the novel, Mihailo Milić, a fifty year old bachelor and journalist, tells the story of his strange affliction: neglecting his former ideals, and forgetting some of the more generous principles in which he believed earlier in his life, lost in conformism, sunk in solitude, he begins to forget first the names of his friends and acquaintances, then all names without distinction, and finally his own name. Discontented, envious, with an unpleasant

[14] *Vrapci Van Pea,* Nolit, Belgrade, 1962.
[15] *Imena,* Branko Djonović, Belgrade, 1964.

scowl, the hero of *Imena* attempts to learn the cause of his misfortunes with memory. So he begins to explain and analyze himself stripped to his egoism. He turns against those who, like himself, have stopped seeking what they once considered their fundamental moral aim in life.

Mihailo Milić uses his confession as a kind of general squaring of accounts with the vices of society; and Koš, through his story, comes to terms satirically with all those with whom his hero does, but at the same time squares accounts with the hero himself. He satirizes the world in which ideals have lost their true, face value. They are in official circulation as a propaganda tool. In a monstrous way they have acquired a material equivalent. In this inhumane scale of values all sense of the true and the decent gives way to the chaotic race of a consumer society. Those whose lives have once been based on humanistic ideals are caught now in a psychosis of ever increasing material prosperity, in a nightmare of snobbery and conformism. Being lost as people, they lose even their human identity embodied in their names. Alienated, they submerge to the realm of things, with only the numbers in the police files pointing to their identity.

Dosije Hrabak[16] *(The Hrabak File)* is probably Erih Koš's most daring satirical novel. First serialized in *Savremenik* (in late 1970 and early 1971), after having been refused by the *Matica srpska* publishing house, it was eventually published by *Prosveta* in 1971. Described in shortest possible terms, it is a satire against the malpractices of the secret police and the absurdly self-righteous, self-imposing and stupid bureaucracy. Using the form of a thriller, Koš tells the story of the failed attempts of the plumber, Svetislav Hrabak, to reach the Director of the General Board of Common Affairs and warn him that an unexploded bomb in the foundations of the building could explode at any moment. Hrabak's persistence only succeeds in arousing suspicion against himself, and when it comes to light that there is no official file on him in the personnel office, his case is turned over to Security.

Once on the subject of the secret police, Koš's satire spares them in no way. Their phobias, bungling and general incompetence are sources of much hilarity. All the requisites of a frantic police investigation are given an absurd, ironic twist. While the *Hrabak file* is becoming bulkier, he is constantly followed, his dilapidated room and telephone are bugged, and his most inconspicuous activities are treated by Security as the most devious schemes to achieve his infernal aims. The fact that Hrabak is of foreign descent makes Security believe that he must be in the pay of a foreign enemy, although, as the investigation progresses, it becomes clear that Hrabak's history gives no causes for suspicion. Satirizing the society in which the secret police has unbridled power, where people constantly live in fear, informers become commonplace and an unhealthy mutual distrust reigns, Koš ironically brings to light that it is not the Hrabaks of the society that are the real offenders but the bureaucrats, the

[16] *Dosije Hrabak,* Prosveta, Belgrade, 1971.

directors of institutions, who are always reading out the law to others but break it themselves; they are the ones that pose much greater danger than the Hrabaks, because they are in a position of greater responsibility and influence.

Hrabak eventually manages to find himself face to face with the Director. At first the Director still tries to brush off the plumber (and his former wartime partisan comrade-in-arms who once saved his life), but when he finally realizes the implications of Hrabak's story, they try to rush off to halt the pneumatic drilling in the basement (where there are two unexploded German bombs). However, as Hrabak and the Director run frantically down the corridor, the whole building goes up in smoke as the bombs explode. So, the story ends with a very simple and explicit message: the seemingly insignificant individual should never be ignored; he might just have something important to say. If he is not listened to the consequences could be disastrous.

It is well known that satirists take extraordinary pains to avoid confrontation with authorities. The Roman satirist Juvenal (1st century AD) ends his first satire with the self-protective announcement that he will write only of the dead. That is exactly what Erih Koš, in a certain degree, does in *Dosije Hrabak*. By placing his story in the pre-July 1966 time, when the dreaded head of the Secret Police, Aleksandar Ranković (1909-1983), was ousted from power, he has arranged for himself a very convenient escape and quite a strong alibi. For the writer to escape the vigilant eye of a censor or an unsympathetic critic, his satirical works have to be camouflaged, allegorical, allusive or elliptical. How to avoid 'the danger zone' - this has been not only a practical but theoretical question for the satirist since the Juvenal times. “Satire which the censor understands deserves to be banned”, said the Austrian satirist Karl Kraus (1874-1936). Koš, I would say, agrees with him. In his essay *Juvenal's lessons and messages (Juvenalove lekcije i poruke)*[17], he looks for the answers to the question how did Juvenal, who had lived in cruel and dangerous times of ruthless, vain and arrogant emperors[18], manage to reach the old age of eighty, and what morals should a contemporary satirist, living in equally insecure times, draw from Juvenal's experiences.

Summing up Juvenal's lessons, Koš says,

> “it turns out that one can slam corruption as much as possible - because it hurts no one as long as corruption is unspecified - but it is far more difficult and dangerous to deal with the corrupted...When one criticizes in general terms... everyone looks around or to those sitting next to them, as if the criticism were not directed at them, but at

[17] 'Juvenalove pouke i poruke ili kako, pišući satiru, i u teškim vremenima doživeti duboku starost', *Satira i satiričari,* Prosveta, Belgrade, 1985, pp. 117-144.

[18] One of them, Koš points out, was Titus, Flavius Vespanianus (39-81), known as 'the darling of the human race'.

those around them. The guilty ones are always in another room as long as their name is not mentioned; only (when it is mentioned) they appear before us, with a cane in their hand. Impersonal names are therefore freely mentioned: lust, vice, perversion and so on. They lack tooth and claw... As it is well known, among us one can freely criticize and ridicule ordinary people, even some sacred concepts; one could even criticize Marx and Engels on many accounts, but if you at the same time mention the name of Djoka Perović, you have committed graver sacrilege than if you had expelled Marx himself from our Marxist heaven ... "[19]

"It is easier even now to glorify dead heroes than rail against living cowards and scoundrels, but if, however, you dare to mention one of them by name or by distant allusion, you will burn like a heretic in all our papers, and your spat-on body would be dragged through dust of our meetings and assemblies. A living name is even now a dangerous word, and so our public, political and moral condemnations rarely speak of politically and socially living, respected and powerful people... Our social criticism, as a rule, speaks only of 'phenomena', 'deviations', 'mistakes', 'tendencies', or 'false conceptions', 'anarchic liberalism' and 'nationalism', or about their 'exponents' and 'protagonists', not mentioning them by name, more or less, except when those unfortunates have already been politically and socially liquidated at some previous or secret plenary session."[20]

"However dangerous and turbulent were Juvenal's times, two important circumstances with which many contemporary writers have had to face were not present; the ruling classes and the rulers of the Roman Empire of his, Juvenal's times, because of specific social reasons, did not have a developed modern sense of responsibility for the 'general state of the nation', country and society, typical for a series of contemporary states; and in the literature of that time, in literary theory, criticism and aesthetics, there still had not been formulated a so-called theory of the typical, to which in our times many writers and their works have fallen like sacrifices..."[21]

"If a satirist selects as a target the deeds of some high state official or the major shortcomings of some important social institution, he will generally be told that he was expressing slanders, but if the writer in his defence proves that such things really happened, and even that the press wrote about them at the time, he will be

[19] *Satira i satiričari,* pp. 129-130.
[20] Ibid, pp. 133-134.
[21] Ibid., p. 137.

answered that perhaps that was correct, but that it was a matter of an individual case which was not typical."[22]

"The writers could find it useful to be interested in politics, but it is damaging or even dangerous for them if in any way they begin to deal with politicians, and completely disastrous if the latter show interest in them."[23]

It is not accidental that Erih Koš treats the relation between literature and politics so directly. As Matthew Hodgart says in his book on satire, "satire is not only the commonest form of political literature, but, insofar as it tries to influence public behaviour, it is the most political part of all literature"[24]. Most of the contemporary Yugoslav satirists have been deeply interested in politics, pitting their wit and moral authority against the crudest forms of bureaucracy and a dehumanized world of hypocrisy, greed and cant.

Another wholly satirical novel which deserves to be mentioned in addition to Koš's novels is Ivan Kušan's *Toranj (The Tower)*. Published in 1970 in Zagreb, it was described by the Croatian critic Branimir Donat as 'the only vertical' in this 'Pannonia' of mediocrity and the disturbingly low quality of humorous and satirical writing in Croatia. However, even before he published *Toranj*, Kušan had proved himself in some of his stories to be a satirist of considerable talent. His story *Moj prijatelj Pet (My Friend Pet),* published in 1963 in the Zagreb literary monthly *Kolo*, is a powerful parable of the exalted and the humble, of the privileged and the oppressed, in which the author's moral realism is given added poignancy by his clever usage of fantasy.

My Friend Pet belongs to what is generally known as animal fable. It tells a story of decent, civilized, well-educated and hard working mice who are ruled and harshly exploited by brutish, uneducated, arrogant, powerful and haughty rats. Although the rats know nothing, they judge and evaluate the work of those who do know. They are "the most corrupt and underhand creatures in the animal kingdom". Although powerful they are unhappy because they know "that strength is all they have, and if they lose it they will lose everything, even their name". The rats' real tragedy begins when they get involved in things that require not strength but intelligence. Therefore, the mice have to write about rats since they are not capable of writing about themselves. However reluctant they are, the mice do what they are expected to do out of mere conformism, because "the main thing was to have enough bacon and cheese, and then we could hold forth about spiritual values".

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[22] Ibid., p. 140.
[23] Ibid., p. 144.
[24] *Satire*, McGraw-Hill, 1969

Pet is an extremely knowledgeable and gifted mouse. He is a friend of the 'narrator', also a mouse, called Sik. Pet's tragedy begins when he wins the contest for the best song of the year with a song which was the first one not to mention rats. It was rather about “some eagles who thought they were the lords of the world as long as they sat on their mountain peaks; but because of the cloud they... could not see the peaks that were far higher than their mountains, they could not see the whole sky above their proud heads, the whole universe which made their heads, so big and majestic here, seem smaller than the tiniest speck of dust”.

But after Pet's unexpected success with his non-rat song, the editor and the manager of the paper where he was employed were approached by the two most highly regarded critics, obsequious and obtrusive characters, who laid before the editor and the manager even “more than those idle rats could possibly have expected”. They had discovered that Pet, “while ostensibly talking about the eagles, had been clearly and blatantly getting at the two of them”, the editor and the manager. Early next morning Pet was summoned before the rat court. There were twenty five charges against him. He was accused “in the first place of high treason ..., betraying ... secret passage-ways to the enemy and so on ... The song about the eagles was not mentioned once.” The president of the court was the director's brother, and the president of the jury the manager himself. “The rat jury declared Pet guilty of all the twenty five points of the accusation and he was condemned to exile” from the community. “Pet had refused a lawyer and did not utter a single word throughout the entire trial”. A short time afterwards he was found dead, having learned about suicide from human books.

Many mouse years later, when Pet was virtually forgotten, his friend Sik comes across some of his notes and remembers “his strength in the last moment of his life”, and consequently feels stronger and more able himself. He says: “In a few days there will be the big pan-rat song contest... I keep thinking I might have the nerve to write something and send it to the contest. In the last few days a little song has been running through my mind: almost as though I had not made it up, but I know it from somewhere. It is a song about two elephants crushing everything underfoot and thinking... never mind what they were thinking. I'll write it down and enter it.”

As we can see, the satirists suffer even in the rat world, but, as Kušan suggests, there are always a few characters with a noble, defiant spirit to carry on with the dangerous art of 'militant irony', as Northorp Frye (1912-1991) calls the satire.

In *Toranj*, a communal chief Cuco, who is a supreme authority in the imaginary Pannonian town of Surkovac, has decided to build a magnificent tower, a building without any definite purpose, but so imposing as to impress the whole country. The construction of this self-purposeful edifice makes the basis of the chronicle written by Mišo S., the communal registrar, but originally an architect, who was sent to live in the provinces because of his

'distorted and malevolent ideas' about the common good. The central targets of Kušan's destructive humour are local, primitive administrators, who rule complacently and make important decisions although they know neither the meaning of the words they use nor the right way to pronounce them; their wives who practice breaking champagne bottles before parties, and who have been in Paris sixteen times for shopping excursions while the French teachers somehow never managed to get there; then, there are 'rebels' who, for all their intentions, do not even manage to utter a word of protest, as well as those who believe that all authority is God given, and therefore keep their mouths shut.

Kušan does not spare the chronicler himself. His silent conformity, his applauding of his superiors, his petty spying are duly rewarded. He is promoted from the office of communal registrar to that of communal treasurer. His original sin being forgotten, Mišo starts his social climbing course towards prosperity. In the last sentence of the chronicle, he even declares that he has stopped being 'a malicious man'.

Kušan's satirical file, used as documentary material for the novel, is bulky and varied. It includes sport, sex, literature, tourism, economy and politics. Writing in an apparently innocent way, Kušan uses sarcasm as his basic satirical device, confident that he will find the audience which will share with him his commitment to those moral standards which validate his attacks on aberrations caused by primitivism and megalomania.

However, in the modern age the nature of satire has changed and is changing all the time. Satire, comedy and humour are increasingly becoming the spiritual food for thousands who read newspapers, watch television and listen to the radio. The media condition not only the inner nature of satire but also the forms in which it appears. Because of this, satire in the former Yugoslavia was fostered less as a literary activity and more as a journalistic one. These factors have all influenced the emergence of satire in the form of satirical articles and essays, parables and aphorisms in the daily, weekly and literary press.

The parable is the main medium of Vladimir Bulatović Vib, one time weekly columnist in the Belgrade daily *Politika*, and considered as one of the best satirists in Yugoslavia. Even when his texts do not resemble classical fables in their outward form, they are close to this literary genre in their intention. In Aesop's fables the predominant traits of animal character were symbols of virtues or failings in human behaviour. The contemporary satirical fable may perhaps more easily than ever abandon the services offered to the classical fable by representatives of the animal kingdom. The satirical fables of Vlada Bulatović Vib sometimes end with an aphoristic point. Instead of remaining unexpressed or hidden, the message takes the form of a direct statement. In his book *Veliko spremanje* (*The Great Clean-Up*, 1971), which consists of an introductory poem and some forty satirical or humorous pieces, one of the aphorisms carrying a satirical moral, claims: “Some revolutions devour their children but some children devour their revolution”. Vib has dedicated his satirical pen to exposing these

modern illusionists, devourers of the revolution who entering the socialist bestiarium, complete and enrich it directly, through their 'daily practice'.

Thus, in Vib's work the bearers of symbolic values are the authentic historical exponents of particular forms of behaviour: directors, delegates, bureaucrats, political leaders, 'old boys', etc. The very choice of the figures Vib writes about suggests that his satire usually has a political pretext. However, while the classical fable was sometimes used for political ends, Vib, starting from a political motive, has a moral aim in mind. His motive is political in so far as political man is always the centre of his attention. Homo politicus is the central target of Vib's parables: man who participates in politics, who plays with politics or with whom politics often plays tricks. The moral distortion of such a man, his stupidity, malleability, spinelessness, self-interest, hypocrisy, arrogance, his lack of principles and his conformity, but above all the discrepancy between his words and deeds, the usual targets and concentrated fire of Yugoslav contemporary satirists, do not escape Bulatović's eye either.

He has created his own symbols based sometimes on the animal and sometimes on the human world. His favourite symbol, standing for the worst evils of the contemporary world is a bureaucrat. In the parable *Ajkula i birokrat (The Shark and the Bureaucrat)*, after a lengthy discussion of the ways in which the shark runs its life and organizes its world, the bureaucrat, an unsavoury individual, falls into the sea only to emerge with the shark between his teeth. *Čuvar kupusa vo (Ox, the Cabbage-Protector)* makes the point that people are better off without foolish, bullying guardians who are deaf to sensible criticism and whose misguided protection will not only kill the freedom so essential for a healthy society, but will also stifle and damage people themselves. This moral is conveyed by a simple story about a red cabbage that flourished while it was left alone. True, the cabbage attracted enemies, hares, who came to nibble at its leaves, but they never did much damage because they were driven away by the owl's hooting or the raven's cawing. Then one day the ox intervenes and takes it upon himself to be the cabbage's protector. He goes about his job in a clumsy and foolish way, and does not listen to the wise advice of the raven and the owl. Finally, in his search for potential enemies, the ox tramples on the cabbage itself and stamps all over the ground, rendering it impossible for any plant to grow there again.

In *Planinari (The Mountaineers)*, Vib exposes the phenomenon of social climbing and careerism. On his way down the mountain a climber observes that there are hoards of people in clumsy climbing boots, all trying to get up the mountain. They are particularly numerous as he passes the government offices and institutions. However, he ends by voicing his fear of such mountaineers, for he will probably be used as a rock on which they will stand in order to climb higher. In *Pokvareni telefon (Faulty Telephone)*, Vib makes a similar point about the dangerous consequences of publicly expressing critical opinions. He tells a new variant of the old children's game in which you tell your boss that some wrong is being done to you, but he

will not hear you because his telephone is faulty. Now you telephone your boss to tell him that he is doing something wrong, and after that nothing more is heard of you.

As a satirist deeply rooted in the Domanović tradition, Vib is preoccupied with the blatant disparity between ideals and the ways they are abandoned. In his *Menjačnica ideala (Exchange Bureau of Ideals)*, large ideals are exchanged for several smaller ones. For a 'hot' ideal one receives a fridge; for a 'bright' one - dark furniture; for a 'firm' one - a soft mattress; and for an ideal with a vision of the future - a villa with a sea view. The narrator, however, cannot exchange his ideals for anything, because he has left them at home. But on arriving home he takes his ideals off the shelf and wraps them in a cloth. It is best, he suggests, to keep them locked away in a safe place and wipe them occasionally because the dust will settle on them since they will never be realized.

Possibly the most eloquent example of Vib's lampooning of bureaucracy is the parable *Lavoratore i Birokracija (Lavoratore and Bureaucratsia)*. I'll quote it in full, to show how Vib develops his ideas and what devices he uses to make his satirical points:

> “Comrade Lavoratore supported himself with his ten fingers. In the morning he worked for a decadent bourgeois, in the afternoon he whistled the Internationale. He spent his nights in his landlord's cellar.
>
> Everything became unbearable. His existence and this position. But most of all the bourgeois' daughter, Miss Anna Maria Bureaucratsia. She put paragraphs under his pillow and brought out his soul for inspection. She rode him piggyback. She climbed onto his head and thought up horrors.
>
> Lavoratore dreamed terrible dreams at night. That he was putting Miss Anna Maria Bureaucratsia between the covers of Marx’s *Das Kapital*, and climbing onto the cover. The young lady expired. From the wall, in his frame, Engels applauded. From dreams, the proletarian Lavoratore turned to reality. He became overripe and began to set up a new order of things. He chased Daddy Bourgeois into the cellar. He chucked Daddy's little daughter, Anna Maria Bureaucratsia, over his shoulder.
>
> Bruised from the fall and fear, Anna Maria Bureaucratsia hid in the cellar with her Daddy. There she grew pale and prettier. When Lavoratore got over his fury, Anna waited for him at the gate and looked at little dogs. One day, Comrade Lavoratore would pour a bowl of dirty water over Miss Anna Maria Bureaucratsia from the balcony. She would whimper joyfully, clap her hands and shout: 'I want more! Wet me!'

At night, of her own accord, she took Lavoratore's socks and washed them in secret. Once she happened to cross the courtyard in her petticoat. Afterwards she came to confess that she had consciously undressed but only in front of him and only for him. Once she called him at night when she was quite naked and fell into his lap. He was disgusted but felt warm. She sent him love letters in verse and prose: 'You will not escape me, I can tell you, my darling. I want your just worker's arms to squeeze me and smother me'. Lavoratore squeezed her with his just arms but did not smother her. He could not; he saw devotion in her eyes. He took her to work in his house. Anna Maria Bureaucratsia made his bed ready and herself in it. Comrade Lavoratore betrayed personal weakness. Anna, personal strength.

In truth, he did scold her in public: 'She will suffocate me like before. I shall chase her away. I'll burn her, I'll crush her!' At home Anna Maria Bureaucratsia would wait for him. She would wait for Lavoratore to come home and hum. When he arrived she would ride him piggy-back out of tenderness. Comrade Lavoratore would bend down a little, out of tenderness, of course. Anna Maria Bureaucratsia got round, plump, and full. It was a squeeze in bed because of her. Lavoratore had bad dreams. Anna Maria Bureaucratsia was putting him between book covers and squashing him from above and below.

He awoke from his bad dreams ready to chase her away. But he glanced at her. Who would chase away such a gorgeous woman? What do you say, Citizen, is it time to tell the man to interfere in his love affairs? If it is time, let us hurry! For Lavoratore's little companion, Anna Maria Bureaucratsia, might get pregnant."

Vib is master not only of the parable, but also of the aphorism, which has become an extremely popular genre since the late 1960s. The satirical aphorism in Yugoslav literature was inspired mainly by the work of the Polish satirist Stanislav Jerzy Lec (1909-1966), after his aphorisms were widely circulated in the press and later published in a book entitled *Neočešljane misli (Unkempt Thoughts)*. In Vib's definition, an aphorism is "a tiny novel of two or three sentences". In one of the most poignant ones, he says: "Freedom dies when satire flies at half mast".

Almost everything that has been said about Vib is true of another Serbian satirist, Branislav Crnčević. Both Bulatović's and Crnčević's satire is an expression of the common experience of our time of accumulated dissatisfaction with the chronic misunderstanding between the possible and the realized. The situations, characters and phenomena the reader

meets in their texts are so recognizable as a part of daily reality that Vib and Crnčević's writings could be labelled ‘satirical verism'. The moral message their writings bear – regardless of whether they are in the form of lapidary humorous sketches, poems, moralistic essays, stories or pamphlets - may be easily disclosed both because they are simply and pithily written and because they are based on careful observation of contemporary behaviour.

Vib's satire is ironical, Crnčević's cynical; the first confronts, the second generalizes more frequently; Vib tends to apply mildly irritating balm, Crnčević’s deep satirical radiation destroys the diseased matter. In his collection of poems *Dunavo* (*The Danube*, 1968) and his volume of prose texts *Dnevnik jednog* (*The Diary of a…*, 1971), Crnčević has presented himself not only as a satirist, but a writer of wider range as well. As a satirist, Vib is more rigorous and rational, Crnčević is subtler and more emotive. The hero of one of Crnčević's stories unwittingly points the reader to the painful source of the satirist's lucid sarcasm in the following words: “I'm sorry for everyone, it seems that everyone, the entire world, has been done an injustice, that everyone in the world was born for something greater and finer”.

This mood is particularly evident in Crnčević's poems, which are imbued with a sense of superior bleakness and the pain of refined dissatisfaction. A master of word play and subtle ‘double-entendre’, he reaches the targets of his satirical laments now with fine allusions, now with annihilating directness. His need to express himself as openly and directly as possible sometimes becomes so great that, instead of writing satire, he engages in polemic. In that polemic, however, there is a unique satirical eloquence which compensates for the lost or neglected narrative element which is always welcome in satire.

As is often the case with satirist-chroniclers, all colours of the satirical spectrum are not equally constant in these two writers. Originating from a direct confrontation with events and phenomena linked with a specific political moment, many of their texts have already lost a considerable degree of the edge and bite they had when they were first published. But the beneficial sparks of pure humour can transcend time and space even when the immediate cause of the satirical reactions are forgotten. In Crnčević more frequently than in Bulatović one comes across general human satirical commentaries which could be relevant for a world of differing spiritual, social, moral and political experience. Soaring beyond their limited framework, Crnčević's satirical words have succeeded in reaching those universal meanings which are more accessible to writers who reflect about life than those who simply observe it.

In Crnčević's as well as in Vib's writings, verbal humour has an important place. This is most effective when some words from political slang, with which the daily speech is very largely contaminated, are brought into a new, satirical or humorous context to achieve a satirical point through carefully balanced double meaning. In Crnčević's aphorisms - those published in his book *Govori kao što ćutiš* (*Speak As You Keep Silent*, 1966), a pun on the famous phonetic principle on which Serbo-Croat orthography is based: 'Write as you speak'

('Piši kao što govoriš') - political slogans or inflated rhetoric are given a tiny twist of phrase with splendidly satirical results.

As aphorism is the only genre which is impossible to quote in extracts, I shall give a selection of the aphoristic satire arranged in several major thematic cycles. The writers represented will include, besides Bulatović Vib and Crnčević, Rastko Zakić, Pavle Kovačević and Milovan Vitezović.

It seems most appropriate to start with what these satirists have to say about satire: George Bernard Shaw compared his country's morals to decayed teeth and himself to a dentist, obliged to give pain in the interest of better health. In Milovan Vitezović's world, the role of a satirist is different: "A satirist is like a state toothache; it is cured by being pulled out". Therefore, it is not surprising that, as Rastko Zakić says, "The least jokes about the revolution are made by the satirists".

"Freedom dies when satire flies at half mast" (Vib)

"Every one of our workers abroad is a great Yugoslav satirist" (Zakić)

"A satirist finds it easier to tell the truth through the animals than through the people" (Kovačević)

"A satirist is like a poison which has a healing effect only if taken in a small dosage" (Kovačević)

"The circus is the only bridge between satire and the state" (Crnčević)

Closely related to the theme of satire is the theme of the freedom of speech:

"In a free country like ours it is an offence to say there is no freedom of speech" (Zakić)

"Now we can freely say that there is no freedom of speech" (Kovačević)

"Truth is forbidden to show itself naked" (Crnčević)

"Everything can be heard, but not everything can be said" (Crnčević)

"Speak quietly and honestly, the more honestly the quieter" (Crnčević)

> “Tell me what to say and I shall tell you why I won't” (Crnčević)

> “Silence is bad for society, but a blessing for an individual” (Kovačević)

> “Freedom of speech - that is a complete control of thoughts” (Kovačević)

> “He said that freedom of speech did not exist. They imprisoned him. For telling lies.” (Kovačević)

> “Master grants freedom to those slaves he can't employ” (Kovačević)

This last aphorism links the subject of freedom with the subject of migrant workers:

> “Our fields are stretching as far as Stockholm. Wherever you look, our peasants are working.” (Vib)

> “Yugoslav workers abroad must not be exploited by the capitalists; they come from a socialist country” (Zakić)

> “Our fathers fought against the occupier so that we should not have to work under the Germans” (Zakić)

There are numerous aphorisms concerning the past (dark and reactionary) and the future (bright and progressive):

> “The middle ages were dark and gloomy. Today man is illuminated from all sides.” (Crnčević)

> “Before the war clever people were more stupid than today” (Crnčević)

> “Our forefathers lived miserably, and according to the latest fact they did not live at all” (Crnčević)

> “In the old days slaves were fairly numerous; today we can record some progress” (Zakić)

“Between today and tomorrow there is the horror of night” (Zakić)

“Look out, here comes the future” (Crnčević)

“He threatened me by pointing his finger towards the FUTURE” (Zakić)

“Where can I possibly escape? They tell me once more that the better life is near again.” (Zakić)

The contemporary political jargon used in propaganda serves as a foundation of the following aphorisms:

“Leaders of the proletarians of all countries – unite” (Kovačević)

“Man is our greatest wealth, so say the merchants” (Kovačević)

“The standard is rising - the people are getting smaller” (Kovačević)

“Man is a great thing!” (Kovačević)

“The revolution does not eat its children, but the grown-ups had better be careful” (Crnčević)

“Men are equal - but wages are different” (Crnčević)

'Men were first brothers, and then they became equal; who knows what they might one day be” (Crnčević)

“I've gone into a better life, I'll be back in half an hour” (Crnčević)

“I fear the children of revolution: children usually bury their parents” (Zakić)

The leaders also get their due:

“If Communism is in front of us, why are the leaders climbing?” (Kovačević)

"The leaders are in front of the people perhaps because they are being chased" (Zakić)

"Chameleons are sometimes red" (Zakić)

"I boldly assert that you are right" (Zakić)

"It's easy for great men, their heads are in the clouds and their behinds in armchairs" (Crnčević)

"I know people who were immortal until yesterday" (Crnčević)

"I have noticed that those who best know the truth are best at telling lies" (Crnčević)

"A politician is a man whom we pay to tell us how well we live" (Kovačević)

"Comrades, give me back faith in My ideals" (Zakić)

I shall end this selection of aphorisms with two of Zakić's on egalitarianism:

"The cemetery: what a concentration of equality"

And, as an anti-climax:

"The little man can more easily enter history than get into the Metropole Hotel"

I can't bring this paper to an end before saying a few words about Matija Bečković and his special brand of satire – the satirical essay, a form which parodies the serious classical essay ironically meditating over reality. In his essays Bečković satirizes the whole ethos of the present times in most mordant terms and with scathing sarcasm. Entitled *On Success and Failure*, *On Nations*, *On Freedom, On the Misuse of Democracy, On Issuing Statements, On Backwardness, On Yugoslavs, On Common Sense*, they represent a triumph of ambiguous and elusive irony. These satirical pieces are splendid at showing men both what they must be against and what they should be for. In Bečković's essays satire in Yugoslavia has arguably reached its peak.

But occasionally Bečković ventures into other forms of satire. His poem *Jevgeniju Jevtusenku (To Yevgeni Yevtushenko)*, written immediately after the Soviet invasion of

Czechoslovakia in 1968 and published in *Književne novine* in September is an excellent example of his sarcastic wit. He asks the Soviet poet:

"Why are you silent, you who have always spoken?
Why haven't you been silent
As those are who cannot always speak?
Where are you?...
In the winter sleep or on holiday?"

Describing Yevtushenko as

"a slot machine for humanism
into which one only has to throw a sad piece of news
and it will shed its tears!
Idle Orpheus of an infallible country!"

he tells him:

"You are humble in Moscow, and courageous in Rome!
You have condemned crimes that Interpol is after.
You have dug a grave for Steinbeck in Vietnam.
You have told the truth to dead Stalin's moustache.
They have killed you before (Martin Luther) King!
His children could not get near the bier because of you.
You have initiated the prosecution of Robert Kennedy's assassin.
You recipient of a pension from other people's ruin and from universal feelings!
The harshest punishment of murderers is your verse.
Persecutions of poets in your country are a reason for you
To raise your voice against arrests in Bolivia!
Who will mourn you, the correspondent of the truth?
You have obliged everybody except your own people!
The further the injustice, the louder your protest.
Whoever cries much, lives long!
Your tear is homelandless!
On a stranger's grave the Russian is crying,
The deserter of Russia!"

This poem finally brings us to the end. I have been wondering how to finish this paper in the most appropriate way. Although he has no illusion that he will be able to bring moral balance or spiritual maturity into a world of moral and spiritual emptiness, brutality and hypocrisy, the satirist does not give up his ambition of painting human character, describing life and human errors and shortcomings. Even the greatest satirists have refused the role of moral reformer generously offered to them, because they did not believe that their pen would be able to bring about any kind of change in human nature. However, in relation to other literary genres, satire has always had one dangerous virtue: it is only satire the American professor of literature Philip Pinkus says, that has confronted the consequences of evil in this world without the usual anaesthetics.

The degree to which it is deprived of anaesthetics is the main determinant of the literary fate of the individual satire and the human fate of the satirist. The best satire has often been written by people who have not had things particularly easy, and their deadly pen was the reason for their glory and their tribulations. Satirists have always felt on their own skin that, in their line of business, there is a more serious and complex problem than the freedom of creativity: the problem of the consequences of that freedom. Therefore, the most proper ending would be a quotation, a satirical piece of writing which you may explicate in whatever way you want. It is a short fable by Ljubiša Manojlović, entitled *Priča o pčeli (A Story About a Bee)*:

> A bee buzzed sadly:
> I'm going to die, I'm going to die!
> A drone answered her:
> Serves you right, when you don't control yourself. Why did you have to criticize with your whole sting?