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## NEW TRENDS IN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY SOUTH SLAVIC PROSE

From the distance of a hundred or more years, one gets the impression that, during most of the 19th century, European literature developed, modified its character and its course only slowly and gradually, but that towards the end of the century, in the eighties and nineties, a sudden acceleration took place, which became even more rapid and more radical in the first decades of the new century. This is noticeable in the field of poetry as well as of prose and drama. On closer investigation, it turns out that many of the new trends of this period were already in evidence in earlier decades: there were pioneers, innovators, forerunners throughout the century, both as regards subject matter and as regards style, tone, language; and most of them were recognized as such by the modernists of the 1890-s and early 1900-s: Baudelaire, Heine, Tjutčev, Whitman in verse, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Edgar A. Poe, Dostoevskij, Flaubert, de Maupassant in prose, to mention just a few names.

In Transalpine and Transcarpathian Europe these changes are discernible just as much as elsewhere and largely run parallel to the development in West and Central European countries — in some instances with a considerable delay, but in many other cases the lag is negligible. Poets, writers, literary critics and other intellectuals in Ljubljana and Zagreb, in Belgrade and Sarajevo, in Bucarest, Sofia and Athens followed international trends and fought their battles over them just as vigorously as their counterparts in other European capitals.

Numerous studies exist that deal with the modernist currents in Southeastern Europa, but they focus more often on poetry than on prose and drama, and mostly on one writer or on one country or literary milieu rather than on the parallels between them. It seems useful, therefore, to concentrate on the common denominators of the movement. The following is an attempt to

do this in respect to the prose of the Bulgarians, Croats, Serbs and Slovenes in the period from 1900 (or sometimes a little earlier) to 1930 — the period of that multifarious movement by the controversial name of "Modernism".

It is obvious that generalizations are very risky when applied to this period, which was so rich in — isms: from naturalism, symbolism and decadentism to vitalism, unanimism and expressionism, and in which conservative, traditional writers lived and created simultaneously with radical experimentators. It is even hard to pinpoint the position of many individual writers who would, during their career, switch their loyalty from one movement or group or style to another, or imperceptibly, perhaps involuntarily, introduce elements of a certain style or fashion into their work, or stay completely outside of all new trends (although that did not happen too often). There were, in almost every cultural environment, artists who would vehemently deny that they had anything to do with, say, symbolism, 'decadence, neo-romanticism, impressionism or expressionism, but who nevertheless betrayed a certain influence of one or more of these new currents in part of their work.

From the outset, a distinction ought to be made between the emergence of certain features of modernism in literary works — and the polemics, manifestos, programmatic articles etc. in which the new trends were discussed, advocated or rejected. A study of the latter, of literary criticism, of opinions and sentiments rather than literary texts, is in itself quite attractive and valuable; however, in the following, the emphasis will be on creative, not on meta-literary writing. The question that poses itself before anything else is: what exactly happened in the South Slavic prose production roughly around 1900 and up to the 1920-s that made it different from typical 19th century prose? The new elements are to be sought in the language and style, the genres, as well as the themes and subject matter of this prose.

Whereas in modernist poetry the renewal of form was of primary importance and free verse and other formal innovations were introduced, in prose the habitual means of expression, the vocabulary, syntex and style characteristic of 19th century prose were more or less intact and not questioned, at least not in the initial years. In terms of literary genres we notice a certain preference for short lyrical prose texts, for sketches and prose poems; a predilection for psychological depth, intimate moods and subjective approaches added a new dimension to many prose texts; often they were characterized by a strong lyricism; as a result, prose and poetry were sometimes drawn closer together and the boundaries between them erased.

However, it would be incorrect to state that the traditional prose forms: the novel, the novella and short story, declined in



the period under consideration: on the contrary, it is no exaggeration to speak of a proliferation of literature in general, and of prose in particular, in the early 20th century — an increase in the production of all kinds, categories and genres, certainly in the countries of Southeastern Europe.

Even though it may not have been primary goal of many prose writers, soon they began to pay attention to stylistic questions and to strive for a richer, a more sophisticated and cultivated style — whether they had sympathy for the idea of art for art's sake or not. Influences from West and Central European literatures undoubtedly played a role here. The tendency was part of a negative attitude toward straight, plain, worn out 19th century realism.

As for the contents of literary works, here the changes are more clearly visible, although, again, not immediately carried through and in many cases only partial and very hesitant. There was an undeniable tendency toward subjectivism, — a tendency to concentrate on the inner experience of the hero(ine) or the narrator — an endeavor to catch his or her most intimate and personal thoughts and sensations. Also, in terms of subject matter and thematic orientation, there was an increased attention for sexual relations, the tendency to speak about erotic matters more freely than was habitual and was permitted in the 19th century. Of course, there was no question yet of the total freedom and openness in this respect of so many authors in the mid-20th century. But love, passion, erotic desire are very much in the center of many, if not most “modernist” prose works.

Both subjectivism and the theme of love and passion were characteristic of romantic literature as well, and there are good reasons for dubbing the literature of the late 19th and early 20th centuries neoromantic.

What distinguishes prose from around 1900 from prose of 1800 is, besides the greater frankness that was just mentioned, the almost exclusively pessimistic, often dismal or even cynical attitude of so many authors — the emphasis on the futility of their characters' love or sexual desires. In general, a “decadent” atmosphere of disillusion and dissatisfaction and the painful awareness of solitude are very prominent in the modernist era.

A pronounced subjective approach was also expressed by means of the so called stream of consciousness — a methodological rather than a thematic feature of modern writing. Usually linked with the name of James Joyce, particularly with his *Ulysses*, this procedure, which makes use of the interior monologue, was already “discovered” and applied, to a greater or lesser extent, by a few 19th century novelists; but a desire to record the “pre-speech levels of consciousness”, the fluid of the mind's



activity, seemingly without the author's intervention, becomes characteristic of much early 20th century prose writing. This interior monologue can be seen as part of a general propensity for psychological probing during this period. A subjective approach was already announced in the preceding decades, for example, in Anton Chekhov's short stories and novellas, in which the point of view shifted from the author or narrator to the main characters.<sup>1</sup> It is understandable that first person narration was a preferred method, although it was by no means the exclusive form of narration, and, of course, it was nothing new: the I-story has a long and rich tradition.

Romanticism was a literary movement and an artistic attitude to which many poets and prose writers around the turn of the century looked back in admiration. However, the major trend of mid-19th century literature, *realism*, left a no less indelible mark on modernist writing, even though the latter is usually viewed as a reaction against realism and many writers of the period attempted to move away from the realist tradition. Without the achievements of the great realists of the preceding epoch with their endeavor to depict life and the world in all its facets, their social and psychological probing, their attention for details, their enrichment of the literary language and ways of expression, modernism is virtually unimaginable. — One aspect or variety of realism is naturalism, a term commonly applied to a type of prose that, in minute detail and merciless outspokenness, depicts human society in its intricate fabrics with an emphasis on its ugly sides and on the suffering and exploited part of a given population. Naturalism, pursued by Emile Zola in French, by August Strindberg in Swedish, by Gerhart Hauptmann, Arthur Schnitzler and others in German language literature, was introduced in the South Slavic area almost simultaneously with modernism. Therefore, elements of naturalism and various aspects of modernism are to be found side by side, often in one writer.

Those authors who deliberately sought to abandon the beaten track of realistic approaches, methods and themes sometimes turned to fantasy, to a fairy tale world, to legends and myths, and to the dream. Obviously dream and fantasy had been elements used by fiction writers in previous centuries; but there was, in these years, a revival of interest in the subconscious (as part of the interest in psychology), on the one hand, and in the legend, the myth, the legendary past on the other hand, which is linked with an interest in national history and mythology, — as far as the Slavs are concerned, in early Slavic religion and history.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. T. Eekman, "The Narrator and the Hero in Chekhov's Prose," *California Slavic Studies*, Berkeley (Los Angeles: University of California Press), vol. VIII, 1975, 93—129.

In all South Slavic literatures 19th century prose has been characterized by its definite orientation towards the surrounding social and national, ethnic, often local reality. That tendency was still very prominent by the end of the 19th century, and was never to die altogether. Numerous modernist writers were evidently under the strong impact, and integrated the characteristic elements, of realism in their work; others — actually a relatively small number only — tried to abandon the time-honoured positions of the realists, their predecessors, and to explore the unreal or irrational. It is important to take into consideration that one point of divergence that makes 20th century prose from the Balkans so different from that of the previous century, is the simple fact that the scene has shifted from the village to the city; it is urban prose. So far this paper has been very general and abstract. Not a single name of a South Slavic author or work has been mentioned. It seemed advisable, though, first to stake out the field and the concepts we want to address ourselves to, before turning to the individual cases.

Perhaps we should begin by paying attention to the Slovene scene, as manifestations of modernist thought and creative efforts emerge in Slovenia at an early date, which is not surprising in view of its geographic location. In the late nineties the Slovene literary journals resounded with polemics pro and con naturalism, impressionism, fin de siècle atmosphere and decadence.<sup>2</sup> In the oldest and most prestigious magazine, *Ljubljanski zvon*, Anton Aškerc, Ivan Cankar, Ferdinand Jančar, Fran Eller and others defended "objective realism", whereas Josip Stritar, Fran Svetič and others rejected it. It should be emphasized, however, that while these theoretical polemics were going on, the actual literary production, the novels and short stories that were being published, did not substantially differ from each other or from the prose of the preceding generation: they basically continued the realist tradition.

Avantgarde literary works that appeared belonged to the domain of verse rather than prose: the best known examples are Oton Župančič's volume *Čaša opojnosti* (The Goblet of Intoxication) and Ivan Cankar's *Erotika*, both from 1899. And it is indicative of the intellectual atmosphere in Slovenia at that time that the Catholic bishop A. B. Jeglič was so infuriated by the contents of *Erotika* that he bought up all copies and had them burnt — an action for which some literary critics praised him. Resistance to novelties in art and literature in Slovenia emanated largely from, or was supported by, the church authorities and the Catholic writers, adherents of neo-thomistic thought — it was primarily prompted by moral, puritanic considerations.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Fran Zadavec, *Zgodovina slovenskega slovstva*, vol. V: *Nova romantika...*, Maribor: Založba Obzorja, 1970, 22—25 and passim.

It might be expedient to specifically focus on one Slovene writer of this generation — one who went through several stages of development and artistic allegiance and who evolved into the most talented and important early 20th century prose writer of his nation: Ivan Cankar. Even prior to *Erotika*, he had written and published short prose texts (1892—1899), a genre that was also practised by Fran Finžgar, Ksaver Meško, Zofka Kveder (one of the very few women writers in Slovenia, and in general in South Slavic literature before World War I), and a few others.<sup>3</sup> He would continue to write this type of short works (usually designated as *crtice*, *škica*, also *feljton*, *vinjeta* or *silhueta*) during the next ten years or so. Some of them possess a narrative epic element, others are satirical, purely meditative, or of an essayistic character.

Cankar was at the very beginning of his career when he got acquainted with the recent developments in European literature during his years in Vienna; he was impassioned by naturalism, which he, however, soon rejected to embrace decadentism — although he at the same time wrote prose that was strictly realistic. During a short period he advocated realism: in a letter of 1900 he declared himself anti-decadent, he found the movement “a self-torture”, and often no more than “a game of expressions” (“igranje z izrazi”), although he recognized that it had been useful, that thanks to it, more refined feelings and a more original expression had become part of Slovene literature.<sup>4</sup>

In subsequent years he developed an impressionistic technique and showed that “decadent” ideas about the coarseness and ugliness of everyday life as compared to the refined and noble character of art, which is “true life”, had influenced him and determined the direction he was going to take as a prose writer (his strong social, “leftist” orientation notwithstanding). He stirred up quite some criticism: he was regarded as a contradictory, inconstant, inconsistent young author. However, a younger generation of critics and readers was soon going to recognize him as a great contemporary Slovene prose writer.

Among Cankar’s series of “Vinjete” (Vignettes), which originated in 1897—99, some have, as I mentioned before, an unmistakably satirical character — others contain a story told in a plain realistic vein; but “Neznana pesem”, for example (The Unknown Song), one of the texts that were not included in the published series of Vignettes, is a typical decadent story about a composer

<sup>3</sup> F. Zadavec, *op. cit.*, 115—116.

<sup>4</sup> See Anton Ocvirk’s Afterword to Ivan Cankar, *Zbrano delo*, vol. VI: Mladostna proza, Ljubljana: DZS, 1967, 392. This is not just an afterword, but an elaborate study of Cankar’s early prose. This Cankar edition, with its extensive *apparatus criticus* and scholarly studies, is quite an achievement, perhaps the best critical edition of a literary classic among all South Slavs.



who is slowly dying and desperately searches for a melody he has known — and he finds it only the moment he dies.

A longer text, "Jesenske noči" (Autumn Nights, 1899) is full of fin de siècle gloom and pessimism. It is the story (in first person narration) of a sensitive, dreamy, unhappy, lonely soul. "There is nothing in the world for which I could be impassioned. My soul lacks something important, namely the social instinct. And not only that. It seems to me that my soul is not of this earth. It was born somewhere else and languishes now for its native soil..."<sup>5</sup> It is characteristic that the prose writer Ivan Tavčar wrote in connection with this story of the "delirium" of modernism; and that *Ljubljanski Zvon* (Aškerc) and the Zagreb *Život* refused to publish it...<sup>6</sup>

A number of Cankar's realistic texts deal with poor and exploited people, showing his genuine concern for the underdog. Yet, certain features distinguish even these stories from similar works by earlier 19th century Slovene writers, — those by Fran Levstik or Josip Jurčič, for instance — the tone, which is often elegiac, sometimes sardonic, — the pessimism and fatalism that speak from several of his works (which have been compared to Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*).<sup>7</sup> Also, there is the language, which is richer, the description, which is more detailed. Never before in Slovene literature was so much attention paid to visual and auditory sensations. "Before Cankar, Slovene literature almost didn't know colors", wrote one critic.<sup>8</sup>

Other new features of his prose are to be found in the style and syntax. Typical indications of a desire to stylistically embellish a text, or at least to bring out and draw attention to special stylistic features, are the preposition of the object, attributive or verb in the sentence, the anteposition of dependent nouns, or the interposition of a verb between attribute and noun. These devices are used much more regularly in verse than in prose and become more *en vogue* exactly in the modernist period among the South Slavs,<sup>9</sup> however, they are used by prose writers as well. In "Jesenske noči" we find, for example: "...kot da se ne dotikajo tal njene noge" ("as if didn't touch the ground her feet").<sup>10</sup>

In the first paragraph of the novella "Križ na gori" (The Cross in the Mountain, 1904) the main character, Mate, "gledal

<sup>5</sup> I. Cankar, *Zbrano delo*, vol. VIII, Ljubljana: DZS, 1968, 29.

<sup>6</sup> See vol. VI, 400–401 of Cankar's *Zbrano delo*.

<sup>7</sup> Janko Lavrin, *Aspects of Modernism*, London: Stanley Nott, 1935, 199.

<sup>8</sup> Anton Ocvirk in I. Cankar, *Zbrano delo*, vol. VI, 404.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. T. Eekman, "Some Aspects of Dučić's and Rakić's Versification," to be published in the Proceedings of the Conference on Serbian Symbolism organized by the Institute for Literature and Art (Serbian Academy of Science and Art), Belgrade, 1984.

<sup>10</sup> Vol. VIII, 36. The whole first paragraph of this page could serve as a model of modernist ("decadent") prose — and poetry as well.

je proti cerkvi in lepe so bile njegove misli" ("looked towards the church, and beautiful were his thoughts").<sup>11</sup> The poetical short story "Izpoved" (Confession, 1905) is full of such inversions ("Nagnila se je noč in srce, veselja trudno, je samo na lahko se vztrepetavalo" ("Fell the night and the heart, of joy tired, only lightly trembled")).<sup>12</sup> Numerous are the poetical or rhetorical figures: anaphors, anadiploses, chiasms etc. This does not imply that Cankar was a cultivator of a flowery language — on the contrary, on the whole his style is rather plain, without revelling in a profusion of stylistic effects, almost without metaphors or metonymy, without *recherché* words or turns of phrase. There are few digressions, and only short nature descriptions. For us, it is hard to believe that contemporary critics would decry him as an utterly decadent writer, in his themes as well as his images and style. In his later works this style becomes even more frugal.<sup>13</sup> But we do see an evolution from his early prose, juvenilia in which language and style were factors he paid relatively little attention to — to the much more polished texts he wrote only a few years after those earliest works.

In conclusion, it should also be remembered that a large portion of his writings dealt with erotic themes, and that dream and fantasy played a not unimportant role in them — so that thematically, too, Cankar was connected with the European modernist trend. In the fairy tale "Kralj Malhus", for example (King Malhus, 1899), an unpretentious "realistic" style is used, but then this little scene occurs between the student Milan and his beloved Milena: "“Milan, I'm so cold.” Milan got up, cut a piece of the clear sky and covered her with it. Her lips smiled and the stars were shining so brightly and so close by that her eyelashes fluttered"<sup>14</sup> (zatrepetale trepalnice).

Cankar died in 1918, 42 years old; he did not live to get acquainted with later developments in European prose writing — with the works of Joyce, Proust, Mann etc. But he contributed to a strong evolution of Slovene literature and occupies a unique position in the history and culture of his nation.

In Croatia a new magazine appeared in 1898, *Mladost*, and in the announcement of its launching the editors attempted to formulate the literary aesthetic conceptions of the Moderna, rejecting the various pressures on literature and art (both moral and political, also patriotic) and stressing the freedom of the

<sup>11</sup> Vol. XII, Ljubljana, 1970, 103. This work is stylistically particularly refined.

<sup>12</sup> Vol. XII, 239. See also 244—245 as a sample of lyrical syntax.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Janko Lavrin, *op. cit.*, 204: "He[Cankar] gave up his early impressionist exaggerations (...) and worked out a simple crystalized style."

<sup>14</sup> Vol. VIII, 245.

creative artist.<sup>15</sup> The movement was much more pronounced in lyric verse than in prose. Petar Skok wrote in 1900 that "the younger writers are caught by a kind of mystical vertigo: the *cult of the soul*... We got lyrical poetry of intimate feelings, of mood, and instead of an inexpressive and dry objectivism, we got a subjective, warm lyricism saturated with the dew of inner impulses... and a splendid, natural, elementary eroticism." But Sok concedes that "in the novella and the drama the production of the young was much weaker", although here, too, "lyricism is bursting out." And as "the sole positive demand" of the young writers he mentions "freedom of creation for the writer and an emphasis on creative individuality".<sup>16</sup>

Other critics expressed themselves more critically and in a warning tone about decadentism.<sup>17</sup> But, stimulated by numerous translations from German, French and other modernists and by a few critics,<sup>18</sup> younger poets and prose writers started to write in a new, different spirit.

Among the first writers of modernist prose were Branko Drechsler (the novella "Razbacana uda" of 1902), and especially Antun G. Matoš, about whom Milan Marjanović wrote in 1901: "He learned a lot from the peculiar American genius Poe, but there is also very much originality in him. Matoš is an unbridled talent, he does not know how to keep within bounds, but in that unrestrainedness there are many strokes of genius. He is a virtuoso in the full sense of the word, to an extent no other Croatian narrator ever was. His style is a mixture of oriental motley, luxuriance, fancy and Western refinement. His style is the most sparkling and brilliant of all newer Croatian letters — he commands his language as hardly anybody else, and is an inexhaustible source of the most bizarre and grotesque figures — but, at the same time, of the most tender words, the most dreamy accords of the soul, the most modern subtleties." So far this judgement by Milan Marjanović, Matoš' contemporary, who called him not a realist, but a true modernist and impressionist.<sup>19</sup>

When we look now at Matoš' fiction, we notice that much of it actually still fits in the realistic tradition. But there are modernist touches, which one detects mostly in the stories

<sup>15</sup> *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije, Zagreb: Jugoslav. Leksikografski Zavod, vol. VI, 1965, s. v. Mladost.*

<sup>16</sup> P. S. Mikov (pseudonym of Petar Skok) in *Svjetlo*, № 21—24, Karlovac, 1900, quoted from Milan Marjanović, ed., *Hrvatska Moderna, izbor književne kritike, vol. I, Zagreb: JAZU, 1951, 226—228.*

<sup>17</sup> Cf., for example, in the same volume Artur Grado (= Benko), 178—189, and Sperans, 88—89.

<sup>18</sup> The main supporting critic was Milivoj Dežman.

<sup>19</sup> In *Ljubljanski zvon*, № 8, 1901; reprinted in M. Marjanović, ed., *Hrvatska Moderna...*, vol. II, 49—50.



(originating in the years 1902—1911) collected in his *Umorne priče* (Weary Stories, a typical decadent title, by the way), — to begin with the introductory text (“O tebi i o meni, kao predgovor” — About You and Me, in lieu of a Foreword); it was written in 1908. This type of rhetorical prose text reminds us of Ivo Andrić’s books of lyrical prose *Ex ponto* and *Nemiri*, which originated some ten years later: “Oh, how tormenting it is for a human to flee for another human! Because I’m searching for him and he is not there. I am searching for a soul, but it isn’t there... Because I’m coming out of the dark, groping in the dark and dying in the dark. A sinister path from darkness into darknesses...”<sup>20</sup>

The majority of Matoš’ stories is realistic and often humorous, cheerful, somewhat reminiscent of Jan Neruda’s *Malostranské povídky* — Tales from the small side, in Czech literature, by whom he may have been inspired. But some are more pretentious in style, language and design. One of the heroes remarks: “We burned out in our love like butterflies on an evening lantern”.<sup>21</sup> Some of them take place in Paris, which, in itself, can be seen as a symptom of a more cosmopolitan, more modern spirit in comparison with the work of the earlier South Slavic realists.

A contemporary of Matoš, much less known, is Andrija Milčinić, born in 1877. In his work we find definite symbolistic features. His novella of 1902, “Nejačići” (a symbolic title in itself: something like The Feeblings), expresses sentiments of disillusionment and exhaustion, the “spleen” that is characteristic of decadent writing. Similar heroes and similar moods are to be found in his sketches and short stories (often rather poems in prose), collected in several volumes, in which he manifests a bent for the bizarre and for a refined, somewhat labored style.

His wife Adela Milčinić likewise wrote short texts in a vein of nostalgia and longing, of melancholy and dissatisfaction, mostly dealing with woman’s intimate, inner experiences. Her contemporary, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, represents the modernist predilection for ancient legends in her stories from Slavic mythology, *Priče iz davnine* (Tales from Long Ago, 1916).

This thematic direction was also followed by a much more talented prose writer and poet, Vladimir Nazor. His *Slavenske legende* (Slavic Legends, 1900) are in verse; but he also wrote prose, which is usually realistic; however, in some of his stories (the well known “Veli Jože” — The Big Jože, 1908, and others) there is a symbolic and a fantastic element superseding the objective narration. Many of his tales, like, for example, the *Istarske priče* (Istrian Stories, 1913) are written in a lyrical tone;

<sup>20</sup> A. G. Matoš, *Pjesme, pripovijesti, autobiografija* (series »Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti«), Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska—Zora, 1967, 224.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

and they often have a clear sensual, erotic aspect. Yet, I would not classify Nazor among the typical modernist prose writers of the early 20th century; on the whole, the predominant tone of his works is life confirming, cheerful, militant and often patriotic.

In the works of Milan Begović and Ivan Kozarac the influence of new trends shows mainly because of their intense preoccupation with sexual themes. More strongly seized by these trends is Janko Polić Kamov, the introducer of free verse in his poetry, who, in his short prose works, mostly in first person narration, tells subjectively and contemplatively about his intimate life, his inner experiences; he evidently attempts to express himself in stylized forms.<sup>22</sup>

Josip Baričević followed Polić Kamov and Matoš in his subjective approach, also in a certain anti-bourgeois attitude. Božo Lovrić wrote prose poems with certain modernistic traits. And, finally, Marin Bego liked to perplex his readers by tackling taboos, mostly of an erotic nature, and professed the need for the artist to free himself of all conventions. He often laid the action of his stories in foreign countries, but, as Branimir Donat remarked, he may have been cosmopolitan, he was not universal.<sup>23</sup> Also, he may have been daring in his time, but Bego's writings impress us, readers of the late 20th century, as at most somewhat frivolous, but on the whole very innocuous, and far from outstanding.

A later critic wrote in 1925 about Bego: "Matos put him in a place for which he does not qualify and where he cannot and will not maintain himself. The judgment of the critics of those days is historically comprehensible if we take into consideration the time when it was pronounced and the frame of mind then prevalent among the readers. It was a period replete with victories of what was then called the "Moderna," when battles were fought between artism and realism, between tendentiousness and anti-tendentiousness, when the Moderna wrote a queer slogan on its motley Europeanized banner: "The strong capacity of enjoyment" — a time when eccentricity was sought after and the imitated costumes of European writers were donned, a time of hollow individualism and aestheticism, when subject matter and themes were exclusively looked for and found in the naked body, in subtle sentiments or in some colorful foreign country."<sup>24</sup>

As the above enumeration shows, various Croatian authors of the period 1896—1914, approximately, were affected by at

<sup>22</sup> Cf., for example, the short, sometimes elliptic sentences of »Zalost.«

<sup>23</sup> In his introduction to Marin Bego, in the series »Pet stoljeća hrvatske književnosti«, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Ivan Nevistić in the literary magazine *Vijenac*, vol. III, № 7—8, 1925, quoted by Branimir Donat, see previous note, 8.

least some aspects of the modernist trend — although there was no single highly talented prose writer who would epitomize the movement as does Cankar in Slovene literature. There was such an eminent writer, but he belongs to a younger generation: Miroslav Krleža, whose first writings were printed in 1914. It is only with much hesitation that I include such a giant in this survey: he is an epoch in himself. However, our text would be very incomplete without at least a brief discussion of his early prose. Against the background of Croation literary modernism Krleža stands out by his greater talent as a writer and by his greater talent as a writer and by his power of expression. He exhibits some of the basic features of modernist prose: subjectivism, a special attention for style, a desire to rise above the regional realism of the preceding century in the scope, significance and geographic extension of his work, and a certain interest in the unreal, fantastic as a component of his fiction. What strikes most is the unrestrained subjective tone, even of his first prose writings. In his *Hrvatski bog Mars* (1917) everything is colored by the author's personality, his viewpoint. With the richness of vocabulary and power of diction so characteristic of Krleža, in long sentences and with numerous subordinate clauses, attributes, enumerations and repetitions (especially of full titles and names), an avalanche of words, he sweeps the reader off his feet, so to speak. His language is full of invectives and angry sorties:

“And that cretinous, detestable, accursed, stupid, idiotic so called imperial and royal discipline which as a damned poison runs through the veins of the Habsburg citizens for over a hundred years...”<sup>25</sup>

This diction is not just subjective, it is highly “engagé” and impassioned, giving utterance to a restless, dissatisfied, strongly critical spirit. The reader is constantly aware of Krleža's aversion, in this case of the bigwigs, the Austrian officers. He resembles the hero of his own novella “Hodorlahomor Veliki” (1919), who travels to Paris, but is disappointed, with the result that “every thought, every word and every line somehow turned into an atrocious, horrendous execration of those who will read this and those who will print it, of Paris and of the whole globe and of life and everything. Nothing but accusations, convulsions, curses and protests...”<sup>26</sup>

Just as *Hrvatski bog Mars* is a philippic against war and the military, especially the officers, and “Hodorlahomor Veliki” against Paris and modern European civilization, so “Veliki meštar sviju hulja” (“The Grand Master of All Rogues,” also 1919) is a critique of the modern city, and particularly of Zagreb. The

<sup>25</sup> Miroslav Krleža, *Hrvatski bog Mars*, in his *Sabrana djela*, Zagreb: Zora, vol. VIII, 56.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



same passionate, exclamatory tone sounds here: "Yes! That nothingness! That's the victor! And cursed be everybody who puts himself in the service of that Naught! However — everything is nowadays in the service of that Naught... All those people who are screaming in the streets, and the bishops and archdukes, and all organizations and all systems, and the war, and art, and philosophy and everything, everything serves that sneering, frightful archducal nothingness! Oh, how I hate you, how I curse you, how I despise you, sneering monster!"<sup>27</sup>

Krleža's sanguine tone and mode of expression differ widely from that of the earlier modernists, mostly because of his idiosyncratic personality, the multitude of visual and philosophical observations in his work, but also as a result of new trends that developed in European literature around and after the first World War and that affected his prose as well as his poetry and drama.

In "Vražji otok" (Devil's Island, 1923) the trains of thought of both father and son Kavran are followed, and this comes close to the stream of consciousness technique. It is again a text replete with accusations and screaming; the sensual and sexual element is also strongly represented. Much inner monologue is again to be found in "Smrt Tome Bakrana" (Toma Bakran's Death, 1924), and even more in "Cvrčak pod vodopadom" (The Cricket Under the Waterfall)<sup>28</sup>. It should be noted that, all modern devices and individual peculiarities of his style notwithstanding, Krleža here and there betrays his ties with the old narrative tradition.<sup>29</sup>

Krleža maintained the special features of his style, tone and methods in the prose of his Glembay Cycle and in all his novels. If "modernism" is not the best term to characterize his work, then "expressionism" may be more appropriate, and it has been applied to him.<sup>30</sup> However, we do not intend to deal with that question in this paper, in which the focus is on the first quarter of this century and the prose writers who reached their maturity in these years.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

<sup>28</sup> Published only in 1937, but dating from the twenties.

<sup>29</sup> E. g., in this sentence from »Smrt Tome Bakrana«: "Within the framework of our story Pavle Križanić does not play a big and important role, but it is necessary nonetheless to say a few words about him" (*ibid.*, 476). Follow several pages in which the author/narrator digresses about this Pavle Križanić. "Smrt bludnice Marije" (The Death of the Prostitute Marija, also 1924) opens with a short introduction in which the author-narrator, very traditionally, poses as a chronicler: "...we would like to report according to our chronicler's obligation..." (*Ibid.*, 520).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Branimir Donat, "Das politische Theater Miroslav Krležas und das Erbe des europäischen Expressionismus," *The Bridge*, № 22, Zagreb, 1970, 16—34.

In Serbia, not surprisingly, the same or similar tendencies can be observed. As far as foreign influences are concerned, it seems correct to state that the German-Austrian impact was stronger in Slovenia, also, but less so in Croatia, and virtually absent in Serbia, whereas the French connection was paramount among Serbian poets and writers in general. Here, too, a realistic prose tradition (usually with plots situated in the countryside or provincial towns) had established itself during the last third part of the 19th century, with Sremac, Veselinović, Matavulj, Lazarević, Ignjatović, Glišić and others. It has been demonstrated that this strict realism gradually obtained more psychological depth. Already in the work of M. Glišić and I. Čipiko, for example, modernist elements can be indicated.<sup>31</sup> Shortly after 1900 new breaches in this rather homogeneous system appeared. A new spirit emanated from the pages of the *Srpski Književni Glasnik*, founded in 1901 (the same year as *Mlada Hrvatska* in Zagreb).

"The first authentic narrator of a modern formal-stylistic and thematic orientation in Serbian literature in the beginning of the 20th century", writes Predrag Palavestra, "was Veljko Milićević (1886—1929), who instinctively felt and expressed the psychological and moral strain of man living in the modern epoch, and who, almost without any model, effected a true avantgarde achievement such as is rarely noted even in greater literatures with a more peaceful development and a more stable spiritual continuity".<sup>32</sup>

Milićević performed the remarkable feat of writing his first work, the novella "Mrtvi život" (Dead Life), published in the *Srpski književni glasnik* in 1903, when he was 16—17 years old; as Jovan Skerlić stated: "The youngest contributor this magazine ever had."<sup>33</sup> It is a rather mature story about the death of a beloved woman. This story and the next ones manifest an inclination towards psychological probing, towards the rendering of erotic impulses; their tone is melancholic, and even a title like "Dead life" is typical decadent.

Very often a central motif is the disappearance of a woman, or a man-woman relation that ends with failure. Sometimes the action takes place in Paris or some undefined foreign country (still an adolescent, Milićević lived for several years in London and France). Characteristic of many of these stories is "a patient collecting and accumulating of small, fine, delicate, often elusive details which indicate changes in the hero's innermost feelings

<sup>31</sup> Predrag Palavestra, »Doba modernizma u srpskoj književnosti (1901—1918«), I—III, *Književna istorija*, Belgrade, vol. XII, 1979, no's 45—47, 257 ff.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 278.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted by Z. Milićević in his introduction to Veljko Milićević, *Pripovetke*, vol. I, Belgrade: SKZ, 1930, XVII.

and which pass by without leaving a trace, like the shadows of clouds on the earth", writes Ž. Milićević about his father.<sup>34</sup>

His "Sentimentalne beleške" (Sentimental Notes), written in Paris and Toulouse in 1908—09, are a sort of poems in prose. The longest text he wrote, "Bespuće" (Blind Alleys) of 1912, was "an announcement of the upcoming penetrations by modern writers into the psychology of the city dweller, of intellectuals with a disturbed conscience and morbid sensitivity — into the subconscious currents and whirlpools of the mind and vague, decadent impulses toward the vanishing, the extinction and dissolution of impotent creatures in the inferno of the not comprehended and not accepted problems of life", to quote Palavestra again.<sup>35</sup> And Velibor Gligorić commented: "Dostoevskij is present in the inner monologues, the disruptions, hallucinatory psychic states and apparitions from the subconscious."<sup>36</sup>

Milićević, after writing some naturalistic stories about dark, primitive village life, and a small melodramatic novel, disappointed the expectations and stopped writing fiction. His place was taken, in modernist prose writing, by Isidora Sekulić (1877—1957), a talented woman writer who, although not very prolific, enriched Serbian literature with a few works characteristic of the spirit of the new times in literature.

Most of the 16 texts constituting her volume *Saputnici* (Fellow Travelers, 1913) appeared in magazines between 1910 and 1913. Only a few of these texts contain a narrative, fabular element: the first, for instance, "Bure" (The Barrel), and the fifth, "Umor" (Weariness), which largely consists of the complaint or confession to the "I" (a school girl) by a pitiful, wretched teacher who is tired to death of life. There are some imaginative "modernist" metaphors and similes in the story: "...outside, curtains of humid and miry murk began to hang before the windows"; "as if from some pit, slowly the dark voice of weariness and grief began to rise".<sup>37</sup>

Otherwise, Sekulić's manner of writing is rather unassuming, not stylized, — even though Matoš reproached her for her mannerisms and affectation.<sup>38</sup> But her work is subjective (which bothered Jovan Skerlić: he found her subjectivism "exaggerated and

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, XXVI—XXVII.

<sup>35</sup> *Op. cit.*, 278—279.

<sup>36</sup> Velibor Gligorić, »Veljko Milićević,« in his *Senke i snovi*, Belgrade: Prosveta, 1970, 23.

<sup>37</sup> Isidora Sekulić, *Saputnici, Sabrana dela*, vol. I, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska, 1961, 46.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Velibor Gligorić, »Isidora Sekulić,« in *Srpska književnost u književnoj kritici*, vol. VII: Književnost između dva rata, vol. 1, S. Velmar-Janković, ed., Belgrade: Nolit, 1972, 65.



narrow");<sup>39</sup> the personality of the author/narrator is usually central; and her observations and meditations reach a depth that was never attained or aspired to by the 19th century realists.

This new style, which has a certain affinity with Jovan Dučić's prose poems, and also with Ivo Andrić's lyrical prose, was also utilized in Sekulić's non-fictional, personally colored *Pisma iz Norveške* (Letters from Norway, 1914). Dučić considered her a singer of loneliness: "It seems", he wrote, "that nothing but solitude has ever accompanied this soul: what others have lived through, she has dreamed through — what others have sung about, she has cried about (. . .). This book [*Fellow Travelers*] is a series of variations on more or less the same theme: on misfortune on this earth, on grief not because life has passed, but because it never came."<sup>40</sup>

The elegiac character of her book appears from the titles of the individual sketches: "Čežnja" (Longing), "Samoća" (Loneliness), "Nostalgija", "Umor" (Tiredness), "Tuga" (Sorrow), "Glavobolja" (Headache), "Mučenje" (Torment), "Rastanak" (Taking Leave), etc.

Her contemporary Borisav Stanković (1876—1927), the most talented Serbian fiction writer of the first quarter of the century, was unmistakably affected by the new trends in European prose writing. Even though he did not travel to Paris, like Milićević and so many others, and was not following the literary developments abroad, his work reflects some of the distinguishing traits of modernism, which were obviously "in the air" at this juncture. His main work, the novel *Nečista krv* (Tainted Blood, 1910), is written from a subjective, empathic point of view, it focuses on human suffering, on human passions, on the conflict of his heroes with the dark forces of a narrow, conservative *milieu*, on the primary, compulsive power of the sexual drive, and on the individual inner experience and psychology of the two main characters. However close this novel still is to the traditional, veristic prose of preceding generations, it distinguishes itself both by the presentation of the heroes and by the tone of the narration.

A talent of more modest proportions than Stanković, Milutin Uskoković, was another prose writer who was under the impact of the somber disposition characteristic of his contemporaries, and who shows the urge to find expression for it. The titles of his early writings are again indicative: *Pod životom* (Under Life), *Vitae fragmenta*, *Knjiga za sumorne ljude* (Vitae Fragmenta, a Book for Gloomy People), "Morituri" (a cycle), "Na očevom grobu" (At Father's Grave), *Kad ruže cvetaju* (When the Roses Are Blooming, 1911), "Potrošene reči" (Consumed Words). His literary career was short: from 1905 to his death in 1915. In

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 61.

<sup>40</sup> Quoted by Velibor Gligorić, *op. cit.*, 109.

all of these works there are "considerable contradictions between a modern nervousness, a modern sensibility, and time-worn, bookish romanticism",<sup>41</sup> wrote Velibor Gligorić. His best work is the novel *Došljaci* (Newcomers, 1910), in which the action takes place in the city and the frustration of those who have to adjust to urban life is central. The hero, involved in a sentimental love drama and unable to cope with the adversaries of urban life, or of life in general, is a typical representative of "an entire generation of young dreamers, enthusiasts, but also desperate people, wanderers and suicides" with which literature of these days teemed.<sup>42</sup> Again, Uskoković pays much more attention than most 19th century writers did to the inner life of his hero, his dreams and hopes and, above all, his disillusionments and his defeat.

During and after World War I new talents appeared who continued the trends that had become clearly visible or vaguely apprehensible in the pre-war years. Ivo Andrić, who had published poems since 1911, wrote his two small books of lyrical, reflective prose, mentioned above, during and shortly after the war. They qualify him as a modernist by their genre, by their serious introspection, their partly elegiac tone. However, Andrić in the early twenties changed directions and became an author of realistic short stories and later novellas and novels, — one of the most outstanding and esteemed prose writers Yugoslavia has produced.

Miloš Crnjanski likewise evolved from a poet to a prose writer; he played a larger role as a modernist, being involved in new currents and literary fashions that spread all over Europe in the war- and post-war years. His *Dnevnik u Čarnojeviću* (Diary about Čarnojević), published in 1920, was created during W. W. I, and it is, before anything else, an anti-war book. "I'm a soldier. Oh, no one knows what that means."<sup>43</sup> That "Oh!" is characteristic of the modernist way of expression. Soon, however, the "I" turns to childhood and adolescent memories. "Sorrow found me at an early age. Nobody asked me where I was going and nobody was waiting for me when I came home."<sup>44</sup> Here we see the motif of the lonely soul, forlorn and misunderstood. The novella develops into a subjective report about the narrator's inner life, his memories and feelings, more than just an indictment of the war. It is a mixture of realistic details (sometimes hardly interconnected) and unreal fragments. Lyrical sentences are alternated by associations, visions, the transitions are often illogical.

<sup>41</sup> In his *Senke i snovi* ("Milutin Uskoković"), Belgrade: Prosveta, 1970, 64.

<sup>42</sup> Radovan Vučković in the afterword to Milutin Uskoković, *Došljaci*, Sarajevo, Svjetlost, 1966, 309.

<sup>43</sup> Miloš Crnjanski, *Sabrana dela*, vol. V: Proza, Belgrade: Prosveta, Novi Sad: Matica Srpska..., 1966, 9.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Here is just one example: "Wet moonshines, light foreheads come and lay down on the wells. The heart flutters, it mounts a falling star that rushes precipitantly down. It falls at our feet, we lift it and view it — it smiles."<sup>45</sup> In its language, *Dnevnik o Čarnojeviću* occasionally has poetisms or rhetorical inversions: "gledao u taj pun snega grad" ("looked at this full of snow city").<sup>46</sup> A large portion of the work, however, is more or less realistic: the unrealistic style and expression is largely limited to the first twenty pages.

Among Crnjanski's short stories (*Priče o muškom*: Tales of Manhood, 1920) there is "O bogovima" (About the Gods) describing a peculiar, fantastic event in a South American country; he also plays with the language, repeating certain short sentences. And there is "Tri krsta (Iz moga dnevnika, 1919)" (Three Crosses, from my Diary 1919), also unreal in its subject matter, stylized in its external form, containing short separate communications and images instead of a causally and logically proceeding story. However, in his *Seobe* (Migrations) (vol. I, 1929) and other subsequent novels he resorts to a basically realistic style and method.

Rastko Petrović has many traits in common with Crnjanski. He published his novel *Burleska gospodina Peruna, boga groma* (The Burlesque of Mr. Perun, the Thunder God) in 1921. Zoran Gavrilović wrote about it in his introduction to a post-W. W. II edition: "For a novel [Petrović] evidently didn't have enough breath and force, this poet of quivering nerves, completely drowned in the broad, unfathomable theme of human existence, which appears to him in various forms, but most of all as a mysterious, orgiastic, frenzied manifestation of physical love and sexual power".<sup>47</sup> When the book came out Ivo Andrić remarked in a review: "These pages are full of growth, movement, impulses, breeding, harvest, sweat, play, suffering, desire and laughter: Above all — laughter..."<sup>48</sup> And it is a strange, playful and cheerful work indeed, in which everything is unreal, dreamy. The characters are Slavic gods or mythical figures, who in chapter 3 turn into Christian saints; among the heroes in this chapter is Vincent van Gogh. Instead of regular, realistic narrative prose, we are confronted with a peculiar, continuous tittle-tattle about constantly changing themes, persons, phenomena and events without much coherence. Reading this text is rather tiring: there are few new paragraphs (sometimes 3 or 5 pages are without them), and sometimes the sentences are very long (up to twenty lines), consisting of long enumerations or other

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>47</sup> In his introduction to Rastko Petrović, *Burleska gospodina Peruna, boga groma*, Beograd: Rad, 1955, X—XI.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted *ibid.*, XIII.

parallel or paratactic constructions. All this dreamlike, unreal, playful, loose narration is quite a departure from the still predominant realistic Serbian prose tradition. In some short stories from the same period ("Nemogući ratar": "The Impossible Husbandman" and others) he tells in a somewhat solemn, archaic language about Christian and old Slavic legends and Medieval Serbian history. Much of his poetry from these years is formally close to his prose, as it consists of relatively long lines in free verse, without meter or rhyme.

Other prose works by Rastko Petrović (from the late twenties and early thirties) are less remarkable from the point of view of modernistic experimentation. His last work, the bulky novel *Dan šesti* (The Sixth Day) was first finished in 1935, but Petrović left for a diplomatic assignment in Washington (from which he never returned) and wrote an additional part in 1938. The first half of the book is divided into three parts, and only the first of these parts shows the author's endeavors to continue the avantgarde style he had used in his early prose. Dealing with the famous retreat of the Serbian army and thousands of civilians through Albania to the coast (1915) he developed "a rather ambitious and complex type of prose, with frequent shifts of scenes and changes in viewpoints, with a kaleidoscopic succession of characters, flashbacks, interpolated memories and associations, philosophical reflection and psychological analysis of some of the heroes, and with inner monologues printed in italics — in other words, the type of modernist prose that clearly derives from Proust and Joyce".<sup>49</sup>

Another Serbian man of letters, a surrealist poet with modernistic leanings in his prose was Dušan Matić. His volume *Bagdala* of 1954 contains some texts written in the early twenties. The lyrical prose of "Neka bude volja tvoja" (Thy Will Be Done), for example, has an obvious modernistic signature. There is no logical sequence, and a part, printed in italics, is surrealistic, associative prose. There is a sentence in the lyrical prose text "Mapa sveta" (World Map, 1923) that is very typical of surrealism in general: "I came to love the most arbitrary movements, the most accidental words, the freest, most absurd thoughts".<sup>50</sup> Other texts are philosophical contemplations (of a vague, traditional nature) rather than fiction; sometimes it is hard to draw the line between Matić's lyrical-reflective prose and his free verse.

The last name to be mentioned here is that of Momčilo Nastasijević, a notable, though difficult poet between the wars,

<sup>49</sup> Quoted from my article "Modernist Trends in Contemporary Serbian and Croatian Prose", *Fiction and Drama in Eastern and Southeastern Europe*, H. Birnbaum & T. Eekman, eds., Columbus (Ohio): Slavica, 1980, 123.

<sup>50</sup> Dušan Matić, *Bagdala*, Beograd: Nolit, 1964, 47.



whose short story volume *Iz tamnog vilajeta: From the Dark District, or the Realm of the Dark*, 1927, breathes gloom and doom. This prose is highly stylized, dense and compact, partly archaic (for the past tense almost exclusively aorists are used), with a rich vocabulary of unusual, archaic or folk words and turns of phrase.

We have not exhausted the Serbian writers who experimented with a new sort of prose and clearly departed from the long established romantic-realistic models that had been followed for so long. But the examples have shown that such modernistic prose did exist and developed in the first years of this century.

The last section of our paper is devoted to Bulgaria. Here, too, the realistic, daily life (Russian "bytovoj") prose type had become the habitual vehicle of prose writing; the struggle with and liberation from Turkey in the late seventies was a very prominent theme. And here, too, efforts were made to introduce more variegated narrative structures, different themes, more psychological depth and stylistic innovations. Anton Strašimirov, one of the prominent prose writers of the beginning of the century, manifests in his early works (the novellas collected in the volume *Smjaj i Sълzi: Laughter and Tears*, 1897; the novels *Smutno vreme: A Troubled Time*, 1897, *Esenni dni: Autumn Days*, 1902 and *Srešta: The Encounter*, 1904) an interest in psychology, a predilection for erotic themes and for a "liberated morality" under the influence of the Polish modernist S. Przybyszewski and the Russian M. Arcybašev. Several of his larger works created later, after the first World War (*Visjašt most: The Suspension Bridge*, a. o., and especially *Propast: The Disaster*, 1936), belong to the genre of the psychological novel. Yet in most of his works he stayed close to the tradition of realistic, *bytovaja* prose, also in his style. Only occasionally he deviated from pattern, for example in the play *Sъdba (Fate)*, a "dramatic poem" the action of which is laid in Bagdad. The same local-realistic pattern was adhered to by his contemporary Kiril Hristov, a poet who wrote also prose. A story like "Smirenje", published in a volume of 1937, has a more philosophical character.

Much in common with Strašimirov had Georgi Rajčev. He was likewise an admirer of Przybyszewski and Arcybašev, and also of Dostoevskij. The destructive effects of the erotic factor in man's life, the demoniacal side of human nature are shown in a number of short stories and novellas. He strove after overcoming the strong *bytovism* of Bulgarian prose,<sup>51</sup> widened its scope, and sometimes depicted a fantasy world, as in his "legend in verse" *Elenovo carstvo (Helen's Realm)*. Jordan Jovkov is another prominent prose writer of this period; although

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Elka Konstantinova in her introduction to Georgi Rajčev, *Sъčinenia v dva toma*, Sofia: BP, 1968, vol. I, 23.

his *Staroplaninski legendi* (Legends from Stara Planina) are more realistic than the title indicates, he has a predilection for romantic, sometimes unreal themes.

Ljudmil Stojanov expressed himself predominantly in verse, but some of the short stories he wrote after W. W. I are worth mentioning: "Otmāštenieto na Rafail Davidov" (Rafail Davidov's Revenge, 1919) and "Čajld Harold" (Childe Harold, 1919). They are written in the first person and, although they deal with the horrors of the war, they contain also reflections and reverie. The short novel *Srebārnata svatba na polkovnik Matov* (Colonel Matov's Silver Wedding, 1933) portrays this high Bulgarian officer in his daily surroundings, his marital conflict, his personal psychological problems with numerous flashbacks and memories (of the War of liberation) and inner monologues.

The most dedicated Bulgarian adept in the art of modernist writing was Nikolaj Rajnov, a distinguished, many-sided and very prolific art historian and writer. An interest in old legends and old history prompted him to write a book of stylized, archaic *Bogomilski legendi* (Bogomil Legends, 1912), furthermore *Videnija iz drevna Bālgarija* (Visions from Old Bulgaria, 1918), *Kniga na carete* (The Book of Czars, 1918), "Otdavna, mnogo otdavna" (Long, Very Long Ago, 1921) etc. He wrote a number of stories in a peculiar style, probably influenced by expressionism, which also graphically distinguishes itself from regular prose:

He doesn't rise, he doesn't go out.

He is waiting.

He is still waiting. He is waiting for Trianon [The story takes place in Paris]. He is waiting for a prophesy of the future.

But they have all left.(...)

The man suddenly came to his senses. His memory returned to him — with goggling eyes. With a hundred eyes. Horrifying"<sup>52</sup> The hero's inner life is rendered by sentences in parentheses. This style, this nervous, clipped language in short, partly elliptical sentences was something quite new and unusual in Bulgarian literature. The mysterious story "Sčupena stākla" (Broken Windows), the sensual and, in its content, rather sensational "Han" (The Inn) with its unreal, lugubrious atmosphere (it is told by a patient in a mental hospital), "Bar" (The Bar) which is full of hallucinations (a naked woman in a Paris street), passionate love, eroticism and horror (a bloody wedding), the adventurous, oriental "Vixruška" (Whirlwind), — they are quite a departure from the well known patterns of veristic prose writing. We find in Rajnov's prose of the twenties the same stylistic-syntactical features that we discussed above in connection with Cankar.

<sup>52</sup> Nikolaj Rajnov, *Sčupeni stākla. Pālno sabranie na sačinienija*, vol. XI, Sofia: S. Atanasov, 1939, 13.

In his later prose, in the thirties, Rajnov abandoned this stylish and often mannered type of narration and applied a simple, laconic style,<sup>53</sup> in his themes he became more socially oriented and politically conscious. This talented and versatile author deserves a much more detailed and in-depth analysis of his writings than we can offer here.

The above examples from Slovene, Croatian, Serbian and Bulgarian literature in the given period should suffice to demonstrate that prose writing in all these South Slavic literatures followed, obviously not an identical, but a similar course, stimulated by certain literary, philosophical, psychological, cultural as well as socio-political impulses. These impulses were so variegated, the authors involved were so much personalities in their own right that no homogeneous system of literary expression developed; but the parallels and similarities are striking enough to investigate. This has been done in the above paper in a superficial, generalizing way; it can only be hoped that more thorough research in this field will be done in the future.

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Bogomil Rajnov, »Životät i tvorčestvoto na Nikolaj Rajnov,« in N. Rajnov, *Izbrani proizvedenija*, vol. I, Sofia: BP, 1969, 447.