

Title: THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN
THE WORK OF THREE CONTEMPORARY
WRITERS OF THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA: MEŠA
SELIMOVIĆ, IVAN ARALICA, SLOBODAN SELENIĆ

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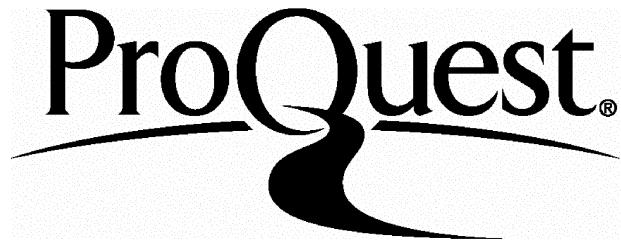
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Abstract

This dissertation deals with the novels of three contemporary writers whose work was published during the 20th century in the former Yugoslavia: Ivan Aralica (Croatia), Slobodan Selenić (Serbia) and Meša Selimović (Bosnia and Hercegovina). Within the framework of a feminist approach, the main objective is to evaluate to what extent certain stereotypes in the portrayal of female characters still determine writing and reading in the literatures of the former Yugoslavia at the end of the 20th century.

The first half of this dissertation explores the development of the feminist movement and its literary thought within the boundaries of the 'Western' world as well as within the boundaries of the former Yugoslavia. The aim is to create a starting point for the analysis of the work of these three authors. The second half of the dissertation examines the work of I. Aralica, S. Selenić and M. Selimović, focusing particularly on their main themes, the portrayal of their male and female characters and the way they interact with each other.

I have endeavoured to show in this study how the female characters portrayed in these novels find the conditions of overwhelmingly patriarchal societies imposed upon them. Also, my aim was to demonstrate how, by silencing their voices, by isolating them, using them only in order to strengthen the roles of their male characters and observing them solely within 'given' roles, these three representative male authors themselves contributed to the marginalization of women's roles in the literatures of the former Yugoslavia at the end of this century.

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Introduction

If we describe a literary work as a record of the imagination, we can see women in literature as subjects of these reflections. But, in order to create a female figure, an author consciously uses language and shapes his/her female characters. It is the author's mind that decides what would be a female role. The author becomes the creator of female behaviour, the one who *associates* a certain kind of behaviour with women. Once these images connect with the outside world and approach readers - they become a reality for themselves and involved in the process of shaping consciousness. They become a link between a reader and author, an instrument of influence. At this point, a novel stops being just entertainment, a neutral guide to the outside world. It is no longer simply a record of the author's imagination, or a companion helping us to perceive a 'supposed reality'. The role of the novel now becomes important as a source of beliefs and suggestions. For women readers, literature was always one of a limited number of socially acceptable ways in which at least certain women could reach out to a wider world than the domestic one. Consequently, an analysis of what

novels tell us about female characters and how they do it becomes important. This is the starting point for the present thesis. In addition, by examining the ways in which female characters are portrayed in the novels of three contemporary writers of the former Yugoslavia, Meša Selimović, Ivan Aralica and Slobodan Selenić, this thesis sets out to explore the extent to which these female characters are active, speaking subjects. It seeks to examine the way these texts elaborate women's notions of themselves and their potential. Furthermore, as the three writers come from different parts of the former Yugoslavia, and from different cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds, the thesis explores the distinct differences and similarities in their portrayal of female characters. As a first step, however, in order to cast more light on the conditions which patriarchal societies impose on female characters in these novels and to establish the relation between them and the texts, it is necessary to seek a proper understanding of the general themes developed by the respective writers in their works. The thesis therefore undertakes an analysis of the main subjects treated in their work. Additionally, as an integral part of this analysis and in order to draw a parallel with the representation of female characters, the thesis also examines the writers' treatment of their male characters and the degree to which they are relevant subjects in shaping an understanding of their literary ambitions.

The analysis of the work of the three selected writers draws on the experience of feminist literary criticism. Consequently, the first part of the thesis places literary criticism of the former Yugoslavia in the context of feminist literary criticism. It does not seek to comment on the relative value of Anglo-American and French feminist criticism,

but it takes as its starting point the idea that a writer's response to his/her personal experience of reality, the language used and characters portrayed, influence and modify a reader's understanding of 'supposed reality'. Also, in reflecting on Anglo-American-French feminist criticism, it seems important to point out that in seeking to discover a female literary tradition, feminist critics ought to ask themselves: who is the woman they are referring to? Their concern needs to reach beyond Western academia and to explore female cultures outside the Anglo-American-French World. For instance, Elaine Showalter's essay, 'A Criticism of Our Own: Autonomy and Assimilation in Afro-American and feminist literary theory'¹, was written in the year of the demolition of The Wall. In a sense the text then becomes an invitation for 'The Other Woman' to step in, particularly as it emerges that no part of the essay mentions Eastern Europe, or the rest of the world. In her examination of the historical development of Afro-American and feminist criticism, Showalter clearly demonstrates that she is aware of the importance of 'shared experience' for the further development of feminist literary criticism in general. But, she fails to appreciate that her expression 'shared experience' refers only to the Anglo-American-French environment. As far as feminist criticism is concerned, Showalter urges feminists to continue research into women's literary history and insists on the re-reading of texts for a better understanding of female identity. But once again, she refers to Western women's literary history and Western female identity. Further on, searching for a framework and a direction for future development on the surface of '*otherness*', Showalter does not accept 'mainstream' literary theory and she refuses to be

¹ R. R. Warhol and D.P. Herndl (ed.) Feminisms - an anthology of literary theory and criticism, Rutgers University Press, USA, 1991

marginalised. Yet, at the same time she fails to take account of 'The Other Women', women outside *dominant cultures*. Just as no one introduced and no one even alluded to the young woman translator at the conference described at the beginning of Showalter's essay, so she herself fails to acknowledge the distinct presence of women outside her own culture. Or maybe she has chosen to ignore them existence as '*inferior or flawed*'. Elaine Showalter is not the only Western feminist to demonstrate a visible degree of insensitivity within her reasoning about female identity. Using expressions created by economically dominant cultures such as '*Third World woman*' or '*First World feminists*', Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her essay 'French Feminism in an International Frame'², fails to break away from the linguistic marginalization of '*otherness*'. However, at least she acknowledges that the success of the feminist idea depends on the recognition of its own heterogeneity and that the survival of the feminist idea depends on the ability of feminists to recognise differences, and most importantly - to accept them and to learn from them. Spivak stresses:

*The academic feminist must learn to learn from them (Third World women) to speak to them, to suspect that their access to the political and sexual scene is not merely to be corrected by our superior theory and enlightened compassion.*³

Indeed, in order to deliver a full understanding of female identity, woman's achievements in history and the credibility of her experience, one must respond to the intellectual challenge of learning from '*otherness*' as well. It appears important to suggest that to learn

² M. Eagleton, Feminist literary theory, Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1986

³ ibid. p 38

about just one part of 'otherness' could create a dominant culture within 'otherness' itself. It could produce opponents, as every dominant culture does. That is to say, only when every 'side' is carefully examined, will it become possible to solve the Rubic Cube of different approaches and offer '*a criticism of our own that is both theoretical and feminist*'. Only an unrestricted concern for 'otherness', knowledge of its development in the past and its existence in the present, could be a beneficial instrument in the fight not only against sexism, but also racism and homophobia. Furthermore, it could be a guiding light in the process of discovering the truth about ourselves. The importance of creating shared channels of communication is undeniable, but an ability to understand that behind the word woman lie different cultures, ideas, abilities, strengths, fears, needs and dreams, is an imperative. If for no other reason, then just because, as Alice Walker says:

*It is in the end, the saving of lives that we writers are about. Whether we are 'minority' writers or 'majority'. It is simply in our power to do this. We do it because we care. We care that Vincent Van Gogh mutilated his ear. We care that behind a pile of manure in the yard he destroyed his life. We care that Scott Joplin's music lives! We care because we know this: The life we save is our own!*⁴

Clearly, for feminism itself the act of revision became more than a search for identity, or a chapter in cultural history. It became '*an act of survival*'⁵. Studying the writing of the past, feminist scholars 'discover' the literary heritage of women writers and raise questions about its existence under the suppression of male dominancy. Also, a

⁴ ibid, p 31

⁵ * The term of Adrienne Rich

reanalysis of old texts by male writers with a new critical approach, brings radical changes in understanding women's lives in the past, and leads feminist critics to understand how women have been directed to imagine themselves. In the light of these words, an analysis of the work of some literary critics from the former Yugoslavia in the 20th century demonstrates that so far many literary texts from the former Yugoslavia are decoded by a specific system of patriarchal values conveyed from one generation of male critics to another. Firstly, within their practice, most of them propose a primarily *male literary canon* which excludes many of those deserving female authors who did succeed in bypassing restricted access to publishing. Secondly, in their literary reviews many of the critics enforce particular views of literature, establishing in that way a narrow system of meanings that lacks the ability to comprehend literary texts in a female tradition.

By questioning the adequacy of these inherited conceptual structures, the present thesis aims to recognise different significances in the portrayal of female characters in the work of the three selected major contemporary Yugoslav male novelists. By analysing the images of their women and misconceptions about them in criticism from the point of view of a feminist reader, this thesis sets out to evaluate the extent to which certain stereotypes in the portrayal of female characters still determine writing and reading in the literatures of the former Yugoslavia at the end of the 20th century. Starting from the notion of Anglo-American criticism that the term gender has a psychological and cultural rather than a biological connotation, that it is a cultural and social category, this thesis intends to demonstrate how the literary interpretations of female characters in the novels of

these three authors are based entirely on male experience. That is to say, the thesis proposes to show that their portrayal does not separate the essential existence of a woman from that of a man. By identifying the way the portrayal of female characters differs from that of male characters, seeing them as mainly an extended portrayal of the male characters, the present thesis aims to demonstrate how women in these novels become no more than a reflection of men's needs, desires, ambitions and fears related to the outside world. In the light of the belief that the political objective of gender ideology in literature endorses the method of marginalizing female characters (by ignoring their autonomy and weakening their existence to merely passive characters), this study intends to show that there is a fundamental continuity in the novels discussed which places their female characters mainly in the private domestic world where their relationships with men are the core of their experience as women. It undertakes to demonstrate how the female characters portrayed in the novels of Meša Selimović, Ivan Aralica and Slobodan Selenić find imposed upon them the conditions and unwritten rules of patriarchal societies which regulate relationships between men and women. Their portrayal eventually becomes a mirror image of the imbalance and disharmony that exists in the relationship between men and women in the 'real world' as well as being an effective tool of patriarchy's gender policy goals. Finally, the present thesis sets out to establish how, by silencing the voices of their female characters, misrepresenting and isolating them, using them only in order to strengthen the roles of their male characters and observing them solely within 'given' roles, these three male authors themselves contribute to the marginalization of women's role in the literatures of

the former Yugoslavia at the end of this century.

FEMINIST LITERARY CRITICISM

The origins of feminist thinking

Feminism arose out of a belief in sexual equality and it is the only philosophy that challenges the patriarchal way of thinking and structures. Its shape depends on the societies where it is developed, if it is developed at all. It is moulded by different laws, different economic and cultural frameworks. Broadly speaking, feminism is recognised as a movement which formulates the interests of women. Describing it in these words one must not forget that feminism developed when a specific type of injustice was identified. To put the point another way: feminism is not just a movement from which more women than men will benefit, but it is a movement which strives to eliminate unfairness, inequality and injustice between people.

Feminists believe '*that women are human beings, that the two*

sexes are (at least)⁶ equal in all significant ways, and that this equality must be publicly recognised⁷ With the task of transforming society towards the recognition of equality '*in both public and private worlds*'⁸, feminism represents a political movement which demands admission to the benefits and obligations of the "male" world. In an effort to create equality feminism raises its voice against the nature of patriarchal tradition. It challenges patriarchal values, questions its morality and objects to its double standards. Feminism advocates the removal of the concept of power established by male dominant culture(s), power which helps them to control decisions that will affect entire populations.

Talking in terms of the 'male' world to transform society would, without doubt, involve revolution - in other words: it would include war, arms, guns, innocent victims. But, feminism is a human movement which believes in the teaching process. Talking in terms of feminism, *to transform society* implies the replacement of the patriarchal way of thinking by another. As Marilyn French emphasises, '*it moves and it will continue to move by influencing people, by offering a vision, by providing an alternative to the cul-de-sacs of patriarchy*'⁹.

Already, through this process, a large number of feminist scholars has emerged: historians, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists,... Feminists are influencing history if not tradition. They do not urge the creation of a 'New world' - they insist that changes should be made in this one. They do not urge the creation of

⁶ At least - because some feminist believe in the superiority of women and 'feminine' qualities

⁷ M. French, Beyond Power - On Women, Men & Morals, Cardinal, London 1991, p 477

⁸ ibid, p 478

⁹ ibid, p 480

'new values' - they are fighting against the abuse and misrepresentation of existing ones. Feminists support the replacement of patriarchal morality with a human morality.

Feminism and Literature (1960s -1980s)

In most cultures the literary canon is respected as the model and example for 'good' and 'bad' categories, moral values, 'rights' and 'wrongs' and the 'normal' life style. This is the reason why feminists became involved in literature and recognised it

*as an influential cultural practice embodied in powerful institutions. They are concerned to discover how literature as a cultural practice may be involved in producing the meanings and values that lock women into inequality, rather than simply reflecting the already existing reality of women's lives in literary texts.*¹⁰

Feminist literary criticism developed in the late 1960s, as a part of the international women's movement and it has established gender as an essential category of literary observation. In its early days, it focused on revealing the misrepresentation of women in literature. Criticism exposed the stereotyped images of female characters in literature and the absence of women from literary history. Feminist critics examined and highlighted the connection between the abuse of women in literature and in everyday life. Years of studying and analysing have helped feminist critics to prove that woman writers had a literature of their own. Turning the spotlight onto women's writing, feminists marked the beginning of a major re reading of

¹⁰ P. Morris, Literature and Feminism, Blackwell, Oxford, 1993, p 8

literature. Lost women writers were discovered, and the association between unique female talents and the literary tradition was underlined. The existence of a consistent and progressive tradition of women's writing became more than evident. A new approach to literature and the process of analysing women's writing involved a challenge to traditional literary criticism which was a largely male dominated tradition. Feminist critics realised that it was necessary to create a criticism of their own. The imperative became the establishment of a criticism which would force not just recognition of women's writing, but a serious reconsideration of the idea of literary study. Further, it would insist on transforming theoretical opinion about reading and writing that has been shaped completely by male literary experience.

The increase of theoretical questions in feminist criticism was the result of differences in critical thought between different countries and different cultures. In numerous conferences, seminars and lectures critics from different countries affected and influenced the development of international feminist criticism in their own ways. American feminist criticism established its institutional base in the academic world, in University, departments of literature and women's studies. On the other hand, feminist critics in Great Britain connected themselves with the environment outside the universities: radical politics, journalism and publishing. While the American critics are interested in an immediate and direct influence of feminist ideas on the classroom and the canon, critics in Great Britain contribute to international feminist criticism by analysing the bond between gender and class. Also, the British critics have given new attention to Marxist literary theory.

Despite these differences caused by different historical and social backgrounds, critics in both countries developed the same focus: the recovery of women's historical experiences, the revitalisation of women's experiences as readers and writers. '*Anglo-American criticism has been concerned with the specificity of women's writing, a tradition of women authors and an exploration of women's culture*'¹¹ says Mary Eagleton. Being generally more concerned with history (and literary history), Anglo-American feminism underlines the connection between an author, a text and the outside world which this text both represents and addresses, at the same time.

French feminist criticism '*proceeds from the psychoanalytic premises of Freud and Lacan, and adopts or adapts the deconstructive methods of Jacques Derrida*'.¹² Its interest is in the symbolic system of language, metaphysics and psychoanalysis. The author is not important - just the freedom of textual meaning which cannot be limited by the intervention of critical analysis. The difference between Anglo-American and French feminist critics lies in the way they observe 'woman' and in their own definitions of this word. Anglo-American critics respond to the word 'woman' as something real, biologically real. As a person who did and does exist. As a person who did and does express her involvement in history. French feminist critics are not necessarily engaged with a woman as a person, her historical position and achievements but with 'woman' who, as Jardine puts it, '*is not a person but a 'writing-effect'*'.¹³

Woman's studies have brought a new vitality to the study of

¹¹ M. Eagleton (ed.), Feminist literary criticism, Longman, London & New York, 1991, p 9

¹² R. R. Warhol and D.P. Herndl (ed.) , Feminisms - an anthology of literary theory and criticism, Rutgers University Press, USA, 1991, p. xv

¹³ M. Eagleton, op. cit, p10

literature. They include sociology, anthropology, history, religion, political science... All these disciplines have had an influence on feminist literary critics and development of literary theory. Targeting the institutional bases of literature and critical establishments, feminist critics have exposed the way in which the patriarchal concept of literature has excluded women's work from the literary canon and misinterpreted it. Of course, the fact that feminist critics have 'feminism' in common and share certain ideas does not necessarily entail their agreement on every issue. The differences among feminist critics, and the theoretical movements they represent, are described in Elaine Showalter's essay 'A Criticism of Our Own: Autonomy and Assimilation in Afro-American and Feminist Literary Theory'.¹⁴ She is one of the primary historians of feminist criticism who searches for categories and explains their evolution and in A Criticism of Our Own she outlines the dominant feminist methodologies through the 1980s. The essay was written in 1989 and it offers a short introduction to the histories of Afro-American and feminist criticism and theory. Shawalter stresses how both criticisms have shared '*the confrontation with the Western literary tradition*'¹⁵ and observing their evolution she expresses her hope that there is more to be learned from '*the shared experience in relation to the dominant culture*'¹⁶.

In her study of the criticism of Afro-American literature, Showalter gives a survey of its development from the period before the Civil Rights movement up to the late 80s. She reminds her readers that '*the ambition to have black writers merge with the mainstream of the American literary tradition*' dates from the 1940s and the 1950s and

¹⁴ R.R. Warhol and D.P. Herndl, op.cit., p 168

¹⁵ ibid, p170

¹¹ ibid, p169

it was articulated by the male writers and scholars who 'insisted that black literature should measure up to and be judged by the standards of the dominant critical community'¹⁷ But, one of the problems was that white critics have very often seen black writing as 'inferior or flawed'. Through struggle, by rejecting the idea of a uniform standard of criticism imposed by the white culture, fighting racist standards and insisting on the acknowledgement and acceptance of black identity and expression - the black intelligentsia won recognition. But,

*the black critical imagination was open to charges of sexism; the major texts of the Black Aesthetic ignored or patronised women's imaginative and critical writing, just as the Black Power movement, in Stokely Carmichael's other notorious phrase, defined the position of women as 'prone'.*¹⁸

However, this is not the only aspect that brings Afro-American and feminist literary criticism close to each other. Showalter explains:

*We have both followed traditional patterns in the institutionalisation of critical movements, from our beginnings in a separatist cultural aesthetics, born out of participation in a protest movement; to a middle stage of professionalised focus on a specific text-milieu in an alliance with academic literary theory; to an expanded and pluralistic critical field of expertise on sexual and racial difference.*¹⁹

Showalter identifies six phases in the development of feminist criticism. The first took the form of an androgynist poetics. It was the period of a single standard and denial of the existence of '*the uniqueness of a female literary consciousness*'.²⁰ The second phase is

¹⁷ ibid, p 171

¹⁸ ibid, p 172

¹⁹ ibid, p 170

²⁰ ibid, p 178

the feminist critique of male culture and the third: Female aesthetic celebrating women's culture. In the mid-1970s feminist scholars moved towards the fourth phase called by Showalter 'gynocriticism' - the study of women's writing. By the late 1970s the focus was on 'the feminine' in philosophy, language and psychoanalysis. It marked the fifth phase known as gynecics. The last phase of feminist literary criticism is represented by gender theory which is defined by Showalter as 'the comparative study of sexual difference'.

Elaine Showalter ends her essay by trying to answer her own dilemma: 'Where do we go from here?'. Being aware that '*feminist critics today can no longer speak as and about women with the unselfconscious authority of the past*' and that '*our dilemma has even reached the pages of the New Yorker*'²¹, she questions the possibility of developing '*a feminist criticism of our own*' without the existence of subjectivity or group identity. Showalter strongly argues that feminist critics '*can't afford to settle for mimicry or to give up the idea of female subjectivity*'.²² She also insists that critics can not desert their studying of women's literary history and believes that through careful reading of women's texts feminist critics will develop a criticism of their own: theoretical and feminist.

Feminist criticism in the 1980s

As mentioned before, feminist criticism in the 1980s moved away from androgyny and became concerned with the symbolic construction of gender and sexuality in literature. Demanding

²¹ ibid, p185

²² ibid, p186

criticism which would unite the literary experiences of both women and men and complete a modification in the understanding of women's literary heritage - feminists found themselves searching 'the minefield' of critical methods. As its subtitle suggests, Annette Kolodny's essay 'Dancing through the minefield'²³ (1980) offers 'some observations on the theory, practice, and politics of a feminist literary criticism'. With the aim of transforming the antipathy between feminist critics and critics of feminist criticism into a dialogue, she offers three propositions. The first suggests that '*literary theory is a fiction*', a creation of the past which we decode in the present using our own system of clarification. In her second suggestion she argues that '*we are taught how to read*' and that our reading expectations are 'fixed' by our reading experience. Out of this she shapes her third proposal which suggests a re-examination of the feelings and attitudes which activate our critical method and judgment.

Like many other feminist critics, Kolodny stresses that the shape of feminist literary criticism indicates an imperfection, an inadequate system '*painfully lacking in programme*'. But so far she does not offer an original mode either. Instead she proposes a pluralistic approach. She refuses to recognise the usage of a single methodology and she sees the development of '*a playful pluralism responsive to the possibilities of multiple critical schools and methods, but captive of none*'²⁴ as the mission of feminist literary criticism. But even Kolodny admits that her suggestions cause some difficulty. She acknowledges that the idea of pluralism '*seems to deny the hope of establishing some basic conceptual model which can organise all data* -

²³ R.R. Warhol and D.P. Herndl, op. cit., p 97

²⁴ ibid, p 111

the hope which always begins any analytical exercise.' ²⁵ 25

Adopting the label of pluralism Annette Kolodny recognises more than one principle of being, but will this necessarily initiate her equal position inside a pluralism itself? If one understands plurality as a plural number, the greater number, more than half, a majority over any other - then one recognises a possibility for feminist criticism to become a minority within pluralism. Can feminist criticism take the risk of relying on pluralism in the hope that it will not become marginal again, and, on the other hand, vulnerable and defenceless outside the pluralism? The use of multiple methodologies and approaches can easily deliver a confusion in literary inquiry and it threatens feminist criticism with the possibility of losing its own identity. This is to say: if one examines pluralism as a concept that was offered by the establishment based on the male dominant culture - one can identify an attempt to nullify the importance of the opposition in trying to create a field where the challenger would feel accepted. This is why not all feminist critics recognise Kolodny's advocacy of pluralism as an acceptable approach. Her proposals did not find much support in the essay 'Storming The Toolshed' ²⁶ by Jane Marcus in 1982. She opposes Kolodny's suggestion for '*the playful pluralism*' as a tool of feminist literary criticism and strongly argues against a '*liberal relaxation of the tensions*'. She warns that '*it is far too early to tear down the barricades*' ²⁷ and insists on a refusal of the patriarchal perspective of literature. Marcus believes that feminist critics must refuse to observe their mission as a competition where there are '*ornamental pots from the headmaster*' to be won. She

²⁵ *ibid*, p 111

²⁶ R.R. Warhol and D.P. Herndl, *op. cit*, p 138

²⁷ *ibid*, p138

experiences the presence of free speech for feminist critics but restricted admission to discourse. Responding to the fact that male theoreticians are not interested in the contribution of feminist theorists, she refuses to beg for their acknowledgment. Marcus urges male theoreticians '*to make reparations; to establish secure women's studies departments, chairs of feminist literary criticism and women's history, to read the work of women and black writers, and to teach it.*' She encourages the continual development of intellectual activity and underlines the belief that feminist critics will have a theory of their own when their practice develops it, quoting the words of Virginia Woolf, from A Room of One's Own:

*Masterpieces are not single and solitary births, they are the outcome of many years of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice.*²⁸

However, Kolodny's essay shakes up feminist critics by making them aware of the reasons for which they should embrace pluralism. But not just feminist critics. Somehow this essay shakes pluralism itself and its position inside a male dominant culture. Insisting on literary history as a fiction she defines an established canon as a fiction too. Observing reading as a learned activity Kolodny challenges us all to '*relearn and refine*' our activity. Questioning '*the inherent biases and assumptions informing the critical methods which (in part) shape our aesthetic responses*'²⁹ she makes us responsive to the need of choice '*between having some awareness of what constitutes (at least in part) the bases of our aesthetic response and going without such an awareness.*'³⁰

²⁸ ibid. p 140

²⁹ ibid. p 107

³⁰ ibid. p 107

How important this is for feminism itself may be seen also in Marcus' essay. Firstly, it could be very helpful as an approach in the attempt to resolve, what Marcus calls the '*battlefields (race, class and sexual identity) within each one of us*' and the '*battlefield where we wage these wars with our own feminist colleagues*'.³¹ Secondly, this is exactly what Jane Marcus expects and demands from Quentin Bell (Virginia Woolf's nephew, official biographer and owner of her literary estate) detecting his mockery of Woolf's feminism and her contribution to political thought. She insists that he should 'relearn and refine' his reading activity:

*I believe Bell labors under the misconception that feminism is not political - a major mistake - as well as under minor misconceptions that pacifism in World War II was not a respectable political stance (it was certainly not popular) and that Virginia Woolf could not have been much of a socialist because she didn't work in Labour Party Committees or associate with the working classes.*³²

Women's Writing

In her book A literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing³³, Elaine Showalter raises the question of the development of women's writing, focusing on British women writers who published their work between 1840 and 1960. She draws the attention of feminist critics to novelists who contributed to the development of women's consciousness but who are largely forgotten and excluded from literary history. She stresses:

31 ibid. p 138

32 ibid. p 148

33 E. Showalter, A literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing, Virago Press, London, 1978

Having lost sight of the minor novelists, who were the links in the chain that bound one generation to the next, we have not had a very clear understanding of the continuities in women's writing, nor any reliable information about the relationships between the writer's lives and the changes in the legal, economic, and social status of women.³⁴

Showalter divides this period from 1840 - 1960 into "three major phases of the women's tradition: a 'Feminine' phase (1840 - 1880) - a period when woman writers imitated male modes and used male pseudonyms; a Feminist phase (1880 - 1920) - a protest against male standards and values, and the phase when women won the right to vote; and a third, 'Female' phase (1920 - 1960) which resulted in self-discovery and the search for an independent female identity.

Showalter argues that '*it is important to see the feminist literary tradition in relation to the wider evolution of women's self-awareness and to the ways in which any minority group finds its direction of self-expression relative to a dominant society...*'³⁵ She challenges and questions literary history and tradition. Her task is to prove the existence of a continuity of female literary tradition. Looking at the work of lesser known women writers she underlines the fact that the successful evolution of a female literary tradition did not happen just because of women writers whom everyone accepts as 'great', but also because of all of those who are referred to (even by Showalter) as 'not important' and 'minor' artists. The contribution of these women writers to the female literary tradition must not be overlooked. Thanks to them, as Showalter says, '*when we look at women writers collectively we can see an imaginative continuum, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems, and images from generation to*

³⁴ R.R. Warhol and D.P. Herndl, op. cit, p 271

³⁵ ibid, p 273

*generation.*³⁶ It is of course, questionable that all these women would accept the feminist badge and what they would understand by the word 'feminism', or, how much it would affect their writing. However, the breakthrough of Showalter's research is that it highlights the importance of the construction of 'collective work'. It underlines the necessity of research which will go beyond the 'great' who, for various reasons, became dominant writer-figures in the female literary tradition. It underlines the necessity of research which would go beyond dominant female literary traditions. To go further, it underlines the necessity of research that will include more than Anglo-American-French culture, research which would not, even unconsciously, create female dominant cultures. Only then will we be able to talk about a feminist literary tradition in 'broad terms' and 'in relation to the wider evolution of women's self-awareness.'

In her attempt to initiate such broad analysis and support its course, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, in her essay 'French Feminism in an International Frame'³⁷, asks herself '*not merely who am I? but who is the other woman? How am I naming her? How does she name me?*'. Having in mind these problems Spivak insists on the existence of an illusory distinction between Anglo-American and French feminism. Referring to the 'Third World woman' she finds herself and the rest of feminist academia caught in '*a web of information retrieval inspired at best by: what can I do for them?*'.³⁸ She becomes one of only a few who realised (or are at least willing to) that '*this articulation was part of the problem.*'³⁹ So she rephrases the question as: '*What is the*

³⁶ ibid, p 273

* Showalter's terms

³⁷ M. Eagleton (ed.), Feminist literary theory, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986

³⁸ ibid, p 37

³⁹ ibid, p 37

*constituency of an international feminism?'.⁴⁰ During her research she discovers that there is 'indeed an area of feminist scholarship in the U.S. that was called "International Feminism"; the arena usually defined as feminism in England, France, West Germany, Italy, and the part of the Third World most easily accessible to American interests: Latin America.'*⁴¹ Gayatri Spivak recognises that the time has come when a 'First World feminist must learn to stop feeling privileged as a woman.'⁴² It is time to realise that the experience of women outside 'The First World' is valuable, too. It is time to learn that this woman has to become not an object of 'The First World influence' and its attempts to colonise her - but **a subject in feminist research.**

40 ibid, p 37

41 ibid, p 37

42 ibid, p 38

**DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS
IN THE FORMER YUGOSLAVIA
(from the end of the 19th century up to the present days)**

I. Before the Revolution

The struggle for equality between the sexes began before the state of Yugoslavia even existed. Although they were surrounded by different economic and social realities, religious and cultural heritages, all women in this part of Europe had something in common: '*The law in all parts of the future Yugoslav Kingdom relegated women to the position of minors, dependent on the male members of the family or the husband throughout his lifetime.*'⁴³ They had no right to vote and the Yugoslav constitution of 1921 not only refused them this right again but did not change anything in women's legal status. The study of Yugoslav women's lives from the end of the nineteenth century until the present day suggests three periods in their struggle to achieve equality:

1. The Period before the Second World War
2. The Second World War and post war period

⁴³ B.J. Webster, Women and Revolution in Yugoslavia, Arden Press, Denver Colorado, 1990, p 26

3. The 1970 s and the development of 'new feminism'

Without intending to offer a detailed account of women's history in the former Yugoslavia, it seems appropriate to give a brief survey which would suggest that Yugo-feminism was not imported from the West nor imposed by the West. It developed as historical circumstances produced changes which affected women and organised them around their own demands. Just as cultural, economic, social and political differences created different forms of subordinations in different countries, equally so they also created different demands articulated in different forms of feminism. It is appropriate to underline once again the great importance for these forms to be closely inter-connected, acknowledged in their own relevance and recognised as equally valid forms in raising awareness of injustice against women in general

By the end of the nineteenth century, as Barbara Jančar-Webster writes, two forms of women's culture had developed on the territory of the future Yugoslavia: rural and urban. As far as rural culture was concerned patriarchal rules with firm Muslim or Christian traditions were effectively established.

Women were subordinated to men, working at their 'women's tasks' and ensuring the harmony and smooth-working of the household. Their work was considered a separate contribution to the home, of less significance than men's⁴⁴

In Muslim communities women were kept in the home without the possibility of entering any educational training, covered from head to foot, and polygamy as well as 'bride price' were much in practice.

⁴⁴ ibid, p 28

B.J.Webster also observes the role of rural women during wartime and notes that their participation in various roles dates from the distant past and that by the end of The First World War '*a woman could be warrior, nurse, courier and rearguard supporters of the front-line soldiers, and, indeed, in many parts of the country it was her duty to perform these functions*'⁴⁵ In Webster's findings women's urban culture arose with the development of nationalism at the begining of the 19th century. As demands for the development of intellectual skills grew with the awakening of national identity, some educated women were given a chance to come forward promoting nationalisms and teaching the national languages. Their teaching became extremely important for transmiting the national culture. At the same time it brought them into contact with social and economic problems so they articulate their first demand: equal pay. At the end of the 19th century Yugoslav women became forthright in their economic and political demands. About this period Barbara Jančar-Webster discovers:

*The first women's self help working society formed in Croatia in 1874. In 1884, a similar society was formed in Rijeka. The first Slovenian women's paper, Slovenka (The Slovenian Women), was published in Trieste in 1887. Women strikers were first seen in tobacco, textile, and coal towns.....Muslim women in the Socialist women's organization in Skopje demonstrated for the removal of the veil and the chador. In Macedonia under the supervision of the IMRO committees prior to the Ilinden Uprising peasant women turned out 300 and 400 strong to demand the release of political prisoners and to make known the cause of Macedonian independence before foreign consulates and embassies.*⁴⁶

Furthermore, this period was also the moment of the establishment

45 ibid, p 31

46 ibid, p 33

of the first women's organizations which were in Webster's belief '*the cornerstone of women's political and humanitarian activities in interwar Yugoslavia*'⁴⁷ These interwar activities were accomplished mostly by four women's organisations: the Women's Union, the Alliance of the Women's Movement, the Woman's Party and the Yugoslav Association of University-Educated Women. Their activities were various - humanitarian objectives, demands for women's economic equality and as the most important political activity: the demand for women's right to vote. Remaining independent and refusing to promote the interests of any political party but their own, these women unquestionably contributed immensely to the evolution of future women's movements in Yugoslavia. As Webster notes:

*Their autonomy and refusal to take political sides or to endorse the Socialist cause is the main reason they are officially labeled "feminist" today in Yugoslavia and given short shrift in the history of the interwar period. In the sense that they acted independently of male direction, they could be labeled more "feminist" than their Party-subordinated Communist sisters, although they did not espouse any radical rearrangement of existing society.*⁴⁸

As the Second World War drew nearer, Yugoslav women participated in anti-war demonstrations, while continuing at the same time their campaign for equal rights in work, equal pay, the protection of women during pregnancy and women's political rights. At the same time the Communist Party, encouraging women to integrate into the revolution, stepped out with a programme that '*naturally referred to the outstanding claims of women upon the existing social order, the most important of which was the right to vote.*'⁴⁹

⁴⁷ ibid, p 33

⁴⁸ ibid, p 36

⁴⁹ ibid, p 38

II. Revolution and post revolution

The women of Yugoslavia participated en masse in the people's revolution which has taken place in our country; they were aware of the historical developments in the world, they were conscious that the national liberation struggle was a struggle for the happier future of our peoples, the happier future of the women themselves, a struggle, finally, for equal rights for women.

'Women of Yugoslavia' 50

According to the film 'A League Of Their Own', women's professional baseball in America was born during the World War II. While the boys were fighting the Germans, American women walked out of their kitchens straight onto the baseball fields. Advancing in their leagues they took some important steps towards proving and achieving gender equality. Meanwhile, Yugoslav women were gaining their equality points on the 'killing fields'. Taking an active part in the fight against the occupier, in the struggle for a new Yugoslavia and a happier future for working people, they '*shouldered as much of the burden of war and liberation as did men*'⁵¹ In the words of Andjelka Milić

The civil, political, and social rights that women acquired and that were given legal shape after the war, were not presented on a silver platter by

50 Central Committee of The Women's Anti-fascist Front of Yugoslavia (ed), The Women of Yugoslavia building Socialism, Ljudska Pravica, Ljubljana, 1948, p 1

51 A. Milić, 'Women and nationalism in the Former Yugoslavia' in Gender Politics and Post Communism by N. Funk and M. Mueller (ed), Routledge, NY & London, 1993

*the communist authorities, but have been won and earned.*⁵²

Barbara Jančar Webster divides Yugoslav women who participated in the National liberation war into three categories: women fighters, women in the rear and women leaders. The motives for which Yugoslav women joined the partisan forces and national revolution were varied. On the one hand personal tragedies, such as burned homes and massacred members of families, forced many of them to join the partisans. On the other hand, for many, life in the woods was much safer than life in villages or cities where they were daily exposed to the danger of unpredictable reprisals. These were not the only reasons however: as Webster points out, some women, particularly the more educated, joined the partisans for political or idealistic reasons. She states: *'These had either been active in the prewar anti-Fascist or women's movement, or experience during their educational years had led them to become convinced nationalists.'*⁵³

Women who served in the rear were the majority of the women participants in the national liberation. Most of them were of peasant origins of all ages, members of AFŽ⁵⁴, concerned above all with national freedom. Their duties were to collect supplies, take care of the sick and wounded, and mobilise as many women as possible for the partisans' cause.

The third group of women- women leaders - were according to B.J. Webster a more highly educated group than the average woman in Yugoslavia at the beginning of the war. Her research indicates that

52 ibid., p 111

53 ibid., p 51

54 AFŽ - Antifašistički front žena - A Women's Anti-Fascist Front

*for the women leaders, the dominant impetus to work for and ultimately to join in the Party came from childhood and student perceptions of national and social injustice, juxtaposed against the increasingly real threat of Fascist expansion abroad and dictatorship at home. Women's issues tended to be marginal to these central concerns.*⁵⁵

Nevertheless, for the first time the work of Yugoslav women, at least the majority of them, was valued and appreciated outside their homes. Becoming of great importance for an aim outside their family, their knowledge gained respect. They obtained recognition of all political rights, the right to vote (February, 1942 'Foca Ordinance') and a new sense of self-esteem. It was the beginning of their own liberation. Or as Andjelka Milić suggests, like many anti-colonial liberation wars in Third World countries following World War II, Yugoslavia's national liberation in the period between 1941 and 1945, was '*the wellspring for women's spontaneous emancipation from their traditional patriarchal subordination in the family.*'⁵⁶

After the war, women voluntarily participated in the reconstruction of the country in various projects. Leaving behind their patriarchal families and the fate: women = mothers and housewives, they went to towns and factories; they devoted themselves to the creation of a new social order - socialism.

For example, the women of The People's Republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina contributed 25,760,140 man-days in various drives, during a period of three years. The People's Front, a united organisation of our working people numbering 7,000,000, mobilises and organises the people for voluntary work projects. The Women's Anti-fascist front, as a component part of the People's Front, mobilises the women both for these work drives, and for all other work

⁵⁵ ibid. p 71

⁵⁶ A. Milić, op.cit. p 111

*connected with our socialist construction...Women of Zagreb contributed 191,123 man-hours on the construction of the Zagreb-Belgrade highway. During the competition, the Women's Anti-fascist front arranged to have 11,000 of children cared for. 10,850 women from various villages of the People's Republic of Macedonia participated in the construction of co-operative centres.*⁵⁷

Taking an active part in the war and afterwards in the construction of the new order that would grant them 'a formal legal equality of genders' - the right to education, equal pay and the right to abortion - Yugoslav women continued the process of creating room for themselves in a new system. But, as Andjelka Milić accentuates, '*while this system generously meted out social justice on the one side, however, it reduced civil and political rights and liberties on the other.*'⁵⁸ She argues that despite all the rights that Yugoslav women won under communism they remained dependent and limited by their male comrades. For example, during World War II, the Women's Anti-Fascist Front played an important role in the liberation of women, demanding that they be treated, for the first time, as subjects rather than as objects. But, as the Yugoslav Communist Party supervised and censored all its activities soon after the war, The Front became just one of the many organisations to practise nothing but the power of the Communist party conducted by men. Finally, AFŽ was abolished by the same Party in 1950. There is no doubt that not having an autonomous women's organisation to represent their rights, needs and demands did contribute to a large degree to the political marginalization of Yugoslav women. Besides, the government never encouraged the development of a specific policy dealing with women's rights or women's needs nor were the rare

⁵⁷ Central Committee of The Women's Anti-Fascist Front of Yugoslavia, op.cit, p 30

⁵⁸ ibid, p 111

women politicians necessarily interested in defending women's rights. This resulted in women's disappearance from the political and public spheres. Being absolutely outnumbered on the political scene by their male compatriots Yugoslav women faced extensive difficulties in their attempt to make any further progress in attaining real gender equality. Probably the best documentation for the argument that women have been pushed aside is Table 1⁵⁹ (page 36-38) which demonstrates the number of women on the political scene in Yugoslavia in 1974. One remarkable detail to note in this Table is the fact that the president of the Conference of Social Activity for Women was a man.

Women of Yugoslavia were becoming less and less involved in the political activities and focusing more on their private lives. The leading party did not have any problem with this. Likewise, there is a thesis that accentuates the existence of a system which encouraged the disappearance of women not only from the present but even from the historical past. Becoming aware that (even before World War II) *'Yugoslav women had not marched through history's events like numb shadows'*, Lydia Sklevicky in her essay 'More Horses Than Women' raises the question:

how was it possible that a tradition of struggle, of commitment with the highest personal costs, and which could have energised generations of women, had been simply wiped out of my generation's historical consciousness? Did it happen through sheer negligence or was there a system to it?⁶⁰

⁵⁹ From B.J. Webster, Women under Communism, appendix, JHU Press, Baltimore & London, 1978

⁶⁰ L. Sklevicky, 'More Horses Than Women: On the difficulties of Founding Women's History in Yugoslavia', in Gender & History ISSN, Vol.1, No 1, Spring 1989

Table 1

YUGOSLAVIA, 1974

Federal Government

Office of the President of the Republic

	Men	Women
Presidents	12	0
Chiefs	13	2
Assistant Chiefs	9	0
Council of the Federation	12	3
Presidents	1	0
Members	94	11
Council of National Defense		
Presidents	1	0
Secretaries	1	0
Members	27	0
Coordinating Commission for Constitutional Questions		
Chairmen	1	0
Deputy Chairmen	1	0
Members	10	0
State Presidency		
Presidents	1	0
Vice-Presidents	1	0
Secretaries-General	1	0
Assistant Secretaries-General	1	0
Members	20	0
Counselors & Chiefs	4	0
Council Chairmen & Presidents	15	0
Council Secretaries	4	0
Council Members	43	0
Federal Executive Council		
Presidents	1	0
Vice-Presidents	2	0
Members	22	2
Secretaries	1	0
Chiefs	2	0
Committee Presidents	7	2
Committee Members	20	0
Commission Chairmen	8	1
Commission Members	21	1
Commission Secretaries	2	0
Assistant, Deputy & Undersecretaries	5	0
Federal Economic Council		
Presidents	1	0
Secretaries	1	0
Federal Legal Council		
Presidents	1	0
Social Committee Service		
Presidents	2	0
Federal Administration		

Federal Government (continued)

	Men	Women
Federal Secretaries	10	2
Deputy Secretaries	8	1
Assistant & Undersecretaries	60	3
Counselors	39	3
Inspectors	2	1
Directors, Commanders & Chiefs	45	2
Assistant Directors	11	0
Federal Organizations		
Directors	19	1
Deputy & Assistant Directors	10	3
Counselors	3	0
Federal Assembly		
Presidents	1	0
Vice-Presidents	6	0
Secretaries-General	1	0
Counselors	2	1
Chiefs	1	1
Service Secretaries	3	0
Commission Presidents	28	2
Commission Vice-Presidents	7	0
Commission Secretaries	4	2
Chamber Presidents	4	1
Chamber Vice-Presidents	5	0
Chamber Secretaries	3	2
Chamber Members	567	76
Chamber Counselors	0	2
Committee Presidents	29	6
Committee Secretaries	1	1
Federal Judiciary		
Court Presidents	3	0
Court Secretaries	1	0
Court Judges	41	2
Public Prosecutors & Defenders	2	0
Assistant Prosecutors & Defenders	5	0
Republican & Provincial Administration		
Executive Council		
Presidents	8	0
Vice-Presidents	13	2
Secretaries	20	0
Members	110	8
Council Presidents	4	0
Commission Presidents	22	2
Chiefs & Directors	9	0
Commission Secretaries	1	0
Committee Presidents	13	0
Committee Secretaries	4	0
Republican & Provincial Administration Secretaries		
Assistant, Deputy & Undersecretaries	85	4
Directors, Commanders & Chiefs	77	2
Council Presidents	44	2
Council Vice-Presidents	6	0
Assistant Directors	6	0
Commission Presidents	4	0
Commission Secretaries	11	0

Republican & Provincial Administration (continued)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Assembly and Provincial Assembly		
Presidents	9	0
Vice-Presidents	16	0
Secretaries	19	0
Chamber Presidents	41	3
Chamber Vice Presidents	21	7
Chamber Secretaries	25	2
Commission Presidents	40	0
Commission Vice-Presidents	1	0
Committee Presidents	37	1
Members	8	0
Judiciary		
Judges	85	12
Public Prosecutors & Defenders	16	0
Court Presidents	24	0
Court Secretaries	3	0
Assistant & Deputy Prosecutors	2	0
City Government		
Presidents	50	5
Political Parties		
President	1	0
Secretary	1	0
Executive of the Presidium	25	4
Department Heads & Center Directors	10	0
Assistant Department Heads & Directors	2	0
Commission Chairmen	10	1
Commission Secretary	1	0
Commission Members	20	1
Committee Members	10	2
Conference Permanent Section Members	59	11
Republican Leagues		
Central Committee Presidents	7	1
Executive Committee Secretaries	9	1
Executive Committee of Central Committee	59	12
Central Committee Members	340	46
Commission Presidents	90	11
Commission Secretaries	1	1
Commission Members	77	12
Committee Presidents	11	4
Committee Members	47	18
City Conference Permanent Members	702	63
City Conference Presidents	21	0
City Conference Secretaries	21	2
Mass Organizations		
Confederation of Trade Unions		
President	1	0
Vice-President	1	0
Secretaries	6	0
Presidium Members	38	2
Committee Presidents	0	1

Mass Organizations (continued)

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Commission Presidents	7	0
Trade Union Council Presidents	9	0
Trade Union Council Secretaries	12	0
Federation of Reserve Officers & Veterans Associations		
Republican Committee Presidents	7	0
Republican Committee Vice-Presidents	7	0
Federal Committee Presidents	11	0
Secretaries-General	0	0
Secretaries	3	0
Secretariat Members	10	2
Presidium Members	22	2
Commission Presidents	2	0
Reserve Officers & Veterans Association Presidents	9	1
Reserve Officers & Veterans Association Secretaries	8	0
Federal Conference of S.A.W.P.		
Presidents	1	0
Vice-Presidents	4	1
Secretaries-General	1	0
Secretariat Members	8	0
Committee President	6	0
Presidium Members	34	2
Section Presidents	5	0
Commission Presidents	5	1
Commission Secretaries	1	0
S.A.W.P. Presidents	15	1
S.A.W.P. Secretaries	7	1
Conference of Social Activity for Women		
Presidents	1	0
Vice-Presidents	0	2
Secretaries	0	1
Secretariat Members	1	4
Conference Presidents	3	8
Student Association Presidents	6	0
Student Association Secretaries	3	0
Youth & Student Federation		
Presidents	21	0
Secretaries	2	1
Commission Presidents	2	0
Commission Secretaries	1	0
Youth & Student Association Presidents	6	1
Commercial Organizations		
Presidents	1	0
Deputy & Vice-Presidents	8	0
Secretaries-General	1	0
Economic Chamber Presidents	8	0
Economic Chamber Secretaries	8	0
Council Presidents	1	0
Office Heads	5	0
Directors	5	0
Directors General	6	1
Assistant Directors	12	0

Scientific Organizations

	<i>Men</i>	<i>Women</i>
Presidents	5	1
Vice-Presidents	4	1
Secretaries	4	1

International Organizations

Ambassadors	96	7
Diplomatic Missions to Other Organizations	3	1
Assistant & First Ambassadors	1	3
Commission Presidents	5	1
Red Cross Presidents	1	0
Red Cross Vice-Presidents	1	0
Red Cross Secretaries	0	1
Interparliamentary Union Presidents	1	0
Interparliamentary Union Vice-Presidents	3	0
Interparliamentary Union Executive Secretaries	1	0
Interparliamentary Union Secretaries	1	0

Mass Information Media

Editors-in-Chief	22	3
Assistant Editors-in-Chief	4	1
Directors	21	0

Universities

Presidents	0	1
Vice-Presidents	1	0
Secretaries	1	0
Rectors	8	0
Prorectors	5	4

Professional Organizations

Presidents	18	2
Secretaries-General	2	2
Secretaries	3	0

Institutes

Directors	18	2
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Sources: United States, Department of State, *Reference Aid: Directory of Albanian Officials*, R 74-22 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 1974); *idem, Reference Aid: Directory of Czechoslovak Officials*, A 67-30 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, November 1967); *idem, Reference Aid: Directory of East German Officials*, A 72-40 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, December 1972); *idem, Reference Aid: Directory of Hungarian Officials*, RA 71-18 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, June 1971); *idem, Reference Aid: Directory of Polish Officials*, A 70-3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, February 1970); *idem, Reference Aid: Directory of Romanian Officials*, A 73-24 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, August 1973); *idem, Reference Aid: Directory of Yugoslav Officials*, A 74-30 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1974).

In her search for an answer, Sklevicky presents a study of history text books in primary schools dealing with chapters on Yugoslav history in the Socialist Republic of Croatia. An analysis of her data in Table 2 and Table 3 demonstrates that women are again outnumbered but not only by men - this time even by animals.

Table 2: Images in study materials in Yugoslav schools

Type of images	Male		Female		Children		Animals		Total	
Grade	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
5th	985	77.0	91	7.1	no data		203	15.8	1279	100
6th	1483	79.2	42	2.2	no data		347	18.5	1872	100
7th	517	84.2	32	5.2	15	2.4	50	8.1	614	100
8th	797	81.2	101	10.4	76	7.8	no data		974	100

Source: R.Polić, Žena (1986), p 75 and 79

Table 3: Appearance of gendered names in study materials in Yugoslav school

Name	Male		Female		Total	
Grade	No	%	No	%	No	%
7th	123	96.9	4	3.1	127	100
8th	246	94.6	14	5.4	260	100

Source: R.Polić, Žena (1986), p 75 and 81

Sklevicky does not forget to remind us that the experiences of women in Yugoslavia have been the result of a number of diverse factors such as class, different cultural and historical heritages, economic

development etc. However, as Sklevicky says, it is not very hard to conclude that the absence of women from the historical files '*has had an underlying common denominator; what may be called patriarchy as an ever convenient ideological construct*'⁶¹ So, Table 2 and Table 3 provide information that could be generalised to Yugoslavia as a whole. Sklevicky's study also offers a report from a survey which illustrates that women are less than two per cent of named individuals in eight Yugoslav national secondary school history texts. In her opinion the list of reasons for this 'historical amnesia' includes '*the lack of written sources about women, the practice of dismissing the activity of women as irrelevant, the absence of gender as an analytical category.*'⁶² In addition, Sklevicky highlights the existence of something else, a political practice recognised as **the invention of tradition**.

*A considerable effort is undertaken, both on the level of ideology as well as contemporary historical science, to prove that women have always been ideally integrated into the revolutionary (socialist, communist) tradition. By means of repetition, according to Hobsbawm a prominent way to invent a tradition, we are today made to believe that women faced no obstacles whatsoever, or occasionally some minor ones, in being integrated into the revolutionary processes from the late 19th century, whether in unions, parties, political actions or the National Liberation war itself.*⁶³

An authoritarian communist regime, with a newly created tradition where women were slowly disappearing as active and important participants in the creation of Yugoslavia, was evidently

61 ibid, p 69

62 ibid, p 70

63 ibid, p 70, NB: E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (ed.), The invention of tradition, Cambridge Press, Cambridge, 1985

very unsupportive of any undertaking which might question the patriarchal complex of the whole culture. As a movement with every intention of doing exactly that, **feminism** was not permitted. To be more precise: it was constantly discouraged. Being a 'spontaneous grass roots organisation' and not institutionalised, feminism as such could not be controlled and that is why it could not be tolerated. To say 'I am a feminist', involved thinking which was not compatible with the central ideological components of the patriarchal-communist system. Feminism itself was described as something that was merely Western, decadent, foreign and suitable only for the bourgeoisie. Its advocacy implied that an individual was embracing the ethics of Western societies which was considered treacherous to Yugoslavia.

In the essay 'Smrtni grijesi feminizma'⁶⁴, published in a book with same title, Slavenka Drakulić presents a short review of the 'obstacles' to the successful development of feminism in the former Yugoslavia. Disturbed by the statement⁶⁵ of Branka Lazic, the new president of the 'Conference for activities and the role of women in the social development of Yugoslavia', delivered at The 12th Congress of SKJ in 1982, as her reference to the appearance of feminism in Yugoslavia, Slavenka Drakulić stresses:

Ako je predsjednica nova, njezina izjava uopće nije. Prije bi se moglo reći da je svojevrsna kulminacija stava (osobiti s visine s koje dolazi) u dijelu političkih radnika i Konferencije prema pojavi neofeminizma u nas (o tome se zapravo radi), jedna od rijetkih pojava izvan tradicionalnog djelokruga njezinih djelatnosti na koju je Konferencija reagirala. Rijetko ili nikako reagirajući na pojave kao što su prostitucija, silovanje, pretučene žene, neplaćeni rad domaćica, seksizam u odgoju itd. - što valjda ne spada u njezinu domenu -

⁶⁴ S. Drakulić, Smrtni grijesi feminizma, Znanje, Zagreb, 1984

⁶⁵ ibid, p102 - 'Shvaćanja tudja našem socijalističkom samupravnom društvu, posebno ona feministička koja se uvoze iz razvijenih kapitalističkih zemalja, traže...organiziranu borbu za njihovo suzbijanje i eliminiranje, svakodnevnu akciju subjektivnih snaga, a posebno SK.'

konferencija je zato našla uputnim da hitno krene u ideološki boj protiv 'uvoznih shvaćanja' Zauzet je krut službeni stav, koji bi se za potrebu ovog teksta mogao sazeti ovako: žensko pitanje kao zasebno ne postoji, ili postoji samo u nekim praktičnim (a nikako teorijskim) aspektima. Ono je u svakom slučaju dio klasnog pitanja, pa se dakle razrješenjem klasnog, razrješava i žensko, a to je samo pitanje vremena.⁶⁶

Drakulić believes that if feminists stayed inside their academic worlds, writing doctoral dissertations and continuing theoretical discussions behind their walls - there would be no objection from 'the Top'. But, because of their attempts to challenge the prejudices of the system publicly - they were subject to suppression and groundless accusations. Among many of 'the deadly sins of feminism' some were cyclical:

- a) Imported ideology** - the fact that New Feminism developed in the capitalist countries was the biggest argument against it;
- b) Craving for power** - feminists were accused of only wanting to replace male power with female power;
- c) Elitism** - feminism was distinguished as a tool of women intellectuals interested in their careers whose aim was nothing but to achieve their personal and selfish goals with no concern for the life of working women;
- e) Not being institutionalised** - as everything that was not under the mastery of the Communist Party and as such not easy to manipulate - it was potentially dangerous;
- f) Apolitical** - a movement that did not even exist was charged with an attempt to immobilise Yugoslav women and make them passive, which would lead 'to social negligence of working and political

⁶⁶ ibid, p104

potential which these women represent'⁶⁷. They were also accused of initiating a campaign to dispute the leading role of the working class and the Communist party as well;

g) Class and women - this accusation was theoretical, an outcome of the belief that solving the 'class problem' would automatically result in eliminating all other problems, 'women's' as well.

In addition to these accusations, there is another suggestion to add in order to understand the failure of the recognition of women's activities. Lydia Sklevicky believes that it can be traced to two main causes:

The first is the animosity towards the pre-revolutionary feminist tradition - by not being overtly critical (i.e. communist inspired) of the system, the feminists were accused of 'serving the regime'. Therefore they should not be given any credit for improving the position of women and their name and existence was efficiently wiped out from historical records. The second reason was the rather late emergence of the new feminism in Yugoslavia. ⁶⁸

III. New feminists

The false interpretation of feminism produced a widespread 'allergy to feminism', so, as far as the majority of women were concerned - its rejection was based on ignorance of this movement's multiplicity and arguments. But the end of the 1970's marked the appearance of a new generation of young and well educated women familiar with feminism and eager to challenge the political leadership by urging action on behalf of women. Their first public appearance

⁶⁷ ibid, p 110

⁶⁸ L.Sklevicky, op.cit, p 71

took place in 1978 in the form of the International Conference organised in Belgrade without an official blessing. In the same year, the new edition of Riječnik stranih riječi introduces feminism as 'opća oznaka struja u buržoaskom ženskom pokretu za formalno pravno izjednačenje žena sa muškarcima.'⁶⁹ Describing the atmosphere around this 'first public articulation of feminism', which was attended by feminist colleagues from all over Europe, Slavenka Drakulić says:

*The conference was a great shock in several ways. The general public was disturbed by the prospect of feminism, which, the media claimed, amounted to a declaration of war between the sexes. For women war veterans, feminism was synonymous with disloyalty to Yugoslavia. Official women's organisations accused the conference members of importing decadent ideology from the West, and the Communist Party accused them of 'the weakening of women as potential builders of contemporary socialist society' and of 'negating the leading role of the working class and the Communist League'. Feminists were ridiculed, trivialised and aggressively attacked, for in Yugoslavia they challenged something very deep - the patriarchal structure of the society, distinguishing between a real and merely formal emancipation and equality of women, and addressing the as yet unquestioned private sphere.*⁷⁰

In 1979 one of the first feminist groups was established in Zagreb called 'Women and Society', about which Drakulić says:

This group of about thirty women and some men met regularly, promoted public discussions and lectures on many previous unquestionable matters, and became an open platform, sometimes very political, which was a rarity at the time. many of its members wrote articles for newspapers and magazines, awakening consciousness about women's problems. Over the next ten years, many new, but small, groups, including lobbies, political parties, SOS hot lines, umbrella organisations, and lesbian groups, appeared in Ljubljana, Belgrade, Sarajevo, and

⁶⁹ B.Klač, Riječnik stranih riječi, Nakladni Zavod Matice Hrvatske, Zagreb,1978

⁷⁰ S.Drakulić, 'Women and new Democracy in the Former Yugoslavia' in Gender Politics and Post-communism edited by N.Funk and M.Mueller, Routledge, London, 1993, p 127

*Novi Sad. But feminism in Yugoslavia has not become a mass movement.*⁷¹

Not only has it not became a mass movement, but feminism in Yugoslavia has never stretched outside the urban societies. Barbara Jancar Webster locates Yugo-feminism mostly in larger cities, such as Belgrade, Zagreb, Ljubljana while '*Macedonian women informed the author that the issues raised by the feministki were not relevant to their problems.*'⁷²

Criticised by officials and risking the possibility of being labelled as antagonistic towards the communist system, Yugo-feminists continued their search for answers. At the same time, extending their knowledge about the background of Western feminism, they initiated possible communication in order to include Yugo-feminism in the wider frame of the international feminist movement. Having in mind the circumstances besetting the Yugo-feminist environment, it is very easy to adopt the position of Barbara Jančar-Webster that official discouragement and censoring of this movement is one of the main reasons for there not being a great deal of feminist literature, since only a few women identified with this movement have published. However, there is no question that since the first presentation of contemporary feminist ideas at the Croatian sociological association meeting in 1976, feminists of the former Yugoslavia have gained more space for themselves by maintaining to challenge patriarchy and its established attitudes about women in all domains of life. By beginning to analyse earlier and contemporary literary texts of the former Yugoslavia from a feminist point of view, women literary critics, no doubt, continue to contribute to the

⁷¹ ibid, p 128

⁷² ibid, p 176

evolution of this process. These critics object to the fundamental principles of the former Yugoslav critical establishment and its mainly male representatives by questioning their '*interpretative strategies that are learned, historically determined, and thereby necessarily gender-inflicted*'.⁷³ In addition, by analysing the portrayal of female characters in the work of three contemporary male writers of the former Yugoslavia from a feminist point of view, the current work strives to contribute to that process.

⁷³ A. Kolodny, 'A Map for Rereading' in The New Feminist Criticism, E. Showalter (ed), Virago Press, London, 1986, p 47

Images of women in literature

One branch of feminist literary criticism which has proved to be particularly fruitful is the examination of the treatment of female characters in literary works written by male writers. It is this approach which provides the theoretical framework of the present thesis as it appears to be most useful in the analysis of the chosen texts.

Approaching the literature of classical antiquity, with the aim of writing a social history of women in the Greek and Roman worlds, Sarah B. Pomeroy discovered that apart from '*some scraps of lyric poetry*', the remaining literature of this period was all written by men. In addition, she suggests that '*misogyny taints much ancient literature*'.⁷⁴ Sarah B. Pomeroy explores a period of more than fifteen hundred years. The Greek section begins with Bronze Age mythology and legends of the Classical world of the fifth century B.C. and the Hellenistic period. The Roman section concentrates on the late Roman Republic and the transition to the early Empire. Pomeroy

⁷⁴ S.B. Pomeroy, Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves, Schocken Books, New York, 1975, p x

studies classical mythology as '*the earliest glimpse of male-female relationships*' in Greek civilisation. According to her, '*myths are not lies, but rather men's attempt to impose a symbolic order upon their universe.*'⁷⁵ Observing the generations of Goddesses and Gods prior to the rule of Olympian Zeus in the work of the Greek poet Hesiod (living in Boeotia in approximately 700 B.C.), Pomeroy notes that '*it is highly possible that misogyny was one of several factors that motivated Hesiod to organise the dark, evil divinities and their monstrous offspring in the early generations, to be overthrown by the civilising Zeus.*' Closer analysis of the goddesses of Olympus brings Sarah B. Pomeroy to the conclusion that they '*appear in myth never to have had more than narrowly restricted functions, despite the major importance of their cults to Greek cities.*' On the contrary, the male Olympians performed '*as rulers, intellectuals, judges, warriors, fathers, and sexual partners in both homosexual and heterosexual affairs.*' Among them were no virgins, '*and sexual promiscuity - including rape - was never cause for censure even among the married ones.*' On the other hand, as far as the Olympian goddesses were concerned three of the five were virgins. Pomeroy says:

*Athena is warrior, judge, and giver of wisdom, but she is masculinized and denied sexual activity and motherhood. Artemis is huntress and warrior, but also a virgin. Hestia is respected as an old maid. The two non virginal goddesses come off no better: Aphrodite is pure sexual love, exercised with a pronounced irresponsibility. Hera is wife, mother, and powerful queen, but she must remain faithful and suffer the promiscuity of her husband.*⁷⁶

Pomeroy believes that '*the goddesses are archetypal images of*

75 ibid, p 1

76 ibid, p 8

human females' and that the Olympian pattern survived as the ideal.

*Unable to cope with a multiplicity of powers united in one female, men from antiquity to the present have envisioned women in "either-or" roles. As corollary of this anxiety, virginal females are considered helpful, while sexually mature women like Hera are destructive and evil. The fact that modern women are frustrated by being forced to choose between being an Athena - an intellectual, asexual career woman - or an Aphrodite - a frivolous sex object - or a respectable wife - mother like Hera shows that the Greek goddesses continue to be archetypes of female existence.*⁷⁷

Studying the images of women in the literature of Classical Athens, Pomeroy suggests that womanly behaviour '*was characterised then, as now, by submissiveness and modesty*'. Heroines who acted in a contrast with such behaviour, are said to be 'masculine', and this was not considered as a compliment. Pomeroy highlights Sophocles' Antigone, where, she believes, the portrayal of the masculine woman as heroine was fully developed. Opposing the tyrant Creon who has forbidden that the corpse of Polyneices, Antigone's brother, be buried, she urges that they perform the burial rites. But, Pomeroy says, '*her sister Ismene seizes upon the excuse that they are not men: 'We were born women, showing that we were not meant to fight with men.'*'⁷⁸ Pomeroy insists that in such a repressively patriarchal culture women had to adopt the characteristics of the dominant sex if they wanted to achieve their goals. But, in the end they were reminded of their real gender:

Feeling, then, that in daring to flout his commands Antigone has acted as a man - for a true woman would be incapable of opposition - Creon, when he

⁷⁷ ibid. p 9

⁷⁸ ibid. p 99

*declares sentence upon the sisters, asserts that 'they must now be women'.*⁷⁹

As far as Euripides and his tragedy is concerned, Pomeroy argues that he is 'questioning rather than dogmatic'. She does not feel that it is 'misogynistic to present women as strong, assertive, successful, and sexually demanding even if they are also selfish or villainous'. But, she recognises that 'the double standard in sexual morality is implicit in many of the myths Euripides chooses as the basis of his plots' as well as the fact that 'even when they are not essential to the plot, the horrors of patriarchy compose a background of unremitting female misery.'⁸⁰ Pomeroy suggests that Euripides shows us women victimised by patriarchy in almost every possible way - virgins who need their virginity and a dowry to attract a husband, raped women who are blamed while the men who raped them are not and wives who are guilty when marriages prove unfruitful. There is one particular category of women that always arouse sympathy in Euripides - women as mothers:

*Women glory especially in being the mothers of sons, and the lamentation of mothers over sons killed in war is a standard feature in Euripides' antiwar plays.*⁸¹

Studying the literature of Greece, Pomeroy is looking for facts that will tell her more about the realities of women's existence in the ancient world. She warns that what we tend to forget:

what really mattered, even to the Athenians, the most intellectual of all,

⁷⁹ ibid, p 100

⁸⁰ ibid, p 110

⁸¹ ibid, p 111

*was winning wars and maintaining an empire, along with the training that was an essential prerequisite for these goals. Except in their role as bearers of future soldiers, most women were peripheral to these concerns.*⁸²

Could we not use the very same words to explain what really mattered to the men of the 18th, or even the 20th century ? Cold war, economic war, football war, computer war....? Conquering new land, subjugating new people, marching on towards victory, building an empire - whatever that is. And where is the female character here? How is she related to the conqueror, which role does she play and how is she represented in modern literature? Another question is: how much has the relationship between male and female characters changed since classical antiquity? Is the one sex still inferior to the other, is woman's energy still directed towards marriage and motherhood, is the main ground of her existence still the domestic sphere?

Highlighting her belief that '*the study of literature does not proceed in a vacuum*', in her book Images of Women in Literature⁸³, Mary Ann Ferguson argues that the understanding of literature and development of literary images has its base in history, sociology and psychology as well as in our personal experience. She says:

Literary history and theory tell us something about the process by which literature is related to other interpretations of the world. Literature both reflects and helps create our views of reality ; it puts us in touch with our deepest feelings, with our prerational knowledge of the world. It is through their preservation in works of art that we know what the stereotypes and archetypes have been and are ; in turn, knowing the images influences not only our view of the world and

⁸² ibid, p 228

⁸³ M.A. Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1981

*ourselves but also our behaviour.*⁸⁴

The third edition of Mary Ann Ferguson's book consists of sixty three complete works that portray '*traditional images of women and also reflect the changes in those images brought about by the current women's movement.*'⁸⁵ This anthology includes authors from the middle of 18th century to the present day. In Part I attention is drawn to female stereotypes associated with their biological roles: mother, submissive wife, dominating wife, sex object, woman on a pedestal and single woman. Observing these images Ferguson suggests that '*not a single work stops with merely describing the stereotype*'. The intention of its authors, according to Ferguson, is to expose the wastefulness of stereotypical thinking and its affects on individuals and society itself. The images in Part II, called Woman becoming, '*illuminate the processes by which women seek to transcend the socially limiting stereotypes of their traditional roles.*'⁸⁶ Writers included in second part of Ferguson's book are focused on the process of changing old patterns. Supported by women scholars, they encourage their readers to recognise new images and aim '*to show that their characters may transcend their social roles to become fully human beings with joy and anguish to their experience of the world*'⁸⁷ Here women are seen not as '*objects of others' perceptions*' but as individuals able to create their own worlds. Reminding her readers that the word *stereotype* is the term taken by sociologists from printing ('*where it refers to metal plates used to make exact copies*'), Ferguson underlines

⁸⁴ ibid, p 5

⁸⁵ ibid, p ix

⁸⁶ ibid, p ix

⁸⁷ ibid, p 407

the idea that unlike the metal ones, the stereotypes of people 'need not duplicate the pattern exactly' but she warns that 'the stereotypes that shape our personalities are even more rigid than metal ones.' She stresses:

*As long as some aspects of the stereotype are present, the observer supplies the others from previous experience. Such patterns are called prejudices; they provoke judgment before full knowledge is possible.*⁸⁸

Talking about novels which focus on women's lives, Rosalind Coward, in her essay 'How I became my own person'⁸⁹ says 'Knowledge or understanding has been focused exclusively on sexual experience - love, marriage, divorce or just sexual encounters'⁹⁰

Referring to the novel as the creation of 18th century writers, 'the major literary form of European culture over the last two hundred years', Patricia Stubbs, uses similar terms: 'In the novel women are 'prisoners' of feeling and of private life.'⁹¹ In her book Women and Fiction-Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920⁹², she argues that writers are focused on women's domestic and sexual roles, regardless of what role in society women in fact play. Studying the English novel in the period between 1880 - 1920 she focuses on Hardy, Moore, James, Gissing, Wells, Bennett, Forster, Lawrence and Virginia Woolf, but also surveys the work of less well-known writers, feminist and non-feminist. She sees 'an underlying continuity between the dominant images of the past and those

⁸⁸ ibid, p 3

⁸⁹ R. Coward, 'The True Story of How I Became My Own person' in The feminist reader, edited by C. Belsey and J. Moore, Macmillan, London, 1989

⁹⁰ ibid, p 44

⁹¹ ibid, p x

⁹² P. Stubbs, Women and fiction - feminism and the Novel 1880-1920, Methuen, London, 1979

*of the present*⁹³ and tries to prove how the observation of literature written in this crucial period explains where the present female images have come from. Stubbs recognises that since 1880, novelists did realise (not without struggle!) that their approach towards female characters has to be changed. They acknowledged that women are human beings '*with rights as well as duties, with legitimate sexual passions, with an independent, autonomous existence...*'⁹⁴ According to Stubbs this was one of the most interesting breaks with Victorian ideology at the end of the last century. But, the new accent that was placed on women's sexuality became a change not far away from tradition - it '*has proved to be a link between the stereotypes of the past and those of the present.*'⁹⁵ Analysing social and political ideology in Victorian England, she reveals some of the constraints and conventions under which novelists worked in that period. She says:

*If a novel violated social and sexual conventions it was not just frowned upon or ignored. Society operated an extensive apparatus for banning as well as bowdlerising and it did not hesitate to use it. This meant that if they wanted to be published at all, writers had to accept severe restrictions on the scope and treatment of their material. Most stayed well within the moral conventions, but if a novelist did step out of line he or she was likely to be silenced by publishers, editors or librarians.*⁹⁶

Stubbs also underlines the fact that 'society's' judgment was based on belief that woman (the innocent virgin) had to be protected from 'inappropriate' literature. Simple-minded morality was imposed on literature. The end of the nineteenth century has seen prosecutions

93 ibid, p xv

94 ibid, p xv

95 ibid, p xv

96 ibid, p19

against publishers whose books, in the opinion of the weak-minded supported by the law*, represented 'toxic' literature. This was an attempt to impose simple-minded moralism '*on writers and intellectuals who, by the end of the century, were no longer prepared to accept moralistic interference with the development of literature or science.*'⁹⁷ But, as Stubbs points out, it was not easy to break the moral imperatives of the old guard. Creating new images of women and writing in a new way about sexuality became a political struggle. Only the most determined writers were prepared to attack a whole ideology and the establishment. Stubbs sees the refusal to accept misleading representations of women in their work as the one of the most important factors '*which sets the major Victorian novelists apart from the orthodoxy of the minor writers.*'⁹⁸ She agrees that the Bronte sisters, Mrs. Gaskell, Thackeray, George Eliot, '*...even Dickens (in parts)..*' did have some degree of feminist consciousness and that '*it is certainly helpful to identify the critical insights of these mid-century novelists, forming as they do an important tradition of dissent.*'⁹⁹

Patricia Stubbs is very much aware of the importance of the work of these novelists and that it should not be underestimated. There is no doubt for her that their writing formed the basis on which later literary feminism was built. But she also points out that what unites these novelists, more than anything else, is '*the romanticised notion of love*'. The central interest of their work is 'love'. Women experience life through their emotions and this is why Stubbs cannot ignore the fact that

⁹⁷ ibid, p 25

⁹⁸ ibid, p 27

⁹⁹ ibid, p 27

* Obscene Publications Act 1857

...this group of mid-century writers did not repudiate or, at a fundamental level, even question the system of personal and sexual relations which gave rise to the unhappiness and frustrations, and to all the contradictions between ideal and reality which their fiction so deftly pinpoints. In short, their imagination operates, as far as women are concerned, within fairly sharply defined limits, so that though they often focus powerfully on what they see as abuses of the marital and domestic system, the system itself generally escapes criticism.¹⁰⁰

Stubbs points out that by 1880 the feminist movement was growing rapidly and the beginnings of a revision in thinking about women involved novelists too. The rejection of individualistic moral imperatives and moral reorientation were very important for the late nineteenth century novel in England. The work of the novelists from this period shows, as Stubbs says, that they '*were undoubtedly sympathetic to at least some of the women's dilemmas and demands, but this sympathy is embedded in and often limited by their own private constructions of reality or by formal difficulties in the novel itself.*'¹⁰¹

Far from being gradually accepted, the literary challenge of sexual and moral norms in the novel met expressions of outrage. Widespread anxieties about the appearance of sex in literature arose out of fears of the free woman. A number of novelists shared this fear so they tried to promote the old images of virgin heroine, wife and mother. Exposing the anti-feminism of Henry James, Patricia Stubbs suggests that

he can be taken to represent the kind of ideas about feminism which hostile writers worked up and used in their books at the end of century. Second, and more important, his undeniable skill and subtlety as a writer can show us that a network of ideological assumptions - about women, about behaviour, about how people live their lives, about what is valuable in life - can be so closely woven into

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.* p 28

¹⁰¹ *ibid.* p 54

*the texture and structure of a work of literature, that we, the readers, find ourselves drawn into the writer's world view without pausing to examine it for ourselves.*¹⁰²

Observing the work of D.H. Lawrence, Stubbs stresses her belief that he is not interested in women's existence or what they do. For him '*their only real function in the novels is as part of an emotional and sexual cult.*'¹⁰³ Through her analysis Patricia Stubbs indicates that despite the fact that women did (and do!) experience life outside their relationships and feelings, they remain prisoners of a writer's narrow consciousness. It is evident that they did not allow woman's existence outside her emotional and sexual relationships. Stubbs acknowledges that since 1880

*'fictional relationships have become more intense and more physical' but 'at a more fundamental level there was no real change either in the framework within which women existed in the novel, or in the general assumptions about them and their lives which have always shaped their literary image.'*¹⁰⁴

At the end of her analysis she underlines how important it is for a novel to break away from writers' prejudices and the limits of their own subjectivism; to create female characters freed from the world of private experience. But, to go beyond this point and to recognise different ways in which women experience the world will mean that 'male' dominant societies are willing to accept the existence of **human society** and to expand their knowledge of human nature. There is no doubt that they are aware of the fact that women's primary problems arise out of culture's attitudes to woman and her

¹⁰² ibid. p 170

¹⁰³ ibid. p 227

¹⁰⁴ ibid. p 226

social powerlessness. But the argument is that any author who chooses a woman as the central character in the story understands at some point (and at some level!) that women are not primarily defined according to patriarchal opinion. The writer does not have to be a feminist to face the moment when his/her female character will confront the double morality and hypocrisy of patriarchal societies and challenge them.

Zola's Nana is certainly one of the characters who have their own place in literature and is indeed one of the most analysed female characters in literary criticism. In her book Reflecting on Nana¹⁰⁵ Bernice Chitnis introduces an alternative way of reading Zola's novel: a feminist reading. She challenges the image of the temptress woman imposed on Nana by the majority of critics to date. Concerned about: 'Who is Nana?' and 'What is she?', Chitnis works towards the conclusion that Nana is a person who '*has triumphed over men at the point where they are weakest - in the 'involuntary' surge of erotic desire - and has brought about nothing less than a radical change in social order.*'¹⁰⁶ She recognises Zola's portrayal of the process of humiliation and discredit in Parisian society caused by men's desire for Nana, as an indication that '*all the values and institutions which they uphold - family, religion and even the Empire itself - in fact, patriarchal society as Zola knew it*'¹⁰⁷ are crumbling. Chitnis emphasises that Zola is aware of factors that pushed young, lowerclass girls into prostitution: poverty and its uncomfortable living conditions, '*the poor self-image encountered in families living below the poverty line, the prevalence of alcoholism, the inability*

¹⁰⁵ B. Chitnis, Reflecting on Nana, Routledge, London, 1991

¹⁰⁶ ibid, p 3

¹⁰⁷ ibid, p 5

*to earn a living wage in occupations other than prostitution.'*¹⁰⁸ She suggests that for Zola prostitution is not just a simple pragmatic transaction but a symptom of a deep melancholy born of alienation, loneliness and unmet needs.

Traditionally any prostitute is a marginalized figure, immoral character, social evil but Nana becomes much more than this cliché. Chitnis states:

*Nana, known in the novel only by her baby nickname and never given a patronymic, can be seen as paradigmatic, representing all women's civil non-existence and perpetual legal and social infancy. Often seen as a degraded figure, she is the one who comes to stand up for women's dignity and for human dignity.*¹⁰⁹

But Bernice Chitnis does not forget that Zola is a 'born patriarch' and she does not want to suggest that his '*warning growl cannot be clearly heard by the reader.*'¹¹⁰ She warns that from the moment Nana emerged from inferiority and her dominance became obvious, Zola was disturbed. He was caught in a dilemma: to fear or to admire? He had to decide which way she should go: towards success or failure? From Chitnis' point of view, '*The novel not only tells the story of Nana, but also tells the story of Zola's struggle with her.*'¹¹¹ Chitnis highlights Zola's efforts to associate Nana with Eve, Delilah, Circe, Lorelei, Melusine, Venus... For him she becomes a seductress who hypnotises her man and 'overturns his Edenic existence'. Chitnis strongly argues:

What Zola is doing is taking comfort from the most patriarchal sources who

¹⁰⁸ ibid, p 19

¹⁰⁹ ibid, p 20

¹¹⁰ ibid, p 20

¹¹¹ ibid, p 39

*reassure him that other decent men have gone this way, too; he seeks authority from them, as well, and the cumulative effect is to pile blame and guilt on Nana, and perhaps, by extension, on any other woman who dares to threaten patriarchy.*¹¹²

Observing other female characters in Zola's novel, Chitnis has shown that a several of them indicate Nana's own antagonism towards the male hierarchy. Zola's response to them ranges from distance to antipathy, even to respect.

Bernice Chitnis is also studies the appearance of male characters in Zola's novel. She notices that there is no 'hero' and says '*..the reason for this, I think, is that in looking at their humiliation and charting their disasters, Zola is looking straight at himself.*'¹¹³ She detects Zola's own confusion and predicament in relationships with women. Chitnis reminds us that Zola himself declared that the theme of this novel is male sexual desire. She also stresses:

*..the 'nastiness' of the male sexual appetite is brought out clearly by the fact that it is directed towards prostitutes, the sex act is too awful to describe, and the problem of dominance in male-female relationship is presented in an acute form occurring between patron and prostitute.*¹¹⁴

Having in mind that no male character in this novel suffers from a lack of this appetite, one has to agree with Bernice Chitnis' suggestion that it would be very difficult to see what male model could satisfy an understanding of the word 'hero'. Bernice Chitnis insists that Zola used his male characters to show up not just men's

¹¹² ibid. p 39

¹¹³ ibid. p 69

¹¹⁴ ibid. p 70

weakness, but the weakness of the patriarchal system too. She refers to the expectations of patriarchal society imposed on a man: to be hard and tough, in control of the situation and - in control of a woman. But the figure of Count Muffat is one example that things can go wrong:

Muffat's inability to cope with Nana awakens a male terror of the assertive, mocking woman who proves to be superior to him, and Zola demolishes him still further by having his female boss, the Empress, reject him, too, with the withering comment, 'He is just too disgusting'.¹¹⁵

From Chitnis' point of view Zola portrays Nana as a strong, ambitious and courageous woman. He is aware of typically male qualities in her and even further, he recognises her as a leader and as a person who also possesses a sense of honour, just as a man does. In Chitnis' understanding, it is not just that Zola gives a full range of human qualities to a biological woman, but in her he also recognises the real nature and power of women. According to Chitnis this becomes his disturbing vision, an invention he both respected and feared. Chitnis' approach suggests that as a 'born patriarch' he struggled to come to terms with this upsetting image of a heroine who accomplishes her victory over patriarchy. So, Chitnis believes:

it is not at all surprising that Zola 'kills her off', even cruelly, or that this novel, unlike the others of the Rougon-Macquart cycle, is 'end-stopped' - its characters do not go on to figure in other stories. It is as if with Nana and her revolutionary career, Zola has reached the edge of the known world and has to revert safely back to base.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁵ ibid. p 71

¹¹⁶ ibid. p 87

Nana is not the only female character who had to die at the end of the story because she has awakened the fantasies, hopes and fears of her inventor. At the same time, in nineteenth-century Russia, another famous female character, Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, commits suicide. In her work Reflecting on Anna Karenina¹¹⁷, Mary Evans focuses on Anna as

*a woman who can be variously interpreted as a demonstration of women's capacity for passion and sexual desire on the one hand and on the other, as a woman who is (so) trapped by conventional - ultimately conservative - notions about romantic love...*¹¹⁸

According to Evans, Anna's needs for intimacy, physical affection, and emotional experience are created by her position in a bourgeois marriage, the position where women have to act primarily as wives and mothers. Not being able to meet her needs in the marriage, Anna breaks the rules but in a patriarchal society it is only on patriarchal terms that woman can become a legitimate person. As long as she is prepared to protect the 'normality' of society she is not a threat to the traditional patterns. Evans suggest:

*Vronsky's mother did not become a social outcast by her affairs. But she did not - as Anna did - make these affairs a public matter or compromise the accepted norms of the bourgeois world by parading an illicit love and destroying a marriage.*¹¹⁹

This is not the only demonstration of double morality in patriarchal society. Underlining the existence of false moralism, Mary Evans

¹¹⁷ M. Evans, Reflecting on Anna Karenina, Routledge, London, 1989

¹¹⁸ ibid., p 3

¹¹⁹ ibid., p19

targets Oblonsky's extra-marital relationships and the fact that, for in patriarchal society - infidelity is a different matter.

Mary Evans identifies Anna as the woman who gives up her social position, reputation, access to a beloved son and her life, all for Vronsky, for whom she will later '*become a source of irritation, a person who is capable of vulgarity and the kind of behaviour that has no place in the fantasies of the perfect woman.*'¹²⁰ Further on, Evans underlines something very interesting: Anna did not confront patriarchy just by committing adultery - she tried to construct a world that would meet her needs, the world that would include romance, love, passion but none of the patriarchal values. Through her openly expressed sexuality and by refusing to become Mrs. Vronsky and the mother of Vronsky's children (in other words: refusing to become a "good woman", mother and wife again), Anna finally leaves the 'main road'. But, instead of realising her desires, she meets with social disapproval and isolation, she remains outside society. From Evans' point of view Anna is '*a character who is far from passive and far from helpless and betrayed.*'¹²¹ As a woman capable of powerful emotions, she stands for the personal strength and power of woman, but she also stands for women's weakness. Evans says: '*Anna can be read as a victim of the ideology of romance and the social powerlessness of women.*'¹²² Evans also stresses that her point is not to establish that women are socially less powerful than men but to suggest that part of Anna's dilemma is the issue of personal power and social powerlessness. The sexual and any other personal power of women might be enough to control the ballroom - but this arena is as far

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p10

¹²¹ *ibid*, p 26

¹²² *ibid*, p 32 (emphasis mine)

as women can go: they have no control of the public world. Even further: once a woman becomes a reminder of potential which can bring disorder into the apparent 'normality' - she becomes dangerous. She awakens the fear of the 'power of woman' and suggests that glowing lava lies under the 'normality' of every establishment. She disturbs individuals and the establishment itself.

Analysing the portrayal of Anna Karenina, Evans spotlights the fact that Tolstoy tells us almost nothing about Anna's roots. The reader's attention is drawn to the fact that Anna was married off to Karenin and that she is a member of the highest social circles in St Petersburg. Evans suggests that: '*What we know about Anna is that she is a creature of the social, urban world.*'¹²³ She recognises Anna as a feminine woman '*who can appeal strongly to men*'. Always beautifully dressed and arranged, concerned about her own person. the passionate mother of her son, but from Evans point of view not a maternal woman in the conventional sense. For Evans Anna is a fantasy, a fantasy of Tolstoy and Vronsky. Anna's rootlessness, her lack of interest in domestic and maternal concerns are evidence for her argument:

*It is not that women are naturally interested in domestic life and the care of children, but such has been the sexual division of labour that in all western societies women have been placed - like it or not - in the household. Tolstoy's fantasies about a woman who can inspire male desire... have no place for the realities of female experience which commonly include not merely the love for children...but the care for them.*¹²⁴

Evans argues that Anna is a product of Tolstoy's imagination of

¹²³ ibid, p 10

¹²⁴ ibid, p11

female sexuality. She is not a real person but 'a fictionalised version' of his needs and projections about women. Evans stresses that Tolstoy created a character with an unreasonable passion who, clinging to the hope of Vronsky's love, never becomes her own woman: '*Anna becomes one of those nineteenth- (and indeed twentieth-) century women whom it is possible to label as deviant or even hysterical.*'¹²⁵ Mary Evans cannot see Anna as a heroine of this novel. She does sympathise with her as with a victim but finds that

*to elevate Anna to the status of a heroine is more difficult, since we might expect at best some evidence that a heroine attempts to rise above her fate....some capacity for resistance would have to manifest itself for us to see Anna as a person of courage and valour.*¹²⁶

On the other hand Evans recognises Dolly as 'heroine'. She is the character who, according to Evans, represents much that is admirable about human beings. She is aware of '*the question of whether praise for Dolly merely endorses the equally masculine values of the worthy, suffering woman who lives for her children and through all adversity maintains a household and family life.*'¹²⁷ But Evans suggests that above all other characters in Anna Karenina, Dolly has a truly generous understanding of human behaviour and a belief in the essential goodness of all human beings. By going to visit Anna and Vronsky, Evans points out, she puts aside patriarchal conventions, ignores empty morality and highlights her own moral independence.

The dowdy wife, cast aside and ignored by her husband, is paradoxically

125 ibid, p 83

126 ibid, p 83

127 ibid, p 84

*relatively free to act as a mature and independent human being. Free from male approval and control, and free from the equally imprisoning need for male sexual interest, Dolly becomes a human being who cannot fail to impress readers by her bravery and resilience. Generous and concerned, responsible and consistent, she suggests the moral and human possibilities that exist alongside the conventional emotional and domestic arrangements of bourgeois society.*¹²⁸

Nevertheless, it seems unnecessary to spotlight the name of the leading female role, especially because both of them, Anna and Dolly, are as heroines as much as victims. Even just as a fantasy, Anna disturbed Tolstoy's vision and made him aware (or reminded him?) of women's potential. Maybe it was just for the short period of time, until Tolstoy, as a patriarch, and patriarchal attitudes made her a victim once again. But, by challenging the status quo Anna did achieve personal autonomy and become a person in her own right. Choosing to judge for herself and demanding moral autonomy, Dolly did indeed confront society and take a heroic step. But by accepting her life and the publicly known infidelity of her husband as the status quo - she becomes a victim too. The difference between those two women is that for threatening the 'normality' of the patriarchal community, destroying the family and marriage, and living a life outside social boundaries Anna has to die at the end of the story. To be a 'good' wife and mother as well as to be 'good' husband and father, among other things, in any **moral community** is unquestionably good. There is no doubt that woman can attain happiness through these roles. The problem with images of women in traditional works of literature, which have shaped readers' views in the past, is that they are mostly representations of men's visions and attitudes and from what has been said so far, it is clear they remain

¹²⁸ ibid, p 97

imprisoned in the roles and images of these limited stereotypes. While man has been defined by his relationship to nature, to society - woman has been defined by her relationship to man.

Yugoslav Male Critics on Images of Women in Literature

In order to comprehend the affiliated disharmony between the Yugoslav feminist critics and the established critical directions and attitudes, it appears important to reflect on the work of some of the Yugoslav male critics and their particular observations of the portrayal of women in literature.

One of not too many books written on the subject of images of women in literature in the former Yugoslavia is Zenska lica u Hrvatskoj književnosti¹²⁹ by Dr. D. Prohaska. This study of female characters in Croatian literature begins with a short analysis of the poems 'Judita' and 'Susana', works of Marko Marulić, a Croatian writer from the beginning of the 16th century. Dr. Prohaska's first words are: '*Hrvatska književnost počinje s adoracijom žene.*' Interestingly enough, talking more about Marulić himself than about the female characters in his work, Dr. Prohaska 'forgets' to mention that 'Judita' and 'Susana' are stories taken from the Old Testament. 'Judita', a very religious Jewish widow saves the town Bettulia by using her beauty (what else could she use?) to fascinate the general Holofernes and cutting off his head when he falls asleep. 'Susana' is also a story about a religious woman who is not prepared to give herself to an old, well respected man. She is almost executed because her community condemn her. But, at the

¹²⁹ Dr. D. Prohaska, Zenska lica u Hrvatskoj književnosti, Nakladom knjižare Mirka Breyera, Zagreb, 1916

very last moment she is saved when little boy Daniel brings the words of God. God condemns the sexual promiscuity of the old man, praises those who follow his words and saves the virgin. In addition, as Dr. Prohaska views the 16th century woman only in the context of her defence of Christianity and her own virginity, it is possible to a certain extent to agree with his suggestion that Croatian literature did begin with the '*adoration of woman*'. But, only within the bearing of her religious and patriotic feelings. Supporting the writer's admiration of woman's national loyalty and the honour of a virgin, Dr. Prohaska ratifies acceptable female role models.

In his study Dr. Prohaska observes the images of women through the major European cultural movements. Analysing female characters in sixteenth-century literature, he expresses his belief that the poetry of the troubadours developed not just under the influence of literature and social needs, but under the influence of the climatic conditions and passionate nights of Dubrovnik.

*Da ne bude zazorno, da bude časno i otmjeno, trubadur zasipava svoju "gospoju" hvalama i zvjezdama. Predmet je njena ljepota, opis njenog vanjskog lika, što se posve podudara s putenom željom, otajnom i ognjenom.*¹³⁰

Dr. Prohaska continues his analysis of troubadour poetry without paying too much attention to the real images of the women described in these lyrics. His analysis rather suggests a personal admiration of the erotic passion that arises out of this poetry as a response, once again, to woman's beauty. The critic's adoration of 'love words' continues in the next chapter too, where, supposedly, his intention is to analyse images of women in the Croatian baroque. Dr.

¹³⁰ ibid., p 12

Prohaska's book ends with a chapter entitled 'Moderna žena', where he claims her non-existence. He suggests that images of 'modern women' are entering Croatian literature from 'western decadence' and he undoubtedly indicates his antipathy towards her:

...jedna nad-žena, Androgyne, bizarna, perverzna, uokvirena u artistički i kulturni ambijent, a druga, žena šume, prirode, s potrebom da bude majka, da se pokori crnoj sili svojega ženstva, seoska junica i šumska medvjedica, rasna i zdrava.

Ironically enough, writing these words in the conclusion of his study, Dr. Prohaska himself clearly reveals that his proposal regarding the 'adoration of women' does not relate to **woman** but to a specific category of woman.

It was mentioned earlier that in his study Dr. Prohaska seems to be more interested and involved in an analysis of other subjects, rather than the female characters themselves. Likewise, examination of the work of some contemporary literary critics in the former Yugoslavia (for instance some of the critical reviews of the novels of Meša Selimović, Slobodan Selenić and Ivan Aralica) indicates that most of their criticisms also pay very little or no attention to the portrayal of female characters. Even when they do reveal a certain degree of curiosity in their portrayal, the majority of them do not commit themselves to a profound analytical examination, but simply acknowledge their existence. To begin with, it seems that the obviously small number of female characters in the work of these authors is not challenging enough for these representatives of the Yugoslav critical establishment and does not stimulate their inquisitiveness. Rather than raising questions about why it is that so

little space is devoted to female characters in these novels and why they are marginalized, the majority of critics more or less ignore their existence. Furthermore, within some, fairly isolated, critical views of the portrayal of female characters, most of these critics deliver what could be described as a pattern conclusion. For instance, in his short observation of the female characters portrayed in the novels of Ivan Aralica, Velimir Visković suggests:

Osim ovih 'visoko' tematskih kompleksa, naći ćemo u Aralici i iznimno suptilnih prikaza erotskih odnosa (osobito u "Psima u Trgovištu") ; premda se rado identificira s patrijarhalnim gorštačkim mentalitetom svojih likova, Aralica pokazuje dovoljnu mjeru fleksibilnosti i tankočutnosti koja mu omogućuje da stvori produbljene ženske likove koji iznijansiranošću i uvjerljivošću nadmašuju ona tri ženska plosna tipa koje jedine poznaje i priznaje gorštački etički kodeks (majka, vjerna ljuba i kurva).¹³¹

Elsewhere, in his review of Selimović's novel Tvrđava the critic Miodrag Petrović, writes in very similarly, terms:

Meša Selimović dolazi u red onih pisaca koji s najdubljim poštovanjem iskazuje čast ženskom biću. U ovom romanu a i u drugim njegovim delima, ono se pojavljuje s pravom nedodirljivosti. Taj odnos je u svemu tradicionalistički, a uz to i snažno biografski obojen.¹³²

Sadly enough, this is also as far as Petrović's analysis of a 'female being' in Selimović's novels goes. The critic himself does not pursue his study in order to justify his own argument. It is striking that neither Velimir Visković nor Miodrag Petrović show any intention of developing or supporting their statements by further examination. These quotations are the only sentences which are concerned with the

¹³¹ I. Aralica, Svemu ima vrijeme, Mladost, Zagreb, 1990, introduction V. Viskovic, p 21

¹³² M. Petrović, Roman Meše Selimovića, Gradina, Niš, 1981, p 111

portrayal of female characters within the work of the respective authors. However, Visković's conclusion about Aralica's portrayal of his female characters ultimately provokes questions such as: what does it mean for a writer to demonstrate '...enough flexibility and sensitivity which allows him to create complex female characters..?' It is unclear what kind of 'flexibility' Visković has in mind. Could it be a certain degree of 'flexibility' in Aralica's strong support of the patriarchal community and its codes? And who exactly determines what constitutes the right amount of flexibility? How does one measure it and what are the criteria upon which one can declare that a 'profound female character' is created? What indeed is a 'profound female character'? And finally, it seems that the first part of Visković's sentence and his suggestion that Aralica's work contains not only '*visoko tematske komplekse*' but also '*intimno suptilne prikaze erotskih odnosa*', combined with the critic's suggestion that Aralica creates 'profound female characters', identify eroticism and sexuality as the best place to search for these 'profound' female characters. Also, both critics, Visković and Petrović, acknowledge the traditional approach of writers in their portrayal of female characters. In addition, by applauding the authors' representation of women in their novels, both critics clearly justify such portrayals as accurate and acceptable.

In conclusion, comparing interpretative strategies in the critical reviews of Dr. Prohaska, Velimir Visković and Miodrag Petrović, it seems possible to establish some similarities. Even though they wrote their critiques at different historical periods and were supposedly influenced by different literary trends, all of them welcomed the well established traditional portrayal of female characters and its stereotyped images. At the same time, while

advocating the existence of the '*adoration of women*' and '*profound female characters*', sadly enough, none of them shows an interest in widening the perception and understanding of the true female identity, her selfhood and autonomy. It is in order to cast light on just these issues, that this thesis sets out to examine the works of Meša Selimović, Ivan Aralica and Slobodan Selenić.

Themes of Meša Selimović

As he approached his early forties, Selimović began his writing career with several short stories published in various journals and newspapers. All of these writings were inspired by The Second World War and imbued with socialist-realist elements. In the belief of his critics, the strong presence of these elements in Selimović's writing comes as no surprise as it was '*danak vremena' koji su platili i mnogi poznatiji pisci, a nekamoli početnik Selimović*'.¹³³ The first book of Selimović's stories, entitled Uvrijedeni čovjek (Sarajevo), was published in 1947 and followed by Prva četa in 1950 (Zagreb). When he died in 1982, Selimović left a literary opus that includes short stories, six novels (one unfinished), numerous essays, literary and theoretical studies. Selimović's critics are in no doubt that Derviš i smrt and Tvrđava are among the masterpieces of former Yugoslav contemporary literature. Even though many of Selimović's critics describe his novels as 'historical', this analysis seeks to suggest that, with the main focus on the complexity of internal conflicts inside a human mind, Selimović demonstrates more concern for an insight into the

¹³³ M. Savić in M. Selimović, Krug, BIGZ, Beograd, 1982, p 368

'psychological being' of the individual, rather than for history itself. That is to say, he does not attempt a large overview of historical processes but concentrates on individuals and their struggle to survive within the context of various external upheavals. In addition, history, together with all its changes, becomes his concern only as a specific spectrum of external events which affect the internal existence of every human being. In the light of these words, it seems more appropriate to characterise Selimović's novels as psychological rather than historical.

Selimović, then, emerges as an author who is mainly concerned with the human being and the ways in which his or her existence is influenced and defined by external settings. A 'life' in Selimović's novels is portrayed as a great web of events linked to other events, inevitably or coincidentally. In the middle, there is an individual and his internal struggle to understand his place within such a framework. Portraying his major characters Selimović explores both character and the external environment and shows how the interaction of these two elements accounts for the fate of human a life. Offering a portrait-gallery of individuals trying to attain 'personhood' in the strict environments of the Ottoman Empire and post-war communist Yugoslavia, which constantly challenge and deny their human worth, Selimović exposes the fragility of a human life. Nevertheless, even though he acknowledges the vulnerability of the human being which is exposed and subjected to forces beyond his or her control, Selimović is an author who refuses to capitulate before them and to accept the role of the victim. His narrators, through inner monologue, engage themselves in the process of self-analysis, with the clear ambition of defining themselves and also the world

around them. This becomes an act of resistance in itself. They emerge as cautious observers of the external world and its turnabouts, with the aim not of submiting themselves to a life experience but rather of mastering and learning from it. Selimović's novels clearly demonstrate how in such a process personal illusions are inevitably weakened, but that this is essential for any human being to achieve a final self-definition.

In 1961, at a time when the majority of Yugoslav writers were embracing the paradigms of Modernism and interacting with modern literary approaches, Selimović published his first novel Tišine (Sarajevo). Unfortunately his writing did not receive a very warm response from the critics as he appeared to be yet another author engaged in socialist-realism. However, the fact that Tišine, as well as Selimović's second novel Magla i mjesecine, published a year later, were merely viewed as writings outside the dominant literary discipline, could also be explained by a general inability, at the time, to experience Selimović's writing in a more profound way. What is quite clear is that both these novels already demonstrate Selimović's exceptionally sensitive technique of searching within the psychological world of the human being. In Tišine, the author unveils the internal struggle of an ex-partisan who, after the loss of his entire family, his closest friends and the woman he loved, tries to build a new life and find its meaning within the peace he fought for. But, unfortunately, the war created unbridgeable gaps between him, his present and future, leaving him completely isolated:

Osjećam se izdvojen, stran, ništa nije moje, i mogu da budem nadmoćan, i surov. Udaljujem ih od sebe, potirem crte lica, gušim glasove do neprepoznavanja, prekidam svaku ljudsku vezu između sebe i njih, posmatram ih obesmišljene,

puštam da žive preda mnom bez moje pomoći, sami sobom, bez mog razumijevanja i podrške, bez mog opravdanja i kritike, bez moga učešća.

Tišine, p 121

Describing the struggle of this ex-partisan to find a 'new life' path, to integrate into the peace he fought for, Selimović explores the extent of the internal agony and sorrow that remains after a war. Standing alone and without emotion before the ashes of his 'previous life', the ex-partisan feels completely isolated and detached from the people around him. The war terminated the past and the 'new life' moves on without his participation or understanding. In the name of a better future he lost not only everything and everyone, but himself too. In addition, he becomes one of several individuals in Selimović's works who, as a result of their war experience, live their lives isolated and imprisoned in the nightmares of their 'pećina':

Izronjavam iz tame kao iz duboke crne vode. Bio sam negdje na dnu. Iznosim samo nejasan nemir i muk. Pogled mi je maglen, a sjećanje prekinuto. Iz svog mraka vidim samo kako preda mnom mutno svijetli pećinski otvor. Ko je podigao kamen? Uči će Nijemci i sve će nas pobiti. Hoću da viknem, ali nemam glasa, nemam snage, osjećam samo mučninu i strah: svi su ljudi otišli nekud i nikad se neće vratiti, nestali su netragom, pomrli od užasa, pobijeni, podavljeni, postreljani, leže u jamama, mrtvi plove u rijekama, izgorjeli su na pragovima zapaljenih kuća, nema ih, nikog nema, ostao sam sam, posljednji od njih, pod pećinskim stropom što se sve više spušta, sve je bliži, zatvara me u grob još živa, liježe mi na prsa, pritiskuje noge i ruke, i ostaje tako nadnesen da me ne bi uništo odmah, da bi užas umiranja trajao duže. Ne mogu da kriknem, ne mogu da se oduprem rukama, ne mogu da maknem nijednim dijelom tijela, ne mogu da dišem, vazduha nestaje, bradavičasta vlažna stijena me oblaže. a onda pritisak popušta, dišem lakše u polutami pećine gledajući u pećinski otvor, i strah je manji.

A kad otvorim oči, tama se potpuno razilazi, ali ostaje magla, muka i bezvoljnost.

Tišine, p 161, emphasis mine

In the novels to follow, even though some of them are placed within different historical frameworks, Selimović continues to examine the effects of war on a human life. None of his novels analyse a war as a straightforward historical affair, nor is there any indication of the writer's attempt to rewrite painful historical events in order to justify or glorify them. Selimović's novels do not recall the achievements of war, conquests or triumphs. On the contrary, the tragic stories of his ex-warriors suggest that it is not the shining glory that they remember, but the gloom of human suffering. War is '*pasji život*', '*ludnica*' and '*kavez divljih zvijeri*' says Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin in the novel Derviš i smrt (1966, Sarajevo). Even though Tišine is placed in the context of communist, postwar Yugoslavia and Derviš i smrt in the historical framework of the Ottoman Empire, and each includes an individual war saga, both of them have something in common: vanished dreams, destroyed hopes and the feeling of alienation from oneself. Writing his memoirs, while waiting for his death sentence to be carried out, Ahmed Nurudin remembers the murder of his brother and his own disillusion in the ideals he cherished. But, he also remembers his experience of the war, that would afterwards drive him towards absolute devotion to Islam:

Dugo sam nosio pred sobom okrvavljenu sablju, probadajući i sasijecajući sve što nije nosilo bijelu košulju, a i bijelih košulja je sve manje, postale su crvene, kao i moja. Nebo iznad nas bilo je crveni čaršaf, zemlja ispod nas bila je crveno gumno. Crveno smo gledali, crveno disali, crveno vikali. A onda se sve pretvorilo u crno, u mir. Ničeg više nije bilo kad sam se probudio, osim sjećanja u meni. Zatvarao sam oči i oživljavao veliki trenutak, ne želeći da znam za poraz, za

rane, za pokolj divnih ljudi, ne želeći da vjerujem da su se desetorica predala bez boja, odbijao sam ono što jest, ružno je grčevito sam čuvaо sliku velike žrtve, u bljesku, u vatri, ne dozvoljavajući joj da izblijedi. Poslije sam plakao kada je varke nestalo. U proljeće sam se kaljavim putem vraćo iz zarobljeništva kući, bez sablje, bez snage, bez vedrine, bez sebe nekadašnjeg.

Derviš i smrt, p 454

Selimović reveals, within the portrayal of war in his novels, that the disastrous consequences for human beings are identical, regardless of the historical period. Humbled by the experience of war, most of his individuals find themselves living somewhere between the past and the future, unable to give any meaning to their actions or to connect themselves with their inner self again. Throughout their lives and their response to the external world after a war, Selimović demonstrates how the cataclysm of war is aligned with the tragic experience of psychological dislocation. The irretrievable disappearance of the past and its 'familiar points', which shape the individual as an individual, unleashes feelings of fear and insecurity. Selimović shows his characters, separated from the recognisable milestones of their lives, lost before the unfamiliar prospect of 'a new life'. Alone, 'na grobištu' of his previous life, Ahmed Sabo (Tvrđava) describes these feelings:

Išao sam sokacima, bez cilja, nikud, a našao se pred pocrnjelim zidovima svoje kuće, nigdje.

Zar kod nas svaki pojas počinje sve iz početka?

Ta mrtva prošlost i nikakva sadašnjost, te crne ruševine svega što je bilo, na kojima ne mislim ništa graditi, ipak su nekakva spona s nečim. S čime? Prepoznajem staru mjesecinu, liči na onu iz djetinjstva, sad vara, srebrom prekrivajući garež. Jesam li je gledao iz one svoje sobe, gore, što je sad nema, ili pod hoćinskom utvrdom, zamišljajući da sam ovdje? Već dugo se u meni miješa

vrijeme i prostor, pa ne znam gdje sam, ni kad se desilo to što mislim. Ne postoje granice, kao u pustinji, kao na nebu, i sjećanja mirno prelaze, smještajući se ondje gdje im je zgodnije. Liče na oblake, svejedno im je gdje su, svejedno im je kad nastanu i kad nestanu. To mi ne smeta, čak je ugodno: ne osjećam potrebu da išta razrješavam.

Tvrđava, p 33

Tvrđava (1970, Sarajevo), is perhaps the most profound illustration of Selimović's belief that no war serves any human purpose. Throughout the novel the main character, Ahmed Šabo, emphasises Selimović's belief that there are no heroes or winners in war and that it is a tragic 'place' where any victory is nothing but the ultimate defeat of humanity:

Mnogo je ljudi poginulo u močvarama oko utvrđenja, i naših i njihovih, crna voda ritova ostala je zagasito smeđa od krvi, zaudaralo je na pradavno barsko korjenje, i na trule leševe, koje niko nije vadio. A kad smo zauzeli nasip, kad smo ga razanijeli topovima i glavama, zastao sam umoran: kakav besmisao! Šta smo dobili, a šta su oni izgubili? I nas i njih okruživao je jedini pobjednik, potpuni mir prastare zemlje, ravnodušne prema ljudskom jadu. Držao sam glavu u rukama, te večeri, sjedeći na mokrom panju, pred jadnom vatrom koja nam je kopala oči, zاغlušen kricima barskih ptica, uplašen gustom maglom dnjestarskih močvara što nas je uporno zavijala u zaborav. ne znam kako sam te noći uspio da preživim stravu, u meni i oko mene, i najdublju tugu poraza, poslije pobjede, nejasan sam sebi. U mraku, u magli, u kricima i zvižducima, u očajanju kojem nisam nalazio razlog, u toj dugoj noći nesna, u crnom strahu koji nije od neprijatelja, već od nečega iz mene, radio sam se ovakav kakav sam, nesiguran u sve svoje i u sve ljudsko.

Tvrđava, p 8, emphasis mine

Like the ex-partisan in Tvrđava, after his return from the killing fields of Hocin, Šabo also tries to (re)engage himself into the 'normality' of life, to find a job and simply to survive within the framework of the

corrupted and manipulative establishment of the Ottoman Empire. But, he feels completely alienated from reality and psychologically displaced from the outside world. Utterly disillusioned, he reveals his pain:

Povjerio sam se pjesmom o izgubljenosti nakon rata:

*U življenju, u trpljenju
srce blijeni,
srce vene,
sjena slijedi
bivšeg mene,
u trpljenju, u življenju.*

*Izgubih se u traženju.
Ja sam bio,
ja sam i sad.
Nisam bio,
nisam ni sad.
Izgubih se u traženju.*

*U lutanju, u snovima
noć me rubi,
dan me vraća.
dan se gubi,
život kraća,
u snovima, u lutanju.*

*U nadanju, u čekanju
život snijem,
a snom živim.
Srce krijem,
srce krivim
što ne živim,
što još snijem,
u čekanju, u nadanju.*

Admiring 'sve što nije rat', Šabo is determined that his son will not go to some other Hoćin and he vows himself 'Naučiću ga pjesništvu, i naučiću ga da mrzi rat.' (p 48). Himself a survivor of The Second World War, Selimović invokes the story of 'a survivor' - a human being haunted by the memories of war, a human being who faces the past and confronts the future with a burden which those who did not go through the torment cannot measure. Revealing the painful memories of his characters, illustrating the loss of their internal stability and confidence in basic human values, Selimović exposes the depth of its tragic consequences and its long-lasting effects.

The idea of **ideology** - the inexorable power determining the course of life's events with total indifference to their human consequences - is another important theme in Selimović's novel. Within the framework of two different ideologies, Islam in Derviš i smrt and Tvrđava and communism in his other novels, the author demonstrates how ideology has purpose and direction, how it is completely impersonal, and, though it repeatedly advocates the highest moral values, most often itself becomes morally indifferent. It is important to emphasise that Selimović's aim is not to condemn Islam or communism as particular ideologies. His concern has a more universal meaning as he engages in identifying all the ways in which every ideology, negates the individual and the autonomy of the human being. He reveals how by establishing '*više ciljeve*', an ideology binds its followers to its teaching, always assuring them that the final aim is '*toliko lep da zaslužuje svaku žrtvu. Ta žrtva nije lični gubitak već najviša ljudska mogućnost.*' (Krug, p 10) In his novels Selimović shows how by promising 'a better life after this one' or 'a better future' an ideology

establishes a route towards the complete **submission of an individuum** and fulfils its first objective which is that every 'Član partije čini samo ono što čini partija.' (Krug, p 106) At this point it is important to say that Selimović's novels clearly indicate how an ideology frequently indoctrinates human lives at their vulnerable stage. In the analysis of Selimović's novels, most of the critics acknowledge several of the main characters as idealists, at least at the beginning of the novels. Yet, none of them offers a clear sense of what lies behind these characters' striving for an ideal. There is no doubt that characters like Ahmed Nurudin in Derviš i smrt or Vladimir in the novel Krug cherish some higher beliefs and values. Within the walls of his tekke Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin dedicates his life to the practice and teaching of Islam while for Vladimir the teaching of The Communist Party determines the conduct of his own life. It is not coincidental that these men choose to worship the highest moral convictions. Their need for these elusive ideals arises out of an urge to regain '*veru u smisao života*' (Krug, p 7). Accepting the requirement to measure '*svoje postupke strogim mjerilima svoje savjesti, bojeći se grijeha*' (p 330), protecting Islamic law, Ahmed Nurudin (Derviš i smrt) tries to (re)establish and protect order within himself. After witnessing and participating in the destruction of the highest human values and in order to save his own sanity after returning from the war, he becomes completely devoted to the teaching of Islam and its strict guidelines. In the world of his religion, God has given human beings a clear criterion to distinguish good from evil, assuring punishment for those who commit evil. Accordingly, for the young student of Islam, but also the ex-warrior and the witness of the darker side of humanity, who believes that '*kada bih se uvjerio da nema pravde u ovom mome svijetu, ostalo*

bi mi da se ubijem‘ (p 140), religion with its ethical values becomes the ultimate way of protecting of his sanity. Further on, for the war orphan Vladimir Rađenović in the novel Krug, whose entire family died during The Second World War in the name of the communist idea, its elusive world becomes the only refuge from his insecurity in life:

Ta izmišljena a stvarna ideja, zamišljena zbog želje da se objasni jedna tajna, nastala je u njemu iz potrebe da u ovom nesigurnom svetu sam sebi učvrsti jednu dobrodošlu misao o sigurnosti. Bila mu je odgovor na mnoga pitanja, istok prema kojem se uvek okretao, vera u smisao života, opravdanje i uteha za mnoge nedoumice.

Krug, p 7

In addition, it seems appropriate to suggest that Selimović's novels indicate the tendency of human beings to embrace the refuge of an ideology in order to revitalise their lost beliefs and to heal the past. As they struggle to find 'a meaning' and to be reconciled to their own lives, elusive ideological worlds become the only trustworthy refuge. Both, Islam and communism offer a clear definition of 'good' and 'bad' and their tenets are very similar - each one appoints love and altruism as guiding forces in the world. Further, they propose an idea of 'goodness', so needed within an unsafe and harsh outside world. But, Selimović's novels demonstrate how the outcome of the absolute acceptance of an ideology is very often an unnatural and inhuman response to the reality of life. This is perhaps most obvious in the behaviour of Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin in the novel Derviš i smrt, who, confronted with the urgency of saving his brother's life, reveals the absolute absence of any human response to his own tragedy. He cannot free himself from the 'ideological line' as he believes that he is

'vjerom vezan za vječnu istinu i za široke prostore svijeta'. He says:

Zaista mislim da je božja volje vrhovni zakon, da je vječnost mjera našeg djelovanja i da je vjera važnija od čovjeka. Jest, more postoji oduvijek i zauvijek, i ne može se uzburkati zbog svake sićušne smrti. On je to rekao, gorko, sa drugim smisлом, ne vjerujući. A ja bih želio da se uzdignem do te misli, i kad je moja sreća u pitanju.

Derviš i smrt, p 140

Very similarly, the political leader and higher ranking member of the communist party, Gortan, in the novel Krug, also becomes a symbol for absolute subordination to an ideology. In his portrayal Selimović observes extreme ideological devotion and the frightening extent of inhumanity which evolves with it. Gortan appears as one of those fanatical, almost non- human devotees who dissolve their *individuum* in favour of an ideology. For him it is impossible to feel, or to exist, outside communism. Gortan's appearance at the celebration in the University, where he is invited as the Party leader, only a few weeks after the tragic death of his son, establishes him as a person for whom ideological affairs come even before the death of his only son. His individual tragedy and his personal pain are diminished before an ideology.

Junak i mučenik ideje, primjer izdržljivosti, heroj, čudovište, šta li je? U svakom slučaju, on je poseban čovjek, izuzetna snaga, i ljudi mu se mogu diviti ili čuditi, mogu ga sretati sa poštovanjem ili strahom, ali ga je teško voljeti. Možda to ni njemu više nije potrebno. Možda nije ni saznao šta je ljubav prema nekom određenom čovjeku, zbog hladne ljubavi prema čovječanstvu.

Da li je sina volio, kao što vole obični ljudi?

Sve dok ga nije video, Vladimir je mislio da Gortan ipak neće doći. Reći će da je spriječen, da se ne osjeća dobro, da ne može doći, da neće. Nadao se, želio

to, i uzalud sad sav razbor: razočaran je što je ovaj čovjek toliko čvrst, volio bi da u njemu postoji i neka ljudska slabost.

Ujak ne bi došao, sigurno. Možda ni otac, mada za njega nije sasvim siguran. Ovaj je došao. Svu djecu je pogubio u životu, i uvijek je došao na svaki partijski zadatak. Možda je ipak trebalo da ponekad ne dođe.

Krug, p 150, emphasis mine

In his portrayal of Nurudin's (Derviš i smrt) and Gortan's (Krug) fanatical ideological devotion, Selimović offers the ultimate, ironic portrayal of an ideology's failure to touch the heart. But not only does he clearly oppose inflexible adherence to any ideology for its inhumanity but also for the hypocrisy and self-satisfaction that frequently accompany it. In addition, in his novels Selimović demonstrates how '*sveta skloništa*' and sightless belief in their doctrine, provide an adequate hiding place for individuals whose final goal is the fulfilment of personal ambitions and access to power. Illustrating **manipulation and (ab)use of an ideology** by those who loudly advocate its ethics and principles, Selimović accentuates the existence of a disharmony between the principles proposed by an ideology and their presence within the framework of 'real life'. Accordingly, he exposes those who, like Džemal Zafranija in Tvrđava, abuse the highest religious principles in order to cover up their greed for power and their own felony, happily camouflaging it as the defence of faith. Similarly, in the novel Krug, with the words '*važno je sjećanje na brigadu, ne pojedinci.*' (p 249), Nina's father, a Party leader, justifies the fraud he committed by publishing a book of war memoirs under his own name, instead of the name of the real writer, the journalist Stojić. He defends his own crime by arguing that it was

necessary for the protection of The Party's image and reputation as the journalist Stojić was sent to prison, just as the book was about to be published.

-To su isključivo moja sjećanja. Ja sam mu ispričao sve događaje. On nije izmislio ni jedan jedini. Ko je onda autor?

- On. Nisu važni događaji već onaj ko ih zapiše.*
- Besmisao! - počeo je da se ljuti - Diktirao sam mu u pero, takoreći.*
- Sva je razlika u tom 'takoreći': on nije zapisao kako si ti diktirao.*
- Razlike su zanemarljive. Suštinski, sve je moje. Je li ti on rekao drugačije?*

Ako jest, laže.

- Zašto nisi stavio i svoje i njegovo ime? To bi bilo pošteno.*
- Šta hoćeš ti od mene? - opasno se naljutio - kakvo je ovo saslušanje?*
- Nemoj se ljutiti, tata. To je najlakše. Odgovori mi, važno je. Zašto nisi stavio i njegovo ime?*
- Već je bio zatvoren kad je knjigu trebalo dati u štampu. Ne bi mogla izaći s njegovim imenom.*

Krug, p 249

Exposing the **immorality of ideological 'justice'** that finds its locus within the context of two different ideologies and two different historical frameworks, Selimović highlights the existence of various tools used by an 'ideological apparatus' in order to 'protect' itself. Accordingly, he begins to expose their **brutality** too. The murder of Nurudin's brother Harun in Derviš i smrt or the imprisonment of the student Ramiz in Tvrđava are just some of the methods used to silence those who dare to challenge the 'mission' and the illegitimate implementation of the proposed ethics of an ideology. In addition, as they dared to articulate their discontent with ruling forces, Ahmed Nurudin in Derviš i smrt and Ahmed Šabo in Tvrđava, are also assaulted

and beaten up, in order that they should be reminded that each of them is '*mali čovjek koji je zaboravio da je mali*' (*Tvrđava*, p 80) Furthermore, in his novels, Selimović also suggests that abuse of an ideology involves more than one individual. That is perhaps most effectively indicated in Selimović's portrayal of 'forgotten people', who are abused for the fulfilment of an ideological aim or the protection of its dogmatic teaching. In several of his novels the author points to the masses of commoners and proletarians who are at one point glorified for defending the bastions of an ideology, and in the end, if they are 'lucky' enough to survive, become no more than its marginalised creatures, crippled and impoverished beggars. In Derviš i smrt Ahmed Nurudin meets an old friend Kara Zaim, an ex-conqueror and hero who has become a devalued and humiliated servant:

Vojniku je ime Kara-Zaim. Sad je sjenka nekadašnjeg Kara-Zaima, sad je dronjak onog neustrašivog mladića što je golom sabljom išao na golu sablju, dok mu jedna, ulanska, nije otvorila put između rebara na prsima i leđima. Do tada je boden, zasijecan, sječen, skraćivan, nije imao pola lijevog uha, ni tri prsta na lijevoj ruci, lice mu je išarano crvenim brazdama na kojima ne izrasta nova koža, ostale biljege je sakrivaо haljinama, i uvijek je lako prebolijevao i vraćao se u bitke. Krv mu je bila jaka, i duboki zasjecu u mlado meso brzo su zacjeljivali. A kad ga je probola dušmanska sablja ulanska, načinivši otvore da svjetlo sunčeve uđe u njega prvi put, kad su mu vrh i sječivo prošli kud im nije put, kroz pluća, Kara-Zaim je pao i zamro, ostavili su ga uzmičući, i džerah je u trku samo dotakao njegovu hladnu ruku i požurio za vojskom, namjeravajući da mu prouči dovu kad izmakne na sigurno mjesto. Kara-Zaim se probudio u noći, od hladnoće, među mrtvacima, iznemogao i tih kao i oni. Ostao je živ, ali nije više bio za vojsku. Izgubio je snagu, i brzinu i radost. Sad je čuvar bašće, ili kuće, ili nevoljnik što prima milostinju.

Derviš i smrt, p 172

Within the historical context of communist Yugoslavia, in the novel Krug, Nina's boyfriend Ismet also speaks passionately about the unfortunate destiny of his father and the other miners '*koji su se masovno angažovali u revoluciji, i postali su njen pojam. A ipak su zaboravljeni.*' (p 26). He reveals Selimović's concern regarding the dominance of ideologies which '*poništavaju čitave armije ljudi.*' (p 263).

The words of the bitter and disillusioned Ahmed Šabo in the novel Tvrđava, are perhaps the best illustration of Selimović's belief in the **disunity between an ideology and a 'real life'**:

Što ima više svetih skloništaiza koji se ljudi kriju, sve je više prostora za ljudsko zlo. Čovjek uvijek izmisli razlog izvan sebe, da bi se oslobođio odgovornosti i krivice.

Tvrđava, p 69

Unmistakably, indicating his disapproval with any ideology which strives to become more important than a human being Selimović says through his character Hasan in Derviš i smrt:

Lako je izmisliti opšte propise, gledajući iznad glava ljudi, u nebo i vječnost. A pokušaj da ih primjeniš na žive ljudi, koje poznaješ i možda voliš, a da ih ne povrijediš.

Derviš i smrt, p 130

Selimović's novels indicate that the disunity between an ideology and 'life' beyond its boundaries, is the result of a gap between the breadth of a 'life' on the one hand, and the narrowness and limitation of anticipated rules on the other. Hasan in Derviš i smrt says again:

Život je širi od svakog propisa. Moral je zamisao, a život je ono što biva. Kako da ga uklopimo u zamisao a da ga ne oštetimo?

Derviš i smrt, p 132

After the unlawful killing of his brother Harun, discovering felony and crime in the places where he rightly expected justice and realising how the highest ethics of his religion are abused in order to protect lawbreakers in power, Ahmed Nurudin (Derviš i smrt), also suggests '*Amin je početak a ne kraj.*' (p 207). His final acknowledgment of the existence of 'real life', which prevails outside of the Kur'an and its dogmatic teaching, is a clear indication of Selimović's conviction that human life cannot be finalised or conducted according to a set of rules. That is to say, in his novels Selimović constantly argues that 'life' is not something given or proposed by an ideology, outlined by collective or social demands. Mladen Rađenovic, in the novel Krug, dies in the belief '*da je život izbor a ne sudbina*' and with the strong conviction that '*običan čovek živi kako mora, a pravi čovek živi kako hoće: život na koji se bez otpora pristaje to je bedno tavorenje, a izabrani život je sloboda.*' (Krug, p 9, emphasis mine) In other words, throughout his novels Selimović demonstrates his belief that the '**chosen life**' is the only life worth living. In his opinion, 'life' does not mean to be simply content with submission to a 'given' or proposed path, but rather to search and choose one's own road. There is no doubt that through the portrayal of the forces which influence human lives beyond their control, Selimović recognises the presence of imposed elements. Nevertheless, he remains consistent in the belief that humans are beings who have a chance to perceive what might be their fate and by learning from it perhaps affect it. He also indicates the conviction

that humans have no other option but to learn or refuse to believe that they are responsible for themselves. That is to say, Selimović's novels strongly suggest that refusal and denial of choice and acceptance of the status of a victim, is the cardinal sin against life itself. However, while most of his novels are concerned with a 'choice' within the context of ideological demands, in the novel Ostrvo, Selimović focuses his attention on 'life' in general. Even though the novel is very often criticised for its lack of action, there is no doubt that it is conceived as an intense activity of the mind and soul of its main character, the ex-teacher Ivan Maric. Every story, out of the 19 that make up the novel, is one step forward towards his final 'discovery'. Bitter and disillusioned by 'life', Ivan lives on an Adriatic island with his wife Katarina, imprisoned in the world of his own discontent. In his late sixties, he is surrounded by impoverishment, aging, fear and the scent of approaching death. The boredom and apathy of life on the island, together with the nostalgic memories of his youth and his unrealised dreams, isolate him in a world of his innerself:

Što mu treba da misli je li mu srce puno ili prazno, je li mu duša zadovoljna ili tužna. Od čega bi mu srce bilo puno? Od godina što ga sve teže pritiskuju? Od izigranih želja? Od ovog nevoljnog zatočeništa kojeg ne može da se osloboodi? Od ispraznih snova što su na njegovoj životnoj stazi ostali kao prazne zmajske košuljice? Od ljubavi od koje nije ostao ni pepeo? Od samoće? Od besmislena trajanja u životu?

Ne, neće da postavlja sebi nerješiva pitanja, neće da se ubija. Živ jeće kao i dosad.

Ostrvo, p 26

Regrets and unfulfilled hopes activate an internal monologue and

Ivan begins to analyse his life. His questions convert his personal and intimate suffering into something more or less universal:

Najgore mu je bilo kad se nekako odvajao od samog sebe i, kao da je neko drugi, kao da je hladni sudija, posmatrao sebe kako nije želio da se vidi. Kad je bio u sebi, cjelovit, kad se nije razdvajao, obično nije znao tačno ni ko je, ni kakav je, i samo u tom stanju jedinstva mogao je o sebi da misli utješno, čak s nekom nadom. I da o sebi misli s nekim neodređenim zadovoljstvom koje se graničilo s dopadanjem. A kad bi svijest napustila njegovo tijelo, ili nešto neobjašnjivo i rasplinuto što je on, ili njegova ličnost, ili njegova misao o sebi, i ostajala da lebdi izvan i iznad njega, tada kao da se sav pretvarao u natmurenost, u nešto što nije on sam, i ipak sudi sebi mrtvom, ili bivšem, ili onome što je možda živio, i uvijek ga žali i gleda sa tugom i prijekorom, mašući nepostojećom glavom. A mrtvi, odživjeli dio njega osjeća se nelagodno, jadno, skrušeno, mada je mrtav, mada bi mu moglo biti svejedno. I začudo, za njega bivšeg osjeća, i žali, taj odvojeni, živi dio.

Jesi li nešto htio u životu? - pita ga taj odvojeni sudija. Jesi, znam, ali šta je bilo s tim htijenjem? To zapravo i nije bilo nikakvo htijenje, već napon mladosti, snaga nade, suvišak energije, željenje koje se uvijek pruža na sutra. A to sutra nikad ne dolazi. Cak i kad se ponekad učini da je došlo, uskoro se vidi da je to varka. A znaš li zašto je tako? Zato što nikad nisi dozrio do prave misli, nikad nisi pošteno ispitao sebe šta hoćeš i šta možeš, nikad se nisi odmaknuo od praznog mladalačkog željenja koje nema budućnosti.

Ostrvo, p 177

Ivan's questions are clear sign of his personal 'awakening' and rebellion against a futile and meaningless life. But they also indicate Selimović's craving to explore universal and timeless dilemmas about the purpose of human existence and self-definition of every human being within the context of 'life'. However, Selimović does not appear as an author who offers ultimate answers or clear guidelines. In addition, his novels clearly suggest that the breadth of 'life' cannot be

calculated and that its spectrum cannot be defined by anything or anyone. Subsequently, what remains is Selimović's belief in an enduring search for *individuum* and 'chosen' life as '*Ništa nije konačno dok u nama ima snage za traženje. Ništa nije svršeno do samog svršetka.*' (Ostrvo, p 195).

Selimović's male characters

Although some critics describe Selimović as a writer of the Muslim cultural environment in Bosnia, it seems more appropriate to suggest that his writing presents him more as a writer of the male cultural environment which evolved within the territory of what is today known as 'the former Yugoslavia'. In addition, only two of his novels, Derviš i smrt and Tvrđava, are placed within the framework of the Muslim tradition, while, on the other hand, all his novels are set within authoritarian, male dominated regimes: Bosnia at the time of the Ottoman Empire, with its strict guidelines of the Islamic religion, and post-war Yugoslavia with its authoritative communist system.

In most of Selimović's novels the world of his male characters has two elements in common. Firstly it is a world of constant conflict. Selimović's men always have battles to fight, as skilled soldiers against a collective enemy or among themselves. In their portrayal Selimović indicates that the 'war' between men is never over and that '*Rat je surova, ali poštena borba, kao među životinjama. Život u miru je surova borba, ali nepoštena, kao među ljudima.* (Tvrđava, p 14) Furthermore, the world of Selimović's men contains a concept of a hierarchical

structure and most of them support and protect such a concept, in one way or another. At the same time, ironically enough, the majority of them are clustered at its bottom. That is to say, Selimović's male characters are clearly divided into two main groups: leaders and followers. The leaders of the ideological systems portrayed in Selimović's novels, are distinguished mostly by their rank within society and their relationship to the political regime. In the novels set during the Ottoman Empire their status is primarily defined by birth. A prestigious family ultimately bears wealth, supremacy and, in addition, a certain degree of power. The higher ranking position among communists is obtained by merit and heroism demonstrated throughout the Second World War in the Partisan Army. Nevertheless, the 'success' of several of Selimović's male characters also suggests a possibility of attaining some of the highest positions in both societies by becoming the manipulative and corrupted devotee of a regime. However, the portrayal of these male characters in Selimović's novels indicates that most of them are nothing but unscrupulous abusers of an ideology and their higher ranking positions. Their only true goal is to protect or to gain individual power while advocating the highest principles of the ideology. Islam and Communism both propose collective identity and imply commitment to collective action. In addition, establishing themselves as the 'protectors' of the collective and 'higher aims' of an ideology, these male characters demand and enforce the complete obedience of an individual in 'their name'. In his portrayal of those who subject themselves to such conditions, Selimović presents loyal and sightless devotees of an ideology as well as those who are controlled by fear of punishment by the authorities and rejection by the collective. It was mentioned earlier that Ahmed

Nurudin, in the novel Derviš i smrt, becomes a faithful zealot of the Islamic faith, in particular after his war experience. He completely embraces the dogmatic teaching which requires an absolute acceptance of its rules. Ultimately, Nurudin's *individuum* vanishes before the ideology. He says:

Dvadeset godina sam derviš, a malim djetetom sam pošao u školu, i ne znam ništa izvan onoga što su htjeli da me nauče. Učili su me da slušam, da trpim, da živim za vjeru. Boljih od mene je bilo, vjernijih nema mnogo. Uvijek sam znao što treba da činim, derviški red je mislio za mene, a osnovi vjere su i tvrdi i široki, i ništa moje nije postojalo što se u njih nije moglo uklopiti.

Derviš i smrt, p 100, emphasis mine

Similarly, with a passionate belief in the ideals of communism and a strong conviction that 'partija je nepogrešiva.' (p 30), the war orphan Vladimir Rađenovic, in the novel Krug, reveals how he adopts its programme as his personal guidelines:

A kad je imao više vremena i strpljenja, Vladimir je objasnjavao ujaku da je partija organizacija koje udružuje ljude jasne svesti, koja nije postala suma članova koje okuplja već suština najboljeg što u njima postoji. Tako ona, ostajući udruženje, savez ljudi koji dobrovoljno prihvataju jednu ideju i program njenog ostvarenja, uspeva da oni ne unesu svoje mane i greške. Partija kao da ih filtrira, čisti, trijeriše, odstranjujući ružne sastojke a ostavljujući samo čistu materiju. To je supstrat kolektivne svesti, koja nije običan skup pojedinačnih svesti već novostvorenna mogućnost, kvalitet višeg društvenog nivoa, efikasno prevazilaženje uske sebičnosti. Čak nije sasvim odbijao ni izuzetnost partije. Ljudi su spremni da izvrše izuzetan čin samo kad nadrastu svoju prizemnost, ako utelove svoju delatnost u neku višu vrednost, kao što su bili Bog, Čovek, Istina. Ako program partije nosi u sebi ostvarenje ljudske pravde, onda je partija, danas, nosilac te više vrednosti i organizacija koja upija u sebe volju svakog člana ali je nužno potčinjava ciljevima važnim za čovečanstvo. Tako volja svakog člana ostaje

slobodna i nužno obavezna da deluje u svrhu ostvarenja konačnog cilja patije, a oduzima mu pravo da mu se suprotstavi, jer je pristao na to da primi odluku većine. Logika je jednostavna; ciljevi partije su poznati i član ih dobrovoljno prihvata. Ako bi mu se ostavila mogućnost da te ciljeve naknadno odbija ili menja po svojoj slobodnoj volji, ili ako bi bio u situaciji da sam sebi određuje stepen discipline i odgovornosti, partija bi izgubila efikasnost u klasnoj bosrbi, a ona je izvesna, teška je i surova; nosioci bezbrojnih privilegija koje revolucija odriče, bezobzirno se bore da ih zadrže. U takvoj nemilosrdnoj borbi neodrživa su pravila ponašanja pevačkog društva, partija s pravom zahteva i nameće disciplinu, ona ima pravo na to kao nosilac ostvarenja neizbežnih istorijskih zadataka. Ko to ne može da prihvati, može slobodno da izade iz partije, bez ikakvih posledica.

Krug, p 49

With wholehearted confidence in the principles of their ideologies, both Selimović's male characters, Nurudin and Vladimir, foster the required way of thinking and behaviour as they deliver their absolute obedience. By applying the ideals and the goals of imposed ideologies within every domain of their lives, these men become representatives of individuals who are entirely indoctrinated by a dogmatic teaching. It was mentioned earlier that one of the most terrifying indications of the extent of Nurudin's (Derviš i smrt) submission to Islamic doctrine, is certainly most visible in the impotency of his humanity after the imprisonment of his brother. Blindly following the inflexible law of Islam he refuses to challenge it even when his brother's life is in danger. When his friend Hasan suggests kidnapping of Harun from prison, Nurudin categorically refuses. Being imprisoned himself in the doctrine of his dogma, he justifies his cold-hearted and passive response with the 'solemn' belief that he is preserving something much more important than one human life:

Razmišljaо sam trenutak, zatečen, uplašen ovom naglošću, u opasnosti da budem uvučen u ružan poduhvat. Odbio sam, ne kazujući pravi razlog i ne znajući ga tačno.

- *Onda bi ostao kriv.*
- *Ostao bi u životu! Važno je spasiti čovjeka.*
- *Ja spasavam više: pravdu.*
- *Stradaćete i ti, i on i pravda.*
- *Ako je određeno da bude tako, onda je to božja volja.*

Te moje smirene riječi mogle su biti tužne, gorke, bespomoćne, ali su bile iskrene. Ništa mi drugo nije ostalo

Derviš i smrt, p 138, emphasis mine

In the portrayal of Nurudin and Vladimir, Selimović clearly highlights the fact that by placing an abstract idea above a human being, these men have lost the ability to respond to life outside of the boundaries proposed by the respective ideologies. Vladimir's friend Cizmić is not surprised that Vladimir's uncle Janko says nothing to his nephew about the letter he wrote to a newspaper condemning the immorality and corruption of representatives of the communist party. Frustrated with Vladimir's constant denial of reality and his sightless belief in communist ideology, Cizmić shouts '*nije nimalo čudno što ti nije rekao čak ni šta je napisao predsjedniku Udrženja. Ti si iznad svega što je praktični život i praktična politika. Alal ti vjera!*' (Krug, p 288).

Some of the 'followers' illustrated in Selimović's novels are characters who like Mula Ibrahim in Tvrđava believe that '*san je ono što se želi, a život je buđenje*'. Their 'commitment' to the system is not based on their belief in an ideology, devotion to higher moral values or even on personal ambitions. It arises out of their instinctive need 'to survive'. Therefore, confronted with possible exclusion and rejection from the collective, an annihilation awaiting all those who

in any way rebel against an order and a commitment to collective action, they simply conform. Male characters like Mula Ibrahim or Mahmut Neretljak in Tvrđava are clearly aware of the reality which surrounds them but nonetheless, they show no strength or inner-motivation to confront their own discontent. The life of these male characters is mainly controlled by fear of the authorities, possible reprisals, rejection from 'the collective' as well as by the fear of any rebel thought and its effect. Mula Ibrahim in Tvrđava cautions Ahmet Sabo:

-Zašto ne loviš ribu? Izgleda velika ludost, što i jest, ali postane najveća strast. I brani čovjeka od drugih ludosti. Svijet se može rušiti, a ti ćeš, nepomičan, buljiti u vodu. Najveća mudrost u životu je da čovjek pronađe pravu ludost. Da je vlast pametna, naredila bi svima: udicu u šake, pa na rijeku, lovi ribu! Ne bi bilo buna ni nereda. Kažem ti: lovi ribu Ahmete Sabo!

- Ne mislim dizati bune, nije mi potrebna nikakva ludost. Miran sam kao što vidiš.

- Isuviše. Toga se i bojim. Bojim se šta će biti kada se probudiš. Lovi ribu, Ahmete Sabo!

Smijao sam se, jer je izgledalo da se podsmijeva. A onda sam se sjetio da je on podozriv prema svemu što nije pravilo i zakon, zato mu se nije dopadalo moje usamljivanje. Usamljenost rađa misao, misao nezadovoljstvo, nezadovoljstvo pobunu...

...Zašto su ih zadavili?

- Zašto? Pitaš me, zašto!

Prvi put otkako smo zajedno, video sam da je uznamiren. Glas mu je tih, ali ustreptao, i promuklo dubok, kao da ga guši uzbuđenje.

- Šta hoćeš da ti kažem? Tolike ljude su pobili, a ti tražiš razlog zašto su zadavili imama i dva seljaka iz Župče! Lovi ribu Ahmete Sabo!

Tvrđava, p 28-29

The extent of the fear which some of Selimović's male characters

demonstrate before the authority of regime, is clearly visible in their betrayal of friendships. Challenged by fear of a regime, on several occasions in Selimović's novels, friendships between two men fail the test. Out of fear of the powerful law-makers, Mula-Jusuf in Derviš i smrt becomes the Cadi Ajni-efendija's spy and betrays the brother of his only friend and teacher, Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin. Interestingly enough, Nurudin denies Mula-Jusuf's feelings of fear and dismisses their existence as the potential motive for Mula-Jusuf's crime. Nevertheless, when asked to sign an arrest warrant for his best friend Hasan, Nurudin as the Cadi not only finds himself in an identical situation, but after experiencing the extent of his own fear, betrays his best friend:

-Hoćeš li potisati rješenje? - pitao me je defterdar.

-Moram - rekao sam, gledajući pred sobom pismo, gledajući prijetnju.

-Ne moraš. Odluči po savjesti.

Oj, ostavi savjest na miru! Odlučiću po strahu, odlučiću po užasu, i dići ću ruke od sebe sanjanog. Biću ono što moram: đubre. Sramota neka padne na njih, natjerali su me da budem ono čega sam se gadio.

Ali ni to nisam mislio tada. Bilo mi je teško, osjećao sam da se dešava nešto strašno, toliko nečovječno da se ni domisliti ne može. samo je i to potisnuto, pokriveno strahom što me prožeо kao omama, i divljim klokotanjem krvi što me gušila nabujalošću i vrelinom. Zelio sam napolje, da udahnem vazduha, da se oslobođim crne omaglice, a znao sam da se sve mora riješiti odmah, u tom času, i onda ću se riješiti svega. Otići ću na brdo, na najviši greben, ostaću do večeri, sam. Ništa neću misliti, disaću, disati.

-Ruka ti dršće - začudio se defterdar.-Zar ti je toliko žao?

Osjećao sam muku u stomaku, povraćalo mi se.

-Ako ti je toliko žao, zašto si potpisao?

Htio sam nešto da odgovorim na to ruganje, ne znam šta, ali sam čutao, pognute glave, dugo, dok se nisam sjetio, i počeo da molim, mucajući

-Ne mogu više ostati ovdje. Treba da odem nekud, kud bilo. Samo daleko.

Derviš i smrt, p 437

Furthermore, in the novel Tvrđava Selimovic portrays the betrayal of friendship between Mula Ibrahim and Ahmet Sabo. Mula Ibrahim owes his life to Ahmed Sabo, as he saved him on their return from the killing fields of Hoćin. Sabo becomes not only his employee but also his friend. Nevertheless, Mula Ibrahim dismisses Sabo, from his post in a cowardly manner, because of Sabo's verbal confrontation with the opinion of powerful representatives in the community. Ibrahim knows that every one of Sabo's words is true, but his fear takes over:

Naređeno mu je da me otpusti, nije smio da ne posluša. Drugi bi smio, on ne smije. Njegov strah pred jačim ljudima, bilo u čemu jačim, gotovo je nerazuman. Kao strah od groma, od potresa, od kobi, strah koji se ne može ni objasniti ni otkloniti. Kad je do njega dospjela ta zloslutna riječ, nečija želja i zapovijest, u tuđim ustima, naravno manje značajnim ali neospornim, sigurno je odmah pristao da posluša i da me žrtvuje.

Tvrđava, p 94

Apart from the fact that Selimović portrays these male characters as tragic individuals nullified by controlling factors, suspicion, distrust and apprehensions, he also underlines the existence of their fear as 'nutrition' for the survival of any authoritarian regime and the growth of its power. Weak, obedient and invisible, these characters become ideal citizens for any powerful ruler.

Another group of Selimović's male characters, such as Sestan in Tišine, fosters an ideology and demonstrates willingness to integrate themselves into its representing system, because they believe: 'Došli smo da ostanemo' (p 147). In addition, a full integration into the system

for these characters appears to be the only possible path towards achieving the promised and so much desired better, proletarian or heavenly future. On the other hand, some of Selimović's male characters have different reasons for seeking integration into a system. Borivoje Petrović in Krug, who starts his political career 'kao omladinski rukovodilac' but who also calls attention to himself 'oštrim govorima protiv anarhizma omladine za vrijeme studentskih nemira u junu 68, i zahtjevima da se postupi energično protiv podstrekača pobune', is an ambitious individual whose aim is to secure his own, high, position within society. The Muderis Numan and Ilijaz-efendija in Tvrđava are also loud-mouthed devotees with social and political aspirations. They demonstrate the extent of their own integration and sincere devotion by publicly underlining the distinction between 'bad' and 'good' members of the brotherhood:

Ilijaz-efendija je rekao da mu je žao i da ga je stid što dajemo toliko slobode onima koji je ne zaslužuju. Kao da smo pamet izgubili, kobimo sami sebe, zazivajući propast. Naša je dužnost da bdijemo, da sve znamo, da se suprotstavljamo. On tu dužnost vrši u svom džematu, bdije, zna, bori se. Mladi ljudi su pošli krivim putem, pjevaju oko džamije dok se klanja namaz, govore ružne riječi, preziru ugledne ljude, ismijavaju svetinje. u, ali malo može učiniti sam. Šta radi muselim, šta rade stražari? Kao da se njih to ne tiče. Neće klonuti, boriće se dok je daha u njemu, ali molí kadiju da mu pomogne, kad neće oni koji su dužni.

....Tada su počeli da se nadmeću u oštrini, strogosti, napadima na nekakve krivce kojih je bilo sve više. Niko nije htio da zaostane ni za pedalj, a ne zaostati značilo je biti stroži i tvrđi. stenjali su, vikali, režali, nabrajali zločine, zahtijevali kazne i istrebljenje, bolje da nas bude malo ali dobrih nego mnogo a svakavih, bolje da je neprijatelj na drugoj strani šanca nego u vlastitim redovima.

Sve se žarilo od vatre i gnjeva.

Tvrđava, p 219, emphasis mine

Moreover, in the portrayal of the character of Džemal Zafranija (Tvrđava), Selimović continues to emphasise the varied nature of man's motivation for integrating into an authoritarian system and becoming an active collaborator in its preservation. Džemal Zafranija is more than eager to fulfil his long lasting ambitions, by any means. Coming from a poor family, he appears to be the hungriest for power and its privileges. Ahmed Sabo describes him:

Ne volim ga, uvijek me odbijao svojim lažnim smiješkom, svojom opasnom ljubaznošću, svojim njuškanjem, čak i kada sam bio jači od njega. Sad pogotovu. Ne volim ljudе koji rade kod kadije. Da mu je kičma od željeza, pukla bi za dva mjeseca. A on već dvije godine pisar, i neće dugo ostati na tom mjestu, popeće se. Njega nije trebalo ni lomiti, on se savija prije dodira. Sličan je vodi, nema svog oblika, prilagođava se sudu u koji ga naspu. Ništa mu nije gadno ako mu je korisno, jer je imao jedan jedini cilj u životu: da uspije, da pobegne od uspomene na sirotinjsko djetinjstvo i na oca zatvorskog stražara, pijaniku i svačijeg špajjuna, koji je umro prezren, a sin mu je i tu porodičnu nesreću pretvorio u svoju korist, igrajući žrtvu, dok nije stao na noge, i moleći pomoći moćnih pred nenaklonjenom sudbinom. A kad su svi zaboravili, on nije. Sve je pamtio. Otac je bio kriv zato što je jad i sirotinja, kriv što je bio svačiji sluga, kriv što nije znao da iskoristi zlo koje je činio. Da je bio moćan, niko ga ne bi prezirao, bar ne javno. Klanjali bi mu se, makar ga i mrzili. Zlo i nevolje koje je učinio ljudima, mogao je dobro unovčiti, mogao je od njih napraviti stepenice po kojima će se popeti, možda i visoko. Mnogi tako rade. Ali otac je bio slabic, za sitne pare je provadao svoje sposobnosti. On neće biti slabic. Učiniće sve, ali će ispraviti očevu grešku. Bio je miran, odmijeren, opasan, znao je koliko ga se ljudi plaše i, smješeći se, uživao u tome.

Tvrđava, p 67

Zafranija's unhappy childhood and enduring poverty are his primary motivation on his route to the core of power. Selimović portrays him as vicious and cold-blooded with no mercy for his opponents. He is ready to abuse anything and anyone to achieve his

goals, including himself. In order to underline the extreme extent of Zafranija's ambition, Selimović goes even a step further by revealing his homosexual inclinations. From the narrator's words it is clear that this type of sexual orientation is perceived within Zafranija's community as an unacceptable and sinful activity but Selimović's focus is not on homosexuality itself. The author uses homosexuality in order to maximise the intensity of Zafranija's fanatical ambition and determination to succeed. Not only does he embrace violence in order to rise higher within the system's hierarchy, but he also engages in homosexual activity with a higher ranking member of the community:

Sjetio sam se kako o njemu govore, sa smješkom i gotovo s priznanjem, da je već godinu dana ljubavnik bogatog haznadara Fejze, nešto zato da bi imao moćnog zaštitnika, a najviše zato što je htio da se oženi njegovom kćerkom mirazušom. Da li želi prvo da ga odobrovolji pa će onda za uzdarje tražiti kćerku, ili će i dalje tkati na dva razboja, što je vjerovatnije, to ne znam.

Tvrđava, p 68

In the same novel, describing the character of haznadar Fejzo (Zafranija's lover) and his conversation with Ahmed Sabo, who inquires about job possibilities, Selimović once again implies that homosexuality is an abnormal attribute of some of the male characters who serve the evil forces of the system's power. Suggesting the existence of a large number of such individuals and their unity, the author speaks of their homosexual preference as yet another negative indicator of the complete disorder within their moral values and ethics:

I tada, tek tada, tako mi sreće, eto kolika sam budala i bezveznjaković, tek tada mi je psatlo jasno u šta sam upao. I ne zato što sam bistar, već što je posatlo očito. Govorio je sve tiše, sve muklije, unoseći mi se u lice da sam mu dah osjećao, dah vlažan i vreo, a ruka mu je tražila moju, i gladila je sve mekše.

Vidim, šale nema, a nisam je ja ni započinjao, i mislim: da li da ga udarim po drhtavim gubicama, da zapamti kada me je doveo u ovo svoje smrdljivo leglo, ili da se nekako izvučem bez svađe i bez štete, dosta mi je sukoba i mržnje.

Te ustanem i zamolim ga da otključa vrata, moram da se nađem sa Mula Ismailom.

Hadži Fejzo se osmjejnuo:

- On ti neće pomoći.*
- Nije ti prijatelj?*
- Bože sačuvaj!*
- A tih.... prijatelja, imaš li mnogo?*
- Vidjećeš.*
- I svi se pomažete?*
- Dodji, uvjeri se. Mi ne ostavljamo na cjedilu jedan drugoga.*

Tvrđava, p 108-109

The haznadar Fejzo is just one of the representatives of powerful law-breakers within one system portrayed in Selimović's novels. The illustration of male characters such as the Cadi Ajni-efendija in Derviš i smrt or Nina's father in Krug also indicate Selimović's ambition to expose the ruthless executors of the law. These men are individuals with an absolute determination to eliminate anyone and anything in order to protect their power. For them, when it comes to the protection of their own dominant status, no one is more important or above it. Portraying these male characters, Selimović exposes the way in which, in order to hide their own disgrace and corruption, they shield themselves with the teaching of an ideology. In a desperate attempt to save his innocent brother, Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin appeals to the Cadi Ajni-efendija for help. Ajni-efendija knows that Nurudin's

brother is imprisoned as an innocent man, but he also knows that Harun's 'crime' was intended to expose the injustice committed by the Cadi himself. That is why, in order to silence Harun, the Cadi Ajni-efendija sentences him to death. Refusing to help, he sends Nurudin away shielding himself with the words of the Kur'an: 'Koji vjeruju u Boga i suđnji dan, ne drže prijateljstvo s neprijateljima alaha i poslanika njegova, makar to bili očevi njihovi, ili braća njihova, ili rođaci njihovi.' (p 154). By exposing the brutality of Ajni-efendija, Selimović exposes those individuals who protect their own ambitions and goals while hiding behind the dogmatic teaching of an ideology. Inhuman and inflexible, just like the ideology itself, they become its mirror-image. Nurudin describes Ajni efendija:

A od svoga je možda bilo najmučnije što nijednom nije digao glas, nije izmjenio način govorā, nije se uzbudio, naljutio, nasmijao. Polako su otpadale od njega riječi, žute, voštane, tuđe i uvijek nanovo sam se čudio kako ih dobro slaže i nalzai im pravo mjesto, jer je izgledalo da će se prosuti iz njega, nagomilane negdje u šupljini usta, i poteći bez reda. Govorio ih je uporno, strpljivo, sigurno, ni jedan jedini put nije bio u sumnji, nije pretpostavio neku drugu mogućnost, i ako sam mu protivriječio, rijetko, izgledao je istinski začuđen, kao da ga je prevario sluh, kao da se susreo sa ludim čovjekom, i opet nastavljao da niže rečenice iz knjiga, dodajući vijekovima njihove starosti memlu svoga mrtvila. Zašto govoriti? pitao sam se uznemireno. Zar misli da ne znam ove poznate rečenice ili da san ih zaboravio? Govori li to njegovo visoko mjesto, njegova istaknuta dužnost? Govori li iz navike, ili da ništa ne kaže, ili se ruga, ili nema drugih riječi osim naučenih?

Derviš i smrt, p 153

Individuals like Ajni-efendija clearly represent a system that stands for immorality, corruption and deceit. They are unsupulous law-breakers and hypocrites. One of them is Nina's father in the novel Krug, who symbolises a unique 'category' of men that evolved in the

communist Yugoslavia. They are known as 'budže'¹³⁴:

Otac joj je budža, nekakav visoki sindikalni funkcijonер, prvoborac, stari partijac, robijaš, tipičan primjerak visoke birokratije, sa svim privilegijama koje idu uz visoko hijerarhijsko mjesto. Bog te pita kolika su razna primanja takvih tipova, što god pretpostaviš, sve je proizvoljno. Jer, osim visoke plate, tu su velike dnevnice, paušalna primanja, funkcionalni dodatak, poslanički dodatak, prvoboračaka premija, popust na sve, na ljetovanje, na hotele, na vožnju, besplatan voz, besplatna prepravka stana, mislim da ni oni sami ne znaju šta im sve pripada. Ali je ta klopa možda najmanje važna, jebi je, malo više ili malo manje, vrlo važno. Ali taj Ninin čalac što odra boga oca, neprestano sere o društvenim nepravdama, o socijalnim razlikama, o pravu radnika na politička prava, i nimalo mu ne izgleda čudno što jedno radi a drugo govori. Oni to nekako pomire u sebi, majku mu, kao da ničega čudnog u tome nema.

Krug, p 187

For Nina's father (Krug), Ajni-efendija (Derviš i smrt) or Džemal Zafranija (Tvrđava), individuals who position themselves even above an entity which they represent, their own powerful existence and its survival is larger then any individual or integrity of their own ideology. Hiding a crime behind a dogmatic doctrine, just like the *muderis* (professor) in Tvrđava, they are ready to protect themselves, by any means. Targetting 'otherness' and its resistance to submission, as dangerous and harmful to the collective, they call for a 'holy war':

Vjera je nepogrešiva jer je božji zakon, a odstupanje od božjeg zakona je grijeh i bogohuljenje. On odlučno zastupa slobodu mišljenja bez toga nema napretka ni sreće, ali slobodu mišljenja u okviru Kur'ana, jer mišljenje izvan Kur'ana nije slobodno već nazadno. Teško grijesi, i neprijatelj nam je svaki onaj ko slobodom smatra slobodu od božjih zapovijesti. To nije sloboda već najgore ropstvo. A robovanje mraku i satani smrtni je grijeh, protiv koga se mora poći u sveti rat.

Tvrđava, p 218

¹³⁴ Party leaders who immensely enjoyed and cherished the privileges of their status

In his portrayal of these male characters, Selimović reveals the horrifying extent of their greed for power as well as the irretrievable disappearance of any humanity within them. He also emphasises that these individuals do not just represent a System, they are a System. A system and nothing else. In addition, it is not by chance that Nina's father has no name. By leaving him nameless Selimović underlines the meaninglessness of Nina's father's existence outside of the system itself. There is no doubt, that this is exactly how his daughter experiences him:

A bez partije on je niko i ništa, ona mu je sve, vid, sluh, mozak, noge, ruke, snaga koja ga pokreće i koja ga drži iznad drugih ljudi, ona daje smisao i vrijednost njegovu životu. Bez nje, mjerile bi se samo njegove ljudske snage, a one su zaista beznačajne.

Odatle njegov strah pred mogučnošću da se njegova laž otkrije, odatle i želja da se sakrije taj strah, jer hoće da sačuva kakvo-takvo ljudsko dostojanstvo, naročito pred kćerkom, kojoj je uvijek bio autoritet. Naravno, kad bi morao da bira, izabrao bi da bude ponižen pred kćerkom, jer bi mu tako stradao samo lični ponos. Ako bi bio unižen pred partijom, došla bi u pitanje sva njegova egzistencija, sve što on u životu jeste.

Krug, p 254

In his portrayal of the powerful leaders within the regime, Selimović emphasises their betrayal of the system's ideology and the very same values they publicly advocate. By exposing their hypocrisy, he clearly warns against the 'protectors', whose most frequently used tools are crime and the betrayal of humanity. Their rage particularly targets those who break away from the authoritarian ideology, by becoming social outcasts, rebels, outlaws and fugitives. Male characters like the

rebel Ishak in Derviš i smrt, the student Ramiz in Tvrđava or Vladimir's uncle Janko and Ismet Sijerčić in Krug, demonstrate such a break. These men do not fear nor do they hesitate to articulate their disagreements with the abuses of justice committed by forceful leaders. The fugitive Ishak (Derviš i smrt) is not intimidated by threats from the authorities, nor does he fear punishment:

Razmisli dobro. Je li vlast od Boga? Ako nije, odakle joj pravo da nam sudi? Ako jest, kako može da pogriješi? Ako nije, srušićemo je; ako jest, slušaćemo je. Ako nije od Boga, šta nas obavezuje da trpimo nepravde? Ako je od Boga, jesu li to nepravde, ili kazna zbog viših ciljeva. Ako nije, onda je nada mnom i nad tobom i nad svim nama izvršeno nasilje, i onda smo opet mi krivi što ga podnosimo. Sad odgovori. Ali nemoj reći derviški da je vlast od Boga ali da je ponekad vrše zli ljudi. I nemoj reći da će Bog pržiti nasilnike vatrom paklenom, jer nećemo znati ništa više nego što znamo sad. Kur-an kaže i ovo: "Pokoravajte se Bogu i poslaniku i onima koji vašim poslovima upravljavaju". To je božja odredba, jer je Bogu važniji cilj nego ti i ja. Jesu li onda nasilinici? Ili smo mi nasilnici, i nas će pržiti oganj pakla? I je li to što čine nasilje ili odbrana? Upravljanje poslovima je vladanje, vlast je sila, sila je nepravda zbog pravde. Bezvlašće je gore: nered, opšta nepravda i nasilje, opšti strah. Sad odgovori.

Derviš i smrt, p 242

Compared to Ishak, who is portrayed more as the conscience of Ahmed Nurudin and an internal voice which challenges Nurudin's values and morality, Ramiz in Tvrđava is a more active challenger of society and its laws. He is a young, well educated man with kind feelings for his mother and genuine love for his girlfriend. But most of all, he has passionate love for his people and justice. All his speeches are a direct challenge to the regime, with which Ramiz indicates the author's perception of 'power'. Sabo remembers Ramiz's words:

Rekao je, sjećam se i sad svog zaprepaštenja, da postoje tri velike strasti, alkohol, kocka i vlast. Od prve dvije ljudi se nekako mogu i izlječiti, od treće nikako. Vlast je i najteži porok. Zbog nje se ubija, zbog nje se gine, zbog nje se gubi ljudski lik. Neodoljiva je kao čarobni kamen, jer pribavlja moć. Ona je duh iz Aladinove lampe, koji služi svakoj budali koja ga drži. Odvojeni ne predsatvljavaju ništa; zajedno, kob su ovog svijeta. Poštene i mudre vlasti nema, jer je želja moći bezgranična. Čovjeka na vlasti podstiču kukavice, bodre laskavci, podržavaju lupeži, i njegova predstava o sebi uvijek je ljepša nego istina. Sve ljudi smatra glupim, jer kriju pred njim svoje pravo mišljenje, a sebi prisvaja pravo da sve zna, i ljudi to prihvataju. Niko na vlasti nije pametan, jer pametni ubrzo izgube razbor, i niko trpeli, jer mrze promjenu. Odmah stvaraju vječne zakone, vječna načela, vječno ustrojstvo, i vežući vlast uz boga, učvršćuju svoju moć. I niko i ne bi oborio, da ne postaju smetnja i prijetnja drugim moćnicima. Ruše ih uvijek na isti način, objašnjavajući to nasiljem prema narodu, a svi su nasilnici, i izdajom prema vladaru, a nikom to ni na um ne pada. I nikoga to nije urazumilo, svi srljaju na vlast, kao noćni leptiri na plamen svijeće. Jesu li sve bosanske valijezatvorene, protjerane ili pobijene? I čitava njihova svita. A uvijek dolaze novi, i dovode svoju svitu, i ponavljaju gluposti svojih prethodnika, jer drukčije ne mogu. I tako, ukrug, neprestano. Bez hljeba narod može ostati, bez vlasti neće. Oni su bolest na narodnome tijelu, kao guke. Kad jedna guka otpadne, izraste druga, možda grđa. Ne možete bez nas, kažu nam, razbojnici bi se namnožili, neprijatelj bi nas napao, nered bi u zemlji nastao. A ko drži ovu zemlju, ko je hrani, ko je brani? Narod. A oni nas globe, kažnjavaju, zatvaraju, ubijaju. I još natjeruju naše sinove da to čine. Oni bez vas ne mogu, vi bez njih morate. Njih je malo, nas je mnogo. Samo da prstom maknemo, koliko nas ima, te žgadije ne bi bilo. I učinićemo to, braćo moja satrvena, čim odrastu pravi ljudi koji neće dopustiti da im vampiri sjde za vratom.

Tvrđava, p 159

The old artist and painter Janko in the novel Krug also raises his voice against abuses of power within the communist system. He writes an open letter to Rozin, the hypocritical follower of the communist party who abused art in the interests of personal benefit. Janko himself ‘se stidi zbog njega i da je jeftino prodao svoju čast i umjetničko poštenje. I da je sad potpuno siguran da će taj mladi čovjek biti sasvim osrednji

umjetnik.' (p 228). The significance of actions like Janko's, is perhaps most visible in the response they receive from those who stutter to voice their own discontents. Evidently, they acknowledge and admire the bravery of those who overcame their fears and freed their words. Cizmić, in the novel Krug, says of Janko:

Rijedak je to čovjek. On je na lijep starinski način dovodio u međusobnu zavisnost ljudski moral i umjetnički dar. Za njega umjetnik ne vodi računa samo o svojoj umjetnosti već otvoreno reaguje na sve što je ružno. To naivno shvatanje daje tom čovjeku nimbus rijetke plemenitosti. Samo njegovo pismo Rozinu znači antički gest.

Krug, p 226

Further on, Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin (Derviš i smrt) also reveals his respect for the rebel Ishak whose '*misao ide neočekivanim putevima, neobavezna je, drska, ne poštuje što ja poštujem. On se u sve zagleda slobodno, ja pred mnogo čim zastajem.* (p 244). Ahmed Sabo in Tvrđava is clearly impressed by the words of the student Ramiz, but almost paralysed by their intensity and Ramiz's bravery in speaking out:

Nikad ni od koga nisam čuo toliko oštih riječi, toliko prezira prema ljudima na vlasti, toliko ludog slobodoumlja, kao te večeri, slušajući vatrenog al-azharskog studenta koji nije znao što je strah, ili nije znao što je vlast.

Tvrđava, p 159

Undoubtedly, in the portrayal of Ishak (Derviš i smrt), Ramiz (Tvrđava) and Janko (Krug) Selimović illustrates those who refuse to negate their autonomous thought or not to articulate their resentment. Nevertheless, as much as these 'rebellions' invoke respect, they also expose the fears of 'others'. For instance, in his conversation with

Vladimir (Krug) about his uncle Janko's letter, the young academician Čizmić recognises 'collective' fear:

.A mladi predsjednik Udruženja dobio je divan stan s velikom ateljeom. Ni mjesec dana poslije prijema mlade svestrane dame u Udruženje. Tada je čika Janko poslao Rozinu pismo.

- Šta će mu kog đavola to !

- Treba, oportunisto! Treba da kaže istinu makar jedan jedini hrabar čovjek, kad smo se mi usrali od straha.

Krug, p 228

Likewise, Ahmed Sabo (Tvrđava) demonstrates the presence of his personal fear when challenged by the student Ramiz's 'iconoclastic words':

Slušao sam ga jednom, pošto sam čuo kako ljudi šapatom prepričavaju njegove riječi, jedva sam našao mjesto kraj vrata, a izašao sam prije nego što je završio govor.

Pobjegao sam, uplašen!

Tvrđava, p 159

Throughout the observation of Selimović's male characters it becomes clear that whether leaders or followers, the majority of them live in a constant fear. A fear of sins established by an ideology, fear of individual thought, fear of prosecution by authorities, fear of expulsion from the collective, fear of 'otherness', fear of losing control and power...To put the point another way, the male world in Selimovica's novels is evidently a world of fear. As shown earlier, only a few of his male characters demonstrate enough strength to break away from fear and achieve a certain degree of freedom. However, the portrayal of their destinies indicates that these 'free individuals' are ultimately individuals who are in constant conflict

with the law and collective demands. They are individuals doomed to be forever on the run. For instance, Ramiz in Tvrđava is freed from prison but he becomes an outlaw for the rest of his life. The very same thing happens to Hasan in Derviš i smrt, who is certainly one of not too many 'unrestrained' male characters in Selimović's novels. With reference to Selimović's character Hasan and his life, the critic Milisav Savić says: '*Iz kratkih naznaka vidi se da mu je slabo šta polazilo za rukom: boravak u Carigradu, ljubav sa Dubrovkinjom, porodični poslovi.*'¹³⁵ Furthermore, another of Selimović's critics, Nikola Milošević says:

*Prava priča o Hasanu je priča o jednom rđavo prilaogodenom provincijalcu koji nije uspeo da se istakne u velikom gradu, priča o čoveku nesrećno zaljubljenom u jednu udatu Dubrovčanku, što iz jednog nimalo 'bajkovitog' ugla osvetljava psihološki smisao njegovog otpora prema svakoj vezanosti.*¹³⁶

The critics' words suggest that a man's prosperity is measured by his ranking in a system's hierarchy, the success of his relationships with women or the achievement of some kind of business interests. In addition, their words perfectly illustrate all the expectations laid upon a man within a patriarchal society in this part of the world. Furthermore, they indicate a complete misunderstanding of Hasan's character. In other words, a closer observation of Hasan's character leads one to conclude that Selimović portrays this male character precisely as the counterpoint to all the expectations mentioned by critics. There is no doubt that this male character represents all those who dare to refuse to live by the given rules of society and to carry the burden of collective expectations. Therefore, Hasan seems to

¹³⁵ M. Savić, 'Natpevano zlo u prozama Meše Selimovića' in M. Selimović, Krug, BIGZ, Beograd, 1983, p 390

¹³⁶ N. Milošević, Zidanica na pesku, Slovo ljubve, Beograd, 1978, p 178

symbolise the freedom of a 'chosen life'. Interestingly enough, in their essays, both critics 'forget' to mention that Hasan's visit to Carigrad was not 'unsuccessful' due to his inadequacy to thrive, but because of his direct response to the fierce and unfriendly environment:

Našavši se u bogatom carskom gradu, sa složenim vezama i odnosima među ljudima, nužno nemilosrdnim, kao među ajkulama u debelom moru, lažno pristojnim, isprepletenim kao paukove niti i mreže, neiskusna čestitost jednog mladića zaplela se u pravo vještičje kolo. Sa svojom starudijom, s kojom je pokušavao da se probije kroz carigradski čestar, s naivnom vjerom u poštenje, ličio je na čovjeka koji goloruk ulazi u borbu protiv vještih gusara naoružanih najopasnijim oružjem. Sa svojom nezlobivom vedrinom, čestitošću i stečenim znanjem, Hasan je ušao u taj zvjerinjak sigurnim korakom neznalice. Ali kako nije glup, ubrzo je video na kakvo je ugljevlje nagazio. Mogao je ili da pristane na sve, ili da ostane neprimjećen, ili da ode.

Derviš i smrt, p 340, emphasis mine

Additionally, Hasan decides to leave Carigrad and return to Bosnia. In the words of Milisav Savić: '*dobar deo života provodi u skitnji, u putovanjima - iako zna da 'nema kuda da ode'*¹³⁷. The objective of Hasan's journeys is not, however, 'arrival' or the discovery of a safe harbour in order to drop anchor there forever. Selimović seems rather to suggest that the primary purpose of each of Hasan's trip is the journey itself, with complete disregard to any disapproval from his family or society. His journeys contain no fear of the voices of the authorities, parental ties or the collective's expectations. 'Hanging loose' as a social outcast who refuses to live by imposed rules, with no desire for power or money, but with a strong yearning for life itself, Hasan is portrayed as a man who travels through life and put

¹³⁷ M. Savić, op.cit., p 390

simply, he lives life. In Hasan's own words, his trips are journeys of freedom:

Svakome bi trebalo odrediti da putuje, s vremena na vrijeme - rekao je, paleći se. - Čak i više: da nikad ne zastane duže nego što je neophodno. Čovjek nije drvo, i vezanost je njegova nesreća, oduzima mu hrabrost, umanjuje sigurnost. Vežući se za jedno mjesto, čovjek prihvata sve uslove, čak i nepovoljne, i sam sebe plaši neizvjesnošću koja ga čeka. Promjene mu liči na napuštanje, na gubitak uloženog, neko drugi će zaposjeti njegov osvojeni prostor, i on će počinjati iznova. Ukopavanje je prvi početak starenja, jerje čovjek mlad sve dok se ne boji da započinje. Ostajući, čovjek trpi ili napada. Odlazeći, čuva slobodu, spremam je da promijeni mjesto i nametnute poslove. Kuda i kako da ode? Nemoj da se smiješiš, znam da nemamo kud. Ali možemo ponekad, stvarajući privid slobode. Tobože odlazimo, tobože mijenjamo. I opet se vraćamo, smireni, utješljivo prevareni.

Nikad nisam znao kad će njegova riječ skrenuti u podsmijeh. Je li se plašio određene tvrdnje, ili nije vjerovao ni u jednu određenu?

- Zato ti neprestano odlaziš? Da sačuvaš privid slobode? Znači li to da slobode nema?

- Ima i nema. Ja se krećem u krugu, odlazim i vraćam se. Slobodan i vezan.

Derviš i smrt, p 294

As a man who 'nije volio red, nije volio svetinje, bio je ravnodušan prema njima.....šalio se i s Kur-anom, ali bez zlobe i bez ruganja.'. Hasan does not follow any teaching or ideology, nor does he rely upon collective wisdom. His actions in life are based upon his personal and genuine understanding that 'više je štete naneseno u životu zbog sprečavanja grijeha, nego zbog grijeha. (p 132). Also, with his belief that 'nije važno što ne činimo dobro, važno je da ne činimo zlo' Hasan clearly opposes the fanatical and ruthless protection of the system and its ideology. He refuses to perform, as he is expected to by the principles of his own social class, to participate in safeguarding it or blindly to follow its conduct. In the

light of this, the first observation of Hasan's character suggests that he is an unattached, uncommitted and unconstrained individual. But nonetheless, there is a reason to believe that Selimović's portrayal of this character reflects much more. '*Slobodan i vezan.*' says Hasan and with these words recognises the irony of his own, 'free life'. This is to say, Hasan's efforts to attain absolute freedom and to cut the ties that bind him are clear but, at the same time Selimović reveals the senseless of Hasan's struggle. The writer indicates that even Hasan could not cut the last thread - **a strong sense of belonging to his nation.** However much Hasan cut himself loose from all possible ties that could interfere with his 'chosen life' (social expectations, parental hopes and pressure, even the voice of authority) - he could never cut himself free from that last chain: Love and commitment to his native Bosnia and wholehearted sympathy for the unfortunate destiny of its people throughout history.

A on je, neobičan kao uvijek, odbijajući carigradsku surovost, počeo sve više da misli na svoju kasabu, i da njen tiki život suprotstavlja ovom uzburkanom. Rugali su mu se, prezrivo govorili o tom zabačenom, zaostalom vilajetu. - O čemu to govorite? - pitao je začuđeno. - Ni sahat hoda odavde postoji zaostali vilajet kakvog je teško zamisliti. Tu, pored vas, nedaleko od ovog vizantijskog sjaja i bogatstva koje se skuplja iz cijelog carstva, žive vaša vlastita braća, kao prosjaci. A mi nismo ničiji, uvijek smo na nekoj međi, uvijek nečiji miraz. Zar je onda čudo što smo siromašni? Stoljećima mi se tražimo i prepoznajemo, uskoro nećemo znati ni ko smo, zaboravljamo već da nešto i hoćemo, drugi nam čine čast da idemo pod njihovom zastavom jer svoje nemamo, mame nas kad smo potrebni a odbacuju kad odslužimo, najtužniji vilajet na svijetu, najnesrećniji ljudi na svijetu, gubimo svoje lice, a tuđe ne možemo da primimo, otkinuti a ne prihvaćeni, strani svakome, i onima čiji smo rod, i onima koji nas u rod ne primaju. Živimo na razmeđu svijetova, na granici naroda, svakome na udaru, uvijek krivi nekome. Na nama se lome talasi istorije, kao na grebenu. Sila nam je dosadila, i od nevolje smo stvorili vrlinu: postali smo plemeniti iz prkosa. Vi ste bezobzirni iz bijesa. Ko

je onda zaostao?

Derviš i smrt, p 340

One of the best indications of Hasan's deep devotion to his birthplace and his people is the fact that no conflict with the authorities, no conflict with his own family, nor his unfulfilled love for Marija ever change his optimism, excitement and joy in life. But, the misfortune and suffering of the 'rayah' do transform this male character:

I Hasan se sve više udaljava. U početku sam mislio da mu je Mula-Jusuf ispričao o haži-Sinanudinu, ali sam se uvjerio da je razlog sasvim drugi. Nije ni zbog Dubrovkinje: pobjegla je od naše oštре zime, i znao je da će je proljeće vratiti.

Na nesreću, svoju i moju, otišao je po neke rođake u okolini Tuzle, što su u pobuni stradali, kao i mnogi drugi. Miralaj Osman-beg dobro je obavio svoj posao, pobjio, popalio, sa zemlje otjerao, poslao u surgun, i svijet je dočekao zimu u velikoj nevolji. Doveo je te rođake, žene i djecu, i smjestio ih u svojoj kući. Otada je postao sasvim drugi čovjek, težak, zamoran, dosadan. Pričao je o raskopanom životu, o zgarištima, nesahranjenim mrtvacima, i naročito o djeci, pored popaljenih kuća, gladnoj, unezvijerenoj, sa živim strahom u očima zbog svega što su vidjela.

Nestalo je njegove bezbrižne površnosti, podrugljive lakoće, vedrog časkanja, građenja mostova od vazdušastih riječi. Uznemireno je govorio samo o toj posavskoj nesreći, i to nekako mučno, bez ranije igrivosti, zamućeno i otežalo.

Derviš i smrt, p 417

Hasan's loyalty to his own people, his culture, tradition and, at the end of the day to his religion, is also visible within the framework of his relationship with Marija. Their love story is not just a story about an unfulfilled love because of which Hasan develops an inability to commit himself to anything or anyone, as the critic Milošević

suggests. This story indicates just the opposite - Hasan's commitment to his own collective. The first time he confesses his love to Marija, the author accentuates the difference between the two of them by giving, with no particular reason, a Muslim version of Marija's Christian name: '*Uplašen ili ohrabren, zato što će brzo otići, Hasan je rekao Mariji (to joj je bilo ime: Mejrema) da je voli.*' (p 343, emphasis mine) Further on, as Hasan visits Marija at her home, he learns how deep and unbridgeable the gaps between them really are:

U Dubrovniku je dva puta bio drag gost u njihovoj kući, u mnoštvu tetaka, strina, rođaka, poznanika, prijatelja, i oba puta je jedva čekao da pobegne od tog nepoznatog svijeta, koji je na ulicama grada jedva obraćao pažnju na njegovo istočnačko odijelo, a u salonu gospodar Luke i gospe Marije gledao u njega kao čudo. Kao da je bilo nečega nepriličnog u tom njegovom dolaženju, pa je i on bio usplahiren i neprirodan. Kad se još susreo s Marijinom hladnom pažnjom, zbog čega mu se učinila gotovo sasvim strana, daleka, lažno nasmiješena, postalo mu je jasno da se baš u njenoj kući vidi njihova stvarna odvojenost. Ovdje su oni bili dvoje stranaca, koje je sve rastavljalo, ne od juče. Navike, običaji, način kako se razgovara, način kako se čuti, ono što su od ranije mislili jedno o drugome, i ne znajući se, sve je to provalija među njima. Shvatio je da je Marija u ovom gradu zaštićena i odbranjena, kućama, zidinama, crkvama, nebom, mirisom mora, ljudima, sobom ovakvom kakva nigdje nije. I to baš od njega, možda baš samo od njega. Možda čak i on od nje. Jer se ledio od pomisli da živi u ovom mjestu, i sam, i s njom, u dušu mu se uvukla tuga kakvu nikad osjetio nije, i sa radošću se oprostio kad je naišao na jedan trgovачki karavan koji je s Ploča, u Taboru polazio za Bosnu. Radost ga je držala i kad je video ivanplaninski snijeg, i bosansku maglu, i osjetio ljuti igmanski vjetar, i ušao razdragan u namračenu kasabu, stisnutu između brda, i ljubio se sa zemljacima.

Derviš i smrt, p 345

On several occasions in Selimović's novels, the relationship between male and female characters is used as a framework within which the

author proceeds to strengthen the portrayal of his main male characters. It appears that most of Selimović's male characters relate to their female companions not as 'real women' but rather as to metaphors of their past lives or their struggle to regain internal stability. The ex-partisan in Tišine tries to identify a new milestone of his post-war life in the relationship with his girl-friend Mira. She becomes significant as one of the potential elements that could fulfil his internal emptiness that remains after the loss of his 'previous life':

...želio sam da me prizna kao jedinu svoju mogućnost. Ne iz sujete, već iz potrebe, koja za mene mnogo znači, sve znači, da budem bezuslovno prihvaćen na ovom prelasku u život koji se još ne pokazuje, u kojem ću biti potvrđen ili odbačen...Zato sam želio da stane uz mene, hvatao sam se za nju, gurao je da pobijedi oklijevanje, činila mi se dovoljno sigurna da me podrži.

Tišine, p 81

In order to regain his internal-self, the ex-partisan needs Mira not as a 'real woman' but as a '*ljubav koja se ne sakriva*' (p 181). In addition, when the relationship between them comes to its end, the ex-partisan himself admits that he never loved her, but he needed her because '*trebalo je da neko sebe zaboravi radi mene, izlječilo bi me.*' (p 216). Unlike him, Ahmed Sabo in Tvrđava, discovers his future within a kingdom of 'love'.

Zaboravio sam rat, nepravdu, poniženje, postao nesposoban za mržnju, sve zbog ljubavi prema njoj. Sve su mi oduzeli (govorio sam u sebi strasno), a ti si mi sve namirila. Da nisam našao tebe, bio bih ljut na život, pa ne bih imao ništa, kao ni sada, ali ne bih znao šta je sreća. Zbog tebe se ne osjećam poražen i ne mislim na osvetu.

Tvrđava, p 140, emphasis mine

In spite of what many critics suggest, it would seem rather that it is not Tijana as a 'real woman' but an ideal, **elusive world of Sabo's feelings** that becomes his safe harbour. He himself describes his 'creation':

Dobar je čovjek, i lijepa žena, ali ono što je samo za mene, to sam sam stvorio. Čak i da je imala velikih mana, ja ih ne bi znao. Potrebna mi je savršena, i ne mogu dopustiti da to ne bude.

Dao sam joj sve što nisam našao u životu, a bez čega ne mogu. Čak se i umanjujem pred njom, da bi ona bila veća, i ja pomoći nje. Bogato je darujem, da bih mogao da uzmem. Ja sam osujećen, ona je ostvarena, i tako sam obeštećen. Ona mi namiruje izgubljeno, i dobijam više nego što sam želio da imam. Moje želje su bile maglovite i rasute, sad su sakupljene u jednom imenu, u jednom liku, stvarnijem i ljepšem od mašte. Njoj priznajem sve što ja nisam, a opet ništa ne gubim, odričući se. Nemoćan pred ljudima i slab pred svijetom, značajan sam pred svojom tvorevinom, vrednijom od njih. Nespokojan pred nesigurnošću svega, siguran sam pred ljubavlju, koja se stvara sama iz sebe, jer je potreba, pretvorena u osjećanje. Ljubav je žrtva i nasilje, nudi i zahtijeva, moli i grdi. Ova žena, cio moj svijet, potrebna mi je da joj se divim i da nad njom osjetim svoju moć. Stvorio sam je kao divljak svoga kumira, da mu stoji iznad pećinske vatre, zaštita od groma, neprijatelja, zvijeri, ljudi, neba, samoće, da traži od njega obične stvari ali da zahtijeva i nemoguće, da osjeća oduševljenje ali i ogorčenje, da se zahvaljuje i da grdi, uvijek svjestan da bi mu bez njega strahovi bili preteški, nade bez korijena, radosti bez trajanja.

Zbog nje, isključive, i ljudi su mi postali bliži.

Tvrđava, p 174

A constant and an intensive need to create their refuge within an elusive world of ideology and 'love harbour' indicates the lasting presence of internal insecurity of Selimović's male characters. This comes as no surprise bearing in mind the extent of psychological distress many of them were exposed to, due to their experience of war and the struggle to fulfil various collective demands and expectations.

In addition, the search for shelter and emotional protection within the settings of elusive worlds becomes an act of survival. Furthermore, Selimović's portrayal of male characters who (ab)use an ideology, with the ambition to protect their personal power, also indicates an internal insecurity. Their urge for power arises from the patriarchal notion, by which being a man means being in control. In addition, these male characters are constantly besieged by the fear of losing control. Internal insecurity, which ultimately arises out of such fear, results in an unemotional need to overpower others in order to demonstrate, to themselves as much as to their community, that they are men in control.

Through the portrayal of his main male characters, Selimović seeks to demonstrate how vulnerable and threatened human life is in the context of historical changes, authoritarian regimes and the burden of the collective mentality. No doubt, these men embody the strength and weaknesses of the eternal struggle of a human being to survive. However, in the portrayal of Selimović's male characters, it is also impossible not to experience the atmosphere of constant male-male conflict, wars and their yearning for domination. It is precisely in their need to shield themselves with a belief in an ideal or the 'power of power', where one clearly recognises the timeless, tragic and ironic truth about the world of Selimović's male characters, the world of men who live in constant fear of each other.

Selimović's female characters

It is in the context of the main themes of Selimović's novels and his portrayal of men's behaviour in a particular society that his female characters must be considered. While the men in Selimović's novels are defined as possessing strength, intellect, desires, goals and hopes, the female characters in Selimović's novels are, on the whole, simply present. In addition the number of female characters is exceedingly small. They are never placed in the centre of action and their existence is always portrayed within the framework of a secondary role. However, such portrayals do not come as a surprise considering that the critic Miodrag Petrović and the author himself suggest that the illustration of female characters in Selimović's novels is inspired by traditional roles of women in his society:

U svojim Sjećanjima Selimović podvlači da su u njegovoj porodici odlučujuću ulogu imale žene. 'Kod muslimana je dugo sačuvana čvrstina porodice, zbog upornog tradicionalizma i zbog nepovjerenja prema novinama, a nosioci te kohezije i tradicionističke snage bile su žene' (str. 45-46). Piščev odnos prema ženi, obziran i pun poštovanja, došao je do najdoslednijeg izraza u oblikovanju

lika Tijane. 138

Furthermore, the critic Petrović suggests that the author's relationship with his female characters is considerate and full of respect. But it would appear that this is the case only as long as 'She' stays within the framework of her traditional role. That is to say, Selimović's women are divided into two groups: those who act and live according to their traditional role, and those who disobey social rules and behave in an unconventional way.

The first group of Selimović's female characters are mostly those who fulfil the orthodox female role, mother and wife. The quiet, caring, unselfish and protective 'mother' is present in all of Selimović's novels and, no doubt, she is treasured as such. The ex-partisan in Tišine remembers the image of his mother as they say farewell to each other, just before he leaves for the front:

Bila je najbolja majka na svijet, volio sam je i bio pažljiv...riječi ne pamtim, ali smisao znam, tačno, i tugu njenu sam zapamtio, niko nije kriv za to, ni ona ni ja, djeca žive svojim posebnim životom, i odvajaju se bez žaljenja, a majke to otpate uvijek, s novom tugom.

Tišine, p 254-255

The most powerful illustration of a mother figure Selimović's novels is the widow from Višegrad in the novel Derviš i smrt. She is a mother whose twenty year old son, a soldier, dies in the war. Selimović describes the mother's grief:

Nikoga nije imala osim sina, mladića od dvadeset godina. Možeš misliti kako ga je voljela, bio je sin - jedinac, u njemu je bio sav njen život. Kad je mlaadić poginuo u ratu, majka se izbezumila, najprije nije vjerovala, a onda se

138 M. Petrović, Roman Meše Selimovića, Gradina, 1981, p 111

zatvorila u sobu, jela samo crni hljeb i pila vodu, spavala na golum podu, stavljajući svako veče na prsa teški crni kamen. Željela je da umre, a nije imala snage da se ubije. Ali, kao za pakost, smrt nikako nije dolazila. Dvadeset godina je tako živjela, o crnom hljebu i vodi, s teškim kamenom na prsima, sama kost i koža, posivjela, pocrnjela, okorjela, na panti da je visila ne bi bila gora, ali je živjela.

Derviš i smrt, p 328

A 'mother-figure' in Selimović's novels is very often portrayed in relation to her male child. The portrayal is almost always juxtaposed with the son's departure to war, or his tragic death in war. In the novel Krug Vladimir's mother is confronted with the inevitable death of her older son Mladen. As the Gestapo come to arrest him she is '*izgubljena zbog strašnog oproštaja sa sinom, užasnuta zbog smrti što se nadvila nad njim, spremna da prihvati žrtvu koju će podeliti sa voljenim detetom.*' (Krug, p 14). In these scenes Selimović spotlights what seems to be the perpetual misfortune of a mother from this part of the world, an endless mourning of sons who die in wars. The author's portrayal of mothers also reveals their helplessness and voiceless existence:

Majka je bila nevoljna žrtva, o njoj su drugi odlučivali, i kako će živeti i kako će umreti. Spadala je (u) većinu čovečanstva, iz koje se otac izdvojio u poslednjem času. Nju je čovek mogao samo da žali, u životu i sećanju. I da je tužno voli, bespomoćnu.

Krug, p 23

In the novel Tvrđava Selimović continues to explore the relationship between mother and child. The portrayal of Tijana and her pregnancy, perceived through the eyes of her husband, indicates a belief in the significance of motherhood and its ultimate joy. Interestingly enough, there are two further suggestions arising out of

the main male character's words. Both of them reveal the standard response of patriarchal societies towards motherhood. Firstly, Šabo suggests that it is the joy of motherhood that brings full and final meaning to a woman's life, a myth developed and cherished by every patriarchal society.

Svu njenu pažnju zaokupljaо je taj živi a nerođeni stvor, življi od mene, značajniji od svega na svijetu. Ma šta govorila, znao sam da misli na njega. kad je pitala ima li izgleda da ću se zaposliti, bilo je to zbog njega. Ako se sjećala oca, to više nije bila ona teška tuga koja me plašila, već žaljenje što djed neće vidjeti unuče. Ni naša soba više nije valjala, zbog njega, moraćemo na proljeće potražiti nešto bolje, bez žohara, bez vreline, bez tjeskobe. Sve što je činila, govorila, mislila, imalo je jedan povod i jedan razlog, već je voljela taj plod, to buduće dijete, nerazumno je pitala i mene da li ga volim, i morao sam reći da ga volim, da me ne bi smatrala čudovištem, jer ne bi shvatila da majka voli i misao o djetetu, a da će otac zavoljeti živo stvorenje, možda tek od njegovog prvog osmijeha. Ja nisam znao ništa o njemu, bio mi je stran i dalek; ona ga neprestano osjećala kao dio sebe. Ja sam o njemu mislio kao o brizi, zbog nje, i zbog života koji će se promijeniti; ona je o njemu mislila kao o smislu svega, i bilo joj prirodno da se život prilagodi njemu i njegovoj sreći. Ja sam bio uznemiren, sa strepnjom sam mislio šta bi bilo s njom kad bi pobacila, kao prvi put, ona je mirna, sve je u njoj i oko nje sređeno, ništa nije nahero u svijetu, ništa nije prazno i besmisленo. Njeno dijete u njoj u sve je unijelo red i smisao.

Tvrđava, p 339, emphasis mine

Further analysis of Šabo's words reveals his belief that an unborn child is 'He' . For instance, Šabo says: 'ja nisam znao ništa o njemu, bio mi je stran i dalek' using the masculine form instead of the neuter: 'ja nisam znao ništa o njemu, bilo mi je strano i daleko'. It seems appropriate to suggest that while Šabo clearly divides fatherhood from motherhood, describing it as rather 'something' that develops with time ('.. jer ne bi shvatila da majka voli i misao o djetetu, a da će otac zavoljeti živo stvorenje,

možda tek od njegovog prvog osmijeha.'), he still clearly demonstrates a typically patriarchal preference for the birth of 'The Son'.

As mentioned earlier, within his group of 'traditional women' Selimović portrays devoted, understanding and supportive wives. In the novel Krug, Nina's mother is a secondary character who emerges only a few times, but only one observation by her daughter effectively describes her position as a wife:

I otišli su njih dvoje, teški kao kamen, muka njene misli. Otac koje sve zna a ipak čini, i majka koja možda ponešto i čini ali ništa ne zna. On je gospodar koji vodi poslove, ona je žena koja mu vjeruje i koje se ne tiče ništa što je ozbiljno. Njegova nadmoćnost je u tome što se brine o ozbiljnim stvarima; njena ženstvenost je u tome što se brine o neozbiljnim stvarima, o modi, o društvenom životu, o ručkovima, večerama, slavama maskiranim pod imenom rođendana..

Krug, p 257, emphasis mine

Regardless of their social status, the historical moment they live in or their ethnic background - the duties and activities of Selimović's 'traditional wives' are very similar. The provincial and non-glamorous life of poor Katarina Marić in the novel Ostrvo is evidently restricted to the domestic sphere. She herself would acknowledge '*Postala sam živinče, bože me sačuvaj. Kuham, jedem, perem, spavam, hranim kokoške, i to je sve.*' (Ostrvo, p 206) On the other hand, according to her higher social status Nina's mother lives a life preoccupied with '*društvenim životom, prijemima, večerama na koje ide s mužem i na kojima prima ugledne parove*'. Nonetheless, what seems to be a dynamic and glamorous life is no more than a life limited to '*neozbiljne stvari*'. Both of these women live out their lives without any significant participation in political or civil society. Their lives are reduced to the role of housewife and the

sphere of the private world. The primary responsibility of these female characters is to serve their husbands, in order to enable them 'da vode poslove'. These women in Selimović's novels exemplify all of those who are trapped within their traditional role without any other choice. Undoubtedly, many of Selimović's critics would disagree that Tijana (Tvrđava) is also one of them, justifying their beliefs with Šabo's praise of her. Nevertheless, it was indicated earlier that Šabo relates to Tijana not simply as to 'a real woman' but that his feelings for her become his personal refuge, his defence against the hostilities of the outside world. This is why the importance of the distinction between 'Tijana as a real woman' and 'Šabo's vision of Tijana' has to be emphasised again. As 'a real woman' Tijana is an impoverished Christian woman who married an impoverished Muslim man. Responsive to the reality of their life and its difficulties, Tijana works and earns money to support her husband and herself. Even though she is the bread winner, according to her traditional role, she continues to please her husband by making sure that their troubles do not trouble him. And all of that in order to save his '*muško dostojanstvo*':

Nije mi dozvoljavala da odnosim gotove košulje mušterijama, ljutila se ako bih počistio sobu, držala me čisto i uredno, čuvajući moje muško dostojanstvo i svoj ponos trgovačke kćerke, kao da nam je to bilo najvažnije u ovoj sirotinji.

Tvrđava, p 171

Regardless of their hard life, Šabo's unemployment and the everyday anxieties which accompany poverty, in the whole novel Tijana articulates her discontent about her life only once:

Nije joj ništa, rekla je ledeno, ali šta je meni? Uvijek je sama, riječ ni s kim nema da progovori, (sve već znam napamet!), a i ona je ljudski stvor, ne može vječito razgovarati sa ova četiri zida. I ne zna šta je toliko bogu skrivila da je toliko kažnjava, ni šta je meni učinila da sam takav prema njoj. Odrekla se svega što je bila, zaboravila rodbinu, zaturila sve na što je navikla, pogubila prijatelje i poznanike, a sve zbog mene. Ja se nisam odrekao ničega svoga. Ja izlazim, imam svoje društvo, svoje brige, koje nisu njene, jer ih krijem, nema me po cio dan, bogzna kuda lunjam i šta radim, sve svoje znam i držim, Bajram nisam zaboravio, ona će svoje pozaboravljati i ostaće pusta, kao strnjika. U srijedu joj je bila slava, Nikolj-dan, dvadeset godina je s porodicom bila zajedno toga dana, a u srijedu je presjedila sama, isplakala se sama, i ne zbog kućne slave, već zbog svoje sudbine. Zašto nije rekla? Zar mora sve da kaže? Zar ne mogu sam da vidim? Ja se brinem o Mahmutu, o Ramizu, o Šehagi, a o noj ne vodim računa. Ona vidi na meni svaku promjenu, svaku sjenku kad pređe preko mog lica, ja na njoj i u njoj ne vidim ništa. Navikao sam se na njenu pažnju, više je i ne primjećujem, ali i ona je kriva, razmazila me, skriva od mene nevolje, nestashiču, čak i svoje neraspoloženje, samo da ne osjetim nikakvu težinu. Pa bar da to vidim, ne bi žalila. Drugi muževi igraju oko svojih žena, ugađaju im, maze ih. Ona to ne traži, kaže samo kako je kod drugih. A šta ja njoj činim? Jesam li je gdjegod izveo? Nisam, nigdje. Jesam li je iznenadio ičim lijepim za ove dvije godine? Nisam, ničim. Kao da je sluškinja, a ne žena.

Tvrđava, p 276

But, as the 'real Tijana' voices her unhappiness for the first time, Šabo instantly feels under attack. His reaction immediately unmasks a traditional, patriarchal man who is very unsympathetic to his wife's complaints. Šabo's response unveils his feeling of disfavour for the 'rebel Tijana':

Ja joj ne mogu pružiti ni bogatstvo ni ugled, pružam joj samo ljubav. Ali to njoj nije dovoljno. Briga nju za moju ljubav, mogu se tom ljubavlju zakititi kao peruškom. I šta hoće od mene? Kud da je izvodom? Da je vodam po Baščaršiji, da je mladići gledaju? A za krsnu slavu, kako mogu znati, kad ni svoje ne znam, ni za Bajram ne bih znao da me Šehaga nije pozvao. Kaže da me razmazila; vidim kako me razmazila, grdi me kao da sam ne znam šta učinio. Ja sam nju razmazio, pustio

sam joj na volju toliko da uskoro neću smjeti ni iz kuće iskoraciti, treba još samo da mi stavi lanac na nogu...

...I dok su iz mene varnice iskakale, zbog nepravde, zbog moje dobrote koju mi ne priznaje, zbog ljubavi koju ne cijeni, dok sam pjenio, žaleći sebe, grdeći nju, u sobu je ušao Mahmut Neretljak.

Tvrđava, p 278-279, emphasis mine

This is to say, in the light of her first and last conflict with Šabo, Tijana is far from being heard by him, and ultimately far from being respected or truly loved. In his mind she is expected to acknowledge his kindness, to appreciate his love and be satisfied with just that. She is imagined as being giving and selfless, not as one who complains. Tijana's discontent is compassionately ignored and disregarded as an outcome of her pregnancy rather than her true unhappiness and dissatisfaction:

Udaljili smo se dok smo vikali.

Onda je nešto rekla. Nisam razumio, glas joj je suviše tih.

- Šta to šapčeš?

- Izgleda da sam trudna.

Tvrđava, p 280

The fact that Šabo so quickly offers a 'solution' for the 'ungrateful' behaviour of his wife comes as no surprise having in mind his need for 'an ideal'. For him, Tijana is needed as his '*planeta*' without worries and distress. She is needed as an elusive world of perfection, where he is safe and protected.

Similarly, in Selimović's first novel Tišine, his female characters do not present 'real' women. They emerge merely as symbolic creatures whose function is to strengthen the structure of the chain of events which

underline the particular emotion within the process of the internal struggle of the ex-partisan. One of these female characters is Lila, the ex-girlfriend, who is, in the ex-partisan's own words, described as '*mrtvi nišan mog ranijeg života*' (p 43). As a 'real woman' she preveils only as a widowed '*žena koja se goji*' (p 41), with the war '*iskustvo(m) koje se nije željelo*' (p 43) and a new marriage before her. Yet, the objective of her portrayal becomes clear in the context of the ex-partisan's 'lost life', the past that vanished due to the calamity of war. Lila is its

jedini živi svjedok, a neće, ne može to da bude. Iznevjerila je sebe i mene. Ne može da bude utočište ni zaklon ni veza, sve se prekinulo, ne postoji. Nije ona kriva. Krivice nema, postoji prekid, postoji nenastavljanje, postoji smrt. I život iznad toga, i poslije toga.

Zbogom lasice. Glupo je dozivati uspomene. Tebe više nema, a ovu ženu ne poznajem. Ni ti mene, sigurno više ne poznaješ. I sve je u redu.

Tišine, p 43

While Lila symbolises the ex-partisan's lost '*ružičasto jutro....i radosna uzbudjenja, i susret što se čeka*' (p 67), the portrayal of his present girlfriend Mira, unfolds its meaning in the context of his momentary emotional insecurity and his need '*da mi bar za trenutak zamijeni svijet, da me prevari dok ne prebolim svoju muku, nestvarnu, ludu, nepotrebnu možda, ali muku.*' (p 183). Mira is constantly exposed to his demands to accept him completely and to sacrifice her own individuality in order to help him to regain his. She is not important as another human being, with her own war traumas, but rather as the ex-partisan's vision of the potential love refuge. As a 'real' woman Mira is simply '*utopljena u sivožutu masu uniformi, jednaka sa svima, ne izaziva pažnju jer nije izazov, lijepa bez sjaja, bez ikakva ukrasa, s težnjom da bude što bezličnija u izgledu, ponosna*

što se odrekla preimrućstva koja bi mogla da ima, nepotrebna su joj.' (p 96). Her personal experience of the war is not articulated and her silent struggle is indicated only in her one attempt to rebel against unrealistic demands of her boyfriend: '*Zar ne misliš da bih i ja bila vrlo zadovoljna da me prihvatiš onaku kakva jesam?*' (p 182) In addition, the reason for which he cannot accept her for the person she is, emerges precisely out of the fact that Mira is unimportant as a real person and that she exists merely in order to underline the extent of the ex-partisan's need for 'absolute love' which would perhaps 'save' him. Her inability to unremittingly step into the mist of such a framework, only intensifies the depth of his internal dislocation and craving for love within which someone has to '*zaboravi sebe radi mene*' (p 216).

The portrayal of Olga, another female character in Tišine, is yet another example of Selimović's undertaking to use female characters to outline his male character's reasonings. She is portrayed as a woman who, more or less, has been 'protected' from brutalities of the war by the comfort of her home and by her husband. No doubt, for the ex-partisan she represents '*drugi svijet, nepoznat*'. (p 57):

Zamišljam njen život s mužem u ovom bogatom stanu bez vedrine, ponegdje suviše lepršavom i neozbiljnom, s rišićima, čipkama, ukrasnim prdmetima, muslimskim zavjesama, neizbjegnim klavirom, ponegdje mrtvo dosadnom, teškom, obojnom, s nespretnim tamnim namještajem, s diplomom uokvirenom crnim ramom na sredini zida na drugoj sobi....Da nije sad negdje u bosanskim planinama, sjedio bi nad debelom ozbiljnom knjigom za svojim pisaćim stolom, usredsređen, s borom na čelu. Ona bi ležala na svom terakota kauču, pod svjetlom lampe s trbušatim postoljem od fajansa, sa abažurom boje starog zlata, nadnesena nad 'Ljiljanom u dolu', smiješila bi se i plakala.

Tišine, p 58, 59

In addition, it appears that the portrayal of this female character is only significant in the context of the ex-partisan's description and perception of an unfamiliar world of the higher class. In such environment Olga is 'mršava sentimentalna djevojčica' (p 219) who, untouched by the brutality of life, still lives under the 'glass bell',:

Grčevito se drži onog što nije u vremenu, bojeći se uznemirujućih promjena. Igra se života, a vjeruje da je ta igra jedina stvarnost koja vrijedi. Nema ništa, sve joj izmiče, a misli da zadržava sve, odriče se sreće čuvajući njen privid, živi pomalo avetinski, uobraziljom, dajući stvarima značaj koji one nemaju, zadovoljavajući se znakovima, simbolima, maštom, stihovima, hartijom, bijegom, kratkoptrajnim željenjem nečije suzne sudbinice, osjećanjem potrebe da bude pravedna u svom malo svijetu, osakaćenom i tužno obezbijeđenom od života. Pod tim staklenim zvonom, u tom zamijenjenom svijetu, koji su drugi ponudili, a ona prihvatala, napravila je red, stvorila navike, snabdjela se razlozima, uspostavila cjelinu da se osigura. Sve izvan toga je slučajnost, nepoznatost, mogućnost da se dožive neprilike, ili želja da se sve ovo napusti. A to se ne smije, nemoguće je.

Tišine, p 212

As mentioned earlier, the female character of Marija in Derviš i smrt is also portrayed only in order to underline the extent of Hasan's sincere devotion to his nation and she has no voice of her own. The portrayal of the Cadi's wife's hands, the other main female character in this novel, is seen by many of Selimović's critics as one of the most wonderful passages in the literature of former Yugoslavia. They often refer to it as an example of Selimović's glorification of women. Nevertheless, most of them forget to mention that, according to the author, the description of her hands is inspired by his father's

hands¹³⁹. Furthermore, they also seem to 'forget' that (portrayed as 'a real woman') the Cadi's wife is no more than a traditional and loyal wife, greedy daughter and selfish sister, ready to deceive her brother in order to achieve her goals. And finally, all of Selimović's critics seem to ignore the significant detail that Ahmed Nurudin refers to her as '*Iblisova kći*'¹⁴⁰ - the daughter of Eblis - chief of the fallen angels in Muslim mythology - as well as they overlooking Nurudin's not very flattering belief that the Cadi's wife '*misli samo na sebe i niko je se drugi ne tiče. Živi sobom. možda i ne znajući da je bezobzirna.*' (p 354). All this is to say that Selimović's portrayal of the Cadi Ajni-efendija's wife, is far from being an attempt to glorify a woman. It is utilised primarily in order to accentuate two important moments in the life of Sheikh Ahmed Nurudin. Firstly, at the beginning of the novel, she ignites '*nešto neželjeno*' in him and reminds Sheikh Nurudin of his forgotten 'life':

A onda je došlo do svijesti da je opasno i ovo radosno posmatranje, nisam se više osjećao nadmoćan, ni skriven, oživjelo je nešto neželjeno u meni. Nije to bila strast, već možda gore od toga: uspomena. Na jednu jedinu ženu u mome životu. Ne znam kako je isplivala ispod naslaga godina, nije lijepa kao ova, nije joj ni slična, zašto je jedna dozvala drugu, više me se ne tiče ona daleka koja ne postoji, dvadeset godina je zaboravljam i pamtim, dolazi u sjećanje kad neću i kad mi ne treba, gorka kao pelin. Dugo je nije bilo u meni, odakle sad da se javi. Da li zbog ove žene s licem iz griješnih snova, da li zbog brata, da ga zaboravim, da li zbog svega što se desilo, da se prekorim? Da se prekorim što sam ispustio sve mogućnosti, i više ne mogu da ih vratim.

Derviš i smrt, p 27, emphasis mine

¹³⁹ 'Podsticaj za opis sugestivnih ženskih ruku koje ostavljaju moćan utisak u stvari su ruke moga oca, koje sam iz djetinjstva zapamio kao nezaboravan doživljaj.' Sjećanja, BIGZ, Beograd, 1983

¹⁴⁰ 'Iblisova kći, mislio je u meni seljak, proklinjao derviš, začudeni obojica', Derviš i smrt, p 20

The Cadi's wife evokes Nurudin's past and awakens memories of the 'life' from which he is exiled by isolating himself within the walls of his tekke. As she sparks retrospection and stirs Nurudin's feelings, she becomes no more than the Sheikh's revelation that '*nikad čovjek ne smije misliti da je siguran, ni da je umrlo što je prošlo*'. Selimović's critic Milisav Savić is right when he suggests that '*lepota kadijine žene takode ranjava dervišev zaštitni oklop*'. Yet, he also implies that Nurudin controls his '*grešne misli izazvane blizinom lepe žene, ali ne zato - kako bi se moglo pomisliti - što mu to nalažu verski propisi i ubedjenja, već zato što sluti - a to će se kasnije pokazati kao tačno - da se on toj ženi ne može dopasti.*'¹⁴¹ In spite of Savić's attempt to correlate Nurudin with the Cadis' wife in framework of a physical attraction, Nurudin's own words do not indicate desire as such. On the contrary, he clearly specifies that the significance of his response to her is not based on plain lust:

Nije u meni probudila želju, ne bih to sebi dopustio, udavio bih je u samom začetku, stidom, mišlju od godinama i zvanju, sviješću o opasnosti kojoj bih se izvrgao, strahom od nemira koji može da bude teži od bolesti, navikom da vladam sobom.

Derviš i smrt, p 26, emphasis mine

There is no doubt that Nurudin's response to the Cadi's wife's appearance is more than just plain eroticism. It becomes the Sheikh's unexpected reaction to 'the life' that prevails outside his tekke. The Cadi's wife becomes a symbol of the reality from which he has refrained for so long. His response to her is one of the first clear signs of Nurudin's 'awakening' and, among other things, it inflames the

¹⁴¹ M. Savić, op.cit., p 384

process of his modification from 'Sheikh Nurudin the ideologist' to 'Nurudin'. He undoubtedly observes her with pleasure but

sa dubokim i mirnim uživanjem kojim se gleda rijeka, nebo, predvečerje, mjesec u ponoć, procvjetalo drvo, jezero moga djetinjstva u zoru. Bez želje da se ima, bez mogućnosti da se potpuno doživi, bez snage da se ode. Ugodno je bilo gledati kako se love njene žive ruke, kako se zaboravljuju u igri, ugodno je bilo slušati je kako govori, dovoljno je bilo da postoji.

Derviš i smrt, p 26

In other words, the Cadi's wife is entirely unimportant as 'a real woman' with a mind and voice of her own. She is merely yet another element attached in order to complete the illustration of Nurudin's character. This may be clearly seen in the moment when she refuses to marry Sheikh Nurudin. At that time, her husband the Cadi has been killed and Nurudin is largely responsible for his death. The fact that Nurudin becomes the new Cadi suggests his outstanding victory over the ex-Cadi, who is responsible for the death of Nurudin's brother and most injustices committed in their town. But, Nurudin knows that, if he marries the Cadi's wife his personal victory over him can be absolute. Once again, Selimović's female character becomes unimportant as 'a real woman', but desired as a token of ultimate victory. Nurudin himself indicates his lack of interest in the Cadis' wife as 'a woman' and reveals his own disrespect of the possible marriage when he simply speculates of its advantages, acknowledging an incomplete triumph over her husband, Ajniefendija:

A što je bivao mučniji, sve sam više mislio na Hasanovu sestru. Pamlio sam njen čudni pogled, i ruku što je odavala tugu. Nije htjela da me pusti u kuću

kad sam došao da odbijem ružne glasove od sebe. Onda sam joj poručio da bih je zaprosio, ako pristaje. Odbila me, bez objašnjenja. Saznao sam da je zaista trudna. I da iskreno žali za svojim kadijom. Mislio sam da gleda mojim očima, ona je izgleda našla u njemu što niko nije. Ili je bio nježan prema njoj koliko je bio surov prema svakom drugom, a ona je znala samo za tu njegovu stranu. Proći će je ta udovička žalost, ali sam se javio prerano. Šteta. Ženidba s njom najbolje bi me odbranila od optužbi, a ušao bih u uglednu porodicu koja bi mi postala zaštita. Ali eto, Ajni-efendija mi je smetao i iz groba.

Derviš i smrt, p 420, emphasis mine

The Cadi's wife is not the only example of a female character who becomes a token of ultimate victory within the framework of male rivalry in Selimovic's novels. A closer observation of Nina's role in the novel Krug suggests that she also represents no more than the final price in the social and political conflict between her father and her new boyfriend Ismet. By making it clear to her father that she has no intention of breaking off her new relationship with Ismet, a representative of opposition to her father, she becomes yet another trophy to be won in the framework of their male-male conflict. Nina's father is not concerned about the happiness of his daughter. He is not a protective father who is worried about the human qualities of his future son in law. Rather, he is only disturbed by Ismet's political incorrectness. He cannot accept Ismet as he exemplifies a direct challenge to everything that Nina's father represents. As Ismet stands for an *individual*, in Nina's father's judgment this equals danger, so it must be eliminated:

- Ime mi ne smeta - reako je otac mirno, i ona se uplašila tog mira koji pokazuje njegovu sigurnost. - Smeta mi on.

- Zašto?

- *Ne dopadaju mi se njegova politička uvjerenja. Možda i ne znaš kakva su?*

- *Znam, tata.*
- *I prihvataš ga takvog kakav je? Anarhista. Trockista.*
- *Ne govorimo o tome. Ali odakle ti znaš za njegova politička uvjerenja?*
- *Interesovao sam se.*
- *Gdje?*
- *Tamo gdje treba.*

Pa, jasno! Raspitivao se u policiji.

Krug, p 248

Within their worlds of social, moral and political antagonisms, Nina becomes a medal which marks an absolute victory of one man over the other. In the context of their conflicts, Nina's father stands for all 'budžas' and all the negative characteristics of the post-war communist system in the former Yugoslavia. At the same time, Ismet emerges as a hero of the working class who advocates equality and justice. He, in the author's portrayal, ultimately becomes one of those men whom women would 'like to take in their arms':

Do tada nije ni mislila kako se našla između dva neprijateljska položaja, a oba protivnika su joj bliska, i ona nema pravo da se odluči ni za jednoga. ali ona se već odlučila, davno, možda čak i prije nego što je upoznala Ismeta. Oni nisu ravnopravni protivnici, jedan govor i nastupa s pozicija moći, drugi je potpuno obespravljen; jedan je uvijek u pravu drugi je unaprijed osuđen. Zar može da ne bude na strani onih koji žele ono što ne smiju. To su vječni nezadovoljnici koji su uvijek sanjali o pravdi za sve, koja možda i ne postoji, o životu svakome jednako naklonjenom, što je možda fantazija ljudi nesposobnih da se pomire s onim što jest. Možda se njihovi snovi nikad neće ostvariti, ali to ne znači da nisu lijepi; po onome što oni misle, svako vrijeme će znati mjeru svome poštenju i svojoj ljudskosti; ovo naše je nezna, niti hoće da je zna.

Toliko je bila na njegovoj strani, da bi ga najradije zaštitila od svega što mu prijeti. Za trenutak je ostala nepomična, zaprepaštena silom nježnosti koju je

osjetila prema njemu i njegovom opasnom poštenju.

Krug, p 264

The final confirmation of Ismet's victory over Nina's father and the final evidence of Nina's role in their conflict, may be seen in the writer's choice of the place where the young lovers make love for the first time - on Nina's father's bed:

I pripljala se uz njega, zaboravili su na obzire koji su ih sputavali. Ustala je kao u snu, ali su njegove ruke prirastle za njeno tijelo. Pošla je, okovana. Vodila ju je njena misao. Koračao je, dodirujući bedrom njeno bedro. Došla je do očeve spavaće sobe i do očeva raspremljena kreveta, i pala nasatke s mladićem. Nije je puštao ni u padu.

Zaboravili su na sebe i na svijet. Znali su samo za ljubav.

Krug, p 267

In the light of the conflicts between the Cadi and Ahmed Nurudin (Derviš i smrt) and Nina' father and Ismet (Krug), it is possible to recognise the existence of certain patterns in Selimović's portrayal of male-male competition for dominance. One aspect of this pattern is the internal need of male characters to triumph over each other in competitive situations and in that way to demonstrate their male potency. Another aspect is the repetitive presence of female characters in the role of external 'spoil'. Such a portrayal suggests that some of Selimović's main female characters are portrayed more or less as objects, whose role is only to intensify the conflict between male characters. These portrayals hardly support the belief of the critic Miodrag Petrović by which Selimović's portrayal of female characters in his novels demonstrates '*najdublje poštovanje prema ženskom biću*'.

The presence of the woman in the role of an object in a male-

male conflict may also be seen in the portrayal of Mula-Ibrahim's mother in Derviš i smrt and an unnamed woman in Tvrđava, whom Ahmed Šabo meets during the war in Hoćin. While their husband-soldiers are fighting in the name of the collective, these two women are left to the mercy of other soldiers, the enemy's soldiers. Alone with their children, they are left to the mercy of man's craving for absolute victory over his enemy. Their portrayal undoubtedly reveals how in the context of war and '*the very maleness of the military - the brute power of weaponry exclusive to their hands, the spiritual bonding of men at arms*' woman becomes no more but '*peripheral, irrelevant to the world that counts*'.¹⁴² Sadly enough, history continues to support the fact that, marching towards ultimate triumph, the majority of conquerors tend to view the humiliation of the women of their opponents as a manifestation of their final success. Past and present wars clearly demonstrate that woman and her body become the property of the nation, religious or ethnic group in times of war. It is not her own body any more - it is owned by a certain group and it must be protected or conquered. In addition, the woman who willingly allows an enemy of her nation to come into possession of her body is nothing but a traitor to her own people. This is why Mula-Ibrahim's mother is punished and brought before a firing squad:

Neprijatelj je zauzeo naše mjesto, i han. Iskopali su rovove i dočekali nas bez straha. Vratili smo ih na obalu rijeke tek sedam dane kasnije, i opet zaposjeli mjesto oko hana.. Tad su iz kuće izašla naša dva vojnika, iznenadni napad ih je zatekao u hanu, ili su se sklonili, i tu su skriveni, proveli svih sedam mučnih dana, dok je neprijatelj vršljao po hanu i oko hana. Zena ih je hranila. Bili smo joj zahvalni, sve dok nisu ispričali da je živjela i sa neprijateljskim vojnicima.

Nastalo je čutanje.

¹⁴² S. Brownmiller, Against Our Will- Men, Women and Rape, Penguin, New York, p 32

Zamolio sam starješine da se dječak i njegova slijepa baka kolima prebace u neko obližnje selo.

- *A majka?* - *pitao je mališan.*

- *Doći će poslje.*

Strijeljali su je, čim su kola postala sitna na prostranoj ravnici.

Derviš i smrt, p 257

At the same time, an 'enemy's woman' also becomes an object. But in this case, she is the one that has to be conquered. She is a trophy to be won in order to prove the victor's superiority. In Selimović's novel Tvrđava this is evident in the tragic fate of the unnamed woman, raped by soldiers, Šabo's compatriots. He remembers:

Sačekali su me namračeni, s nekakvom zluradom prijetnjim u očima. - Idi u staju, rekli su mi. I samo su to ponavljali kao naređenje, požurujući me i ne odgovarajući na moja pitanja. Djeca su čučala kraj vrata kolibe.

Obišao sam kuću i stog šaše, ušao u staju. Na zemlji je ležala žena. Ibrahim Pero se otresao od slame i paučine, i pritegavši kaiš izašao, ne pogledavši me.

Žena je ležala mirno, golih butina, nije ni pokušala da se pokrije, čekala je da sve prođe.

Tvrđava, p 13

The rape of women in Selimović's novels does not raise questions. It becomes just another dark colour in the portrayal of war in general. It exists in order to underline the extent of male suffering during war. The very disturbing outcome of an analysis of the rape scene in the novel Tvrđava is Selimović's rather sympathetic portrayal of the soldier rapists. Portraying them in the inhuman conditions of the war zone, Selimović seeks an understanding for their crime, using the exceptional circumstances as their alibi. Without suggesting that

Selimović intends to justify the criminal act of rape, one would like to emphasise that the author's portrayal of rape certainly does not challenge the male attitude according to which, in the words of Susan Brownmiller, a rape is '*an unfortunate but inevitable byproduct of the necessary game called war. Women, by this reasoning, are simply regrettable victims- incidental, unavoidable casualties..*'¹⁴³ What is even more disturbing is that the one of Selimović's critics, Miodrag Petrović supports such a notion by saying:

*Žena koju turski vojnici siluju pripada drugoj strani, strani mržnje i nepravde. To je upravo impuls koji oslobađa vojнике svake odgovornosti. Sama logika rata, suprotstavljenosti, nepomirljivosti i mržnje nameće, tačnije, dopušta taj i takav odnos. Čovek u ratu jeste čovek nasilja.*¹⁴⁴

Petrović's comment not only endorses the suggestion that a female character in the novel Tvrđava is no more than an object in the male-male conflict, but it also becomes an effective example of the harmful belief which in its own way continues to justify a criminal act against a woman with the exceptional circumstances of war.

It was mentioned earlier that several of Selimović's novels reveal the presence of another type of women - those who do not compromise the 'traditional' criterion. Some of them, like Zejna in Derviš i smrt, Mrs Ružić in Ostrvo or Roksanda in the novel Krug, are portrayed as moral deviants who, by committing adultery, position themselves outside the patriarchal boundaries. Even though Hasan

¹⁴³ S. Brownmiller, Against Our Will - Men, Women and rape, Penguin, New York 1976, p 32

¹⁴⁴ M.Petrović, op.cit, p 110, emphasis mine

knows that Zejna is '*žena čovjeka kojeg ne voli*' (p 131), he intervenes and ends her relationship with her lover. Hasan justifies his action by asserting that a woman cannot give to another man '*ono što je muževljevo po božjim i po ljudskim propisima..*' (p 130). This belief that woman's love may not belong to her husband but that her sexuality does indeed, is also present in Selimović's novel Ostrvo. In spite of the fact that Mrs Ružić does not love her husband either, she is also forced to stay his '*žena pred zakonom.*' (p 129). Once again, the author dismisses the absence of a wife's love for her husband as unimportant because

Gospoda Ružić je bila kriva, ne zato što nije voljela muža, za to bi bila kriva većina žena već što nije znala da se ponaša i što je povrijedila dostojanstvo kuće. Preko toga se nije moglo mirno preći.

Ostrvo, p 130

No doubt, the portrayal of these women discloses female sexuality as an object which, in the patriarchal society, belongs to a man. In addition, it appears that the 'crime' committed by Selimović's female characters is not the absence of love for their husbands but the fact that they have stepped outside of patriarchal conventions. Also, the author's pattern which keeps his female characters within the boundaries of these conventions (marriage), clearly demonstrates his unease in accepting a woman's attempt to step outside them. In his first novel Tišine Selimović also demonstrates his distress before the 'unconventional behaviour' of women and readiness to condemn it. The ex-partisan describes his female colleague from the office as one who '*ne čeka da joj neko priđe, maše svojom praznom glavicom*' (p 63). Her sexual freedom defines her as '*šašava...bestidna mala životinjica.*' (p 236).

She is perceived as an ill-behaved woman who lives her life without dreams, plans or demands:

...s njom je lako, svejedno joj je šta činiš, važno je ne držati ni do čega, veselo primati ono što nađe, ne misleći da li je zlo ili dobro: dovoljno da je ugodno. A opet nije pokvarena, nije ogorčena ni na šta, ničemu se ne sveti ni u sebi ni izvan sebe, ništa ne odbolijeva, nije čak ni rđava, nije glupa, nije licemjerna, ne poetizuje svoju neodgovornost, ne afektira njome, ne ljuti se ako joj prigovoriš što tako živi, nije zahvalna ako joj učiniš po volji, ne pamti, ne čuva što osvoji, ne žali kad izgubi, ništa ne čini sa strašću, već sa čudnom nasmijanom upornošću koja joj je prešla u naviku, pretvorivši se u potrebu be naročitog zadovoljstva. Vedra svejednost, potpuna, ali za nju bezbolna praznina, odsustvo svakog smisla za određivanje i mjerjenje sebe, neračunanje, nebriga, nesposobnost da išta shvati ozbiljno osim neozbiljnost. Ništa joj ne treba, pa ni to što čini, ali to jedino može da čini. Sačekuje me sa smijehom, ali bez radosti, prepusta se bez uzdržavanja, ali bez stvarne potrebe, rastaje se bez dosade, ali i bez žaljenja.

Tišine, p 237

Described as a woman who 'čini sve što joj padne na um' (p 237), she becomes an example for 'namjerno odstupanje od prihvaćenih normi, neumjereni doziranje po jednom iskrivljenom htijenju ili po slabosti, orgijastičko traženje nereda.' (p 238). Even though he is involved in a sexual relationship with her, the ex-partisan clearly indicates his feelings by saying: 'Žalim je, osjećam gađenje dijelom sebe..' (p 238) Nevertheless, it is not only a woman who achieves a degree of sexual freedom that disturbs the author. The stories 'Namirisana ameba' and 'Čudo' in his novel Ostvo are perhaps the best examples of the author's distress which is invoked by the behaviour of yet another type of 'non-conventional' women. These stories contain far from flattering portrayals of Ivan Marić's daughters-in-law. The titles of the stories themselves suggest Ivan's 'evaluation' of these two women. Both of

them are nameless characters, portrayed as 'intelektualke' where the word is used with a pejorative meaning.

Snaha je bila intelektualka, i imala je visoko mišljenje o sebi. Učili su je "da misli", i ona je mislila, uvjerena da zna kako se to radi. Bila je visoko iznad običnih, prosječnih ljudi, iznad svake osrednjosti, iznad svih predrasuda. Muževljevi roditelji? Na žalost moderni ljudi imaju veremna samo za najneophodnije stvari. Ona posjeduje ličnu slobodu, moral, bez preudnjeđenja, široko razumijevanje stvari i ljudi. Ima gotovo savršenu iluziju o sebi, i u nju potpuno vjeruje. Svoj muža je upoznala za vrijeme studija, mada je to čudno, jer ih je sve razdvajalo: ona je bila vesela i slobodna, on zbumen i tunjav, ona je lako stupala u kontakt s ljudima, on se jedva usuđivao da se javi poznanicima; ona je išla na igranke, on nikada nije ni kročio u salu za igranje. Uz to, on je siromaskan, ona bogata; njegov otac je nekvalifikovani turisticki vodič koji je njemački jezik naučio u jemačom zarobljeništvu, njen otac je predsjednik okružnog suda; on je studirao agronomiju, ona francuski jezik i književnost. On je u svakom društvu bio posljednji pion, ona svugdej kraljica. I samo bi đavo mogao da objasni kako su se sreli, kako su počeli da razgovaraju, kako su se zaiteresovali jedno za drugo, kako su se sporazumjeli da se vježaju i ko je to prvi predložio. Jedino objašnjenje je u tome što je on bio oduševljen svim njenim, i izgledom, i francuskim jezikom, i njenom majkom, i njenom kulturom, i psićem što ga je vodala na kaišu ili nosila u naručju, i time što mu je dopustila da je obožava. Možda mu je uskoro dosadila i njeni kultura, i njeni maka, i francuski jezik, i sve njeni, ali to nije pokazivao. Mislio je nekad na selo radovao se lijepom poljoprivrednom imanju, ali on je rekla: ne! bolje ćeš napredovati u institutu. I zaposlio se u institutu. Mislio je nekad da će živjeti sa svojom majkom i ocem, ali on je rekla: ne! niko nikome ne treba da smeta, i njeni majka je uglavnom prešla kod njih, a njih dvoje starih su otišli na svoje ostrvo.

Ostrvo, p 32

It seems to be important to point out that, once again, Ivan's portrayal of his daughters-in-law is significant only in relation to the wider framework of his observations, regarding his own life and relationship with his family. That is to say, his daughters-in-law are

present not only in order to underline Ivan's antagonism towards urban societies, but he also sees them as the main culprits responsible for the fact that Ivan's sons neglect him and his wife. With their portrayal, Ivan suggests that his daughters-in-law belong to a 'modern generation for whom *'je sasvim obično i normalno što je ona nadmoćna'*'. Ivan's conclusion ultimately indicates his patriarchal understanding of who should be 'nadmoćan' in a relationship between a man and a woman and what should be 'obično i normalno'. By stepping outside the conventional female role, these women, in Ivan's view, have lost their femininity and become an imitation of men, moreover, monsters.

In his brief comment on the portrayal of the female characters in Selimović's novel Ostryo, the critic Thomas Eekman says '*One cannot rid oneself of the impression that the author is far from being a feminist: all the female characters are negative.*'¹⁴⁵ In addition to Eekman's words, and as shown in the foregoing analysis, one is bound to conclude that, when considering the portrayal of all of Selimović's female characters, they are visibly divided into 'good' and 'bad' categories. They are women without a story, illustrated merely as 'beings' with no voice of their own and no autonomy whatever.

¹⁴⁵ T. Eekman, Thirty Years of Yugoslav Literature (1945-1975), Ann Arbor, Michigan 1978, p 109

Aralica's themes

Aralica's first collection of stories, Svemu ima vrijeme, was published in Zagreb in 1967 and was followed by the novels A primjer se zvao Laudina (Split, 1969), Filip (Zadar, 1970), Konjanik (Zagreb, 1971), Ima netko siv i zelen (Zagreb, 1977) and the volume of stories Opsjene paklenih crteža in 1977 (Zagreb). Nevertheless, up to 1979 Ivan Aralica was a writer outside the mainstream. The concerns of his writing and the concept of his literature were outside the dominant discourse. Even though he was recognised as an author with a compassionate understanding of ethical upheavals in the lives of ordinary peasants and a writer searching for an instinctive connection between the individual and society - Ivan Aralica was acknowledged only as an author who explored already examined space. Commenting on Aralica's novel Filip, the critic Branimir Donat says:

Aralica je problemima i ovom zgodom prišao muški odvažno, no ne umjetnički sretno. U borbi protiv jedne životne sheme postade robom jedne književne sheme. Simboli kojima obilježava absurdni put svoga junaka Filipa već su poznati i u njima romansijer nije uspio transcendirati immanentno, tako da jedan naoko izolirani slučaj pretvori u primjer opće vrijednosti koji upozorava na sve one bezbrojene teškoće koje stoje na putu ostvarenja vouluntarističke ideje da se promijeni svijet i izmijeni čovjek. Tematski, "Filip" znači osvježenje, znači dodir s jednim pomalo tabuiranim prostorom; kreativno - znači kretanje u prostoru

koji je hrvatska kniževnost već odavno osvojila.¹⁴⁶

Zadar, Promina, Knin and the people of this region were Aralica's inspiration for his first novels. Their existence and survival, daily problems and dilemmas about personal and collective morality were the author's predicaments too. But, focusing on the **daily life of a countryman** and **his existence in a rural environment** the author could not meet the expectations of Croatian literature at that time. Aralica analysed '*moduse dogmatske svijesti, licemjerja kao rezultante dominacije takve svijesti*'.¹⁴⁷ But that was the period of writers who '*inzistiraju na polisemičnosti, na formalnim eksperimentima, na univerzalnim i kozmopolitskim temama*'.¹⁴⁸ It was an age dominated by writers of Modernism who embraced a more philosophical approach to literature. They adopted the paradigms of modern aesthetics following in the footsteps of Kafka, Joyce, Faulkner, Camus etc. The so called '*krugovaši*' i '*razlogovci*'¹⁴⁹ stepped out of the socio-realistic frame and adopted on the principles of modern European and World literature. As the critic Velimir Visković points out, at this moment in Croatian literature when the break away from socialist realism

146 B. Donat, Brbljava sfinga- kronika hrvatskog poratnog romana, Znanje, Zagreb 1978, p129

147 I. Aralica, Svemu ima vrijeme, Mladost, Zagreb 1990, introduction V. Viskovic, p 7

148 ibid, p 8

149 KRUGOVI - magazine for literature and culture published in Zagreb from 1952 until 1958. The magazine helped to establish a large number of young Croatian writers such as S.Novak, A.Soljan, I.Slaming, V.Pavletic, Z.Golob etc. It played an important role in introducing to readers the writings of modern European and American authors. The importance of this magazine is indicated by the fact that an entire generation of Croatian writers was known by its name '*krugovaši*'.

RAZLOG - magazine for literature, art and culture published in Zagreb from 1962 until 1967. This magazine was also very important for the recognition of the third generation of young Croatian writers such as D.Dragojevic, D.Horvatic, Z.Falout etc. Poetry in the magazine was based on principles of metaphysics and a philosophical approach to existence in the Universe. Gathering around this magazine, writers of the third Croatian generation acquired the name '*razlogovci*'.

implied breaking away from any faithful representation of reality - there was no room for Aralica's critical realism and its regional flavour.

*Ivan Aralica je u hrvatsku književnost ušao kao marginalac koji daleko od književne metropole piše prozu koja nema mnogo veze s kurentnim trendovima hrvatske književnosti. Upravo to nepripadanje školama činilo je njegovu afirmaciju dugotrajnom, sporom. Aralici je bila potrebna mnogo veća mjera talenta i umijeća da se definitivno potvrди kao značajno ime hrvatske književnosti. U vrijeme kad su svi bili poneseni modernističkim istraživanjima literarnih formi, manirističkom kombinatorikom teme koje su zadali veliki preci svjetskog modernizma, Aralica je pokazivao dovoljno morlačke odvažnosti i tvrdoglavosti da se bavi temama za koje misli da su izraz našeg podneblja i naše tradicije, da svjedoči o relevantnim socijalnim procesima tog vremena.*¹⁵⁰

Some years later, Aralica expressed his belief that modernism was no more than the perfect tool for the neutralisation of Croatian literature and also demonstrated strong disagreement with the evaluation of modern European writers. Furthermore, he insisted that writers such as Eugene Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, Franc Kafka etc,

*ti uzori, uzdizani do razmjera koje nisu doživjeli ni na matičnom jeziku, ostavljali su pustoš u hrvatskoj književnosti...naglasak je na tomu da su ti pisci, bez svoje krivnje, odgovorni za jalovi eksperimentalizam u vrijeme oktroiranog modernizma, kad je hrvatska književnost izgubila čitaoce, i za nabijanje kompleksa piscima koji su htjeli razvijati našu tradiciju.*¹⁵¹

This is not the place to discuss the appropriateness of such a statement, but, at the same time it is not possible to ignore the

150 *ibid.* p 35

151 'Republika', No 9-10, Zagreb 1987, p 78-79, interview with N.Bartolčić

resentful sound of Aralica's voice. The time he spent on the marginal side of Croatian literature evidently left a bitter taste in his mouth. Furthermore, the late 1960's and early 1970's, was a time when not only Aralica's writing but also his political activities were outside 'the mainstream'. In December 1971, a large number of the Croatian communist party leaders were forced to resign over the political scandal known as 'Croatian spring' or 'Maspok'.¹⁵² These politicians were seen as creators and supporters of a movement with nationalistic ideas whose aim was to destroy the brotherhood and unity as well as the stability of Yugoslavia and to carry out a counter revolution. SKJ (Yugoslav Communist Party), JNA (Yugoslav National Army) and Tito personally demanded their resignation. In his book 'Croatian spring'¹⁵³, Mika Tripalo, one of the leading politicians in Croatia at that time, who resigned in December 1971, admits that during this period some people endorsed nationalistic and anti socialistic ideas and tried to put them forward. But, he insists that, as far as the so called 'Maspok' was concerned, it was never about chauvinism and hate - it was about the rights of Croatia and democratic changes recognised by party leaders in Croatia at the time as necessary on the way to the liberalisation of the Yugoslav political system. He claims that 'Maspok' was never an organisation with its own leaders, but the political awakening of ordinary people in The Republic of Croatia who became responsive to political decisions and wanted to become involved in making them, not just performing them.

As far as this period of former Yugoslavia's history is concerned

152 MASPOK - 'mas-pokret', 'mass movement'

153 M.Tripalo, Hrvatsko projekte, Globus, Zagreb 1990

- historians still have work to do. There are certain details waiting to be looked at, information to be revealed and 'facts' to be proved. The truth is yet to come. But one thing is certain: as a result of the political cleansing that took place after 1971. a large number of communists in Croatia (according to Mika Tripalo, around 50,000 members), including politicians, army leaders, directors of major state companies, scientists, artists, journalists, writers, were expelled from The Communist Party, some of them jailed. In just two years 2.000 people were charged with crimes against the state of Yugoslavia. By 'the word' that was passed among party leaders, not by any written decree, a number of people marked as 'political dissidents' were banned from public appearances. Among them was the writer Ivan Aralica who was urged to leave the Croatian political scene at the beginning of the 1970's in his position of representative in the House of Counties. About his role in the 'Croatian spring' he says:

The enthusiasm was universal and one after another devotees of my generation, who modestly called them selves "skojevci" ¹⁵⁴, stepped onto the scene and took away the leading positions in politics, culture and economics from uneducated people. That wave found me in the position of headmaster in a school for training teachers; for five years I was a pioneer of my generation and involvement was unavoidable ; as a member of the educated personnel I had a supreme position even if I never had too much interest in politics as a profession and therefore I always remained in that field as an outsider, non professional, on the edge, in the shadow, which, after the collapse of 'The Croatian spring' would be construed as that I was working in the background, that I was an ideologist and that everyone else was in my shadow.¹⁵⁵

Since the failure of 'Maspok' Aralica lived and worked in Zadar,

¹⁵⁴ members of The Communist's Party youth organisation

¹⁵⁵ Z. Crnkovic (ed), Zadar ocvalog imperia (Aralica's interview with Stanko Basic in "Fokus", Zadar, novembar 1989) Znanje, Zagreb 1991, p 8, (tr. mine)

restricted in his activities and prevented from full involvement in public life. However, in 1979 he published his novel Psi u trgovištu (Zagreb), which marked the final days of the marginal season in Aralica's work and a widening of acceptance from his critics and readers. His following novels, Put bez sna (Zagreb 1982), Duše robova (Zagreb 1984), Graditelj svratišta (Zagreb 1986) and Asmodejev šal (Zagreb 1988), led to approval for Aralica as one of the classics in mainstream of Croatian literature. The critic Velimir Visković argues that the young generation of Croatian writers at that time (such as Cuić, Pavličić, Tribuson, Kekanović, Barbieri, Ugrešić etc)

programatski razara tradicijsku predodžbu o piscu klasiku, nacionalnom bardu, koji ima izrazitu svijest o vlastitoj misiji, oni pokušavaju demistificirati patetiku te predodžbe, više vjeruju u ludičku i kombinatoričku funkciju književnosti negoli u kongitivnu, etičku, didaktičnu, prosvjetiteljsku u krajnjoj liniji.

Visković also suggests that these are the main reasons which led to the development of an appetite for a 'classic writer' and '*Aralica se nizom svojih povijesnih romana nametnuo kao personalnost koja najpotpunije zadovoljava tu potrebu.*'¹⁵⁶ Nevertheless, it would seem that some external reasons also influenced the change of Aralica's status in Croatian literature. The first one was the publicity caused by two awards which Aralica received in 1985 ('Vjesnik' award 'Goran' and 'Award of Miroslav Krleža's foundation') and the scandal aroused by the scenario for the film 'Zivot sa stricem' (based on Aralica's novel Okvir za mržnju - Zagreb, 1987 - and directed by Krsto Papić). In his interview with Stanko Bašić for 'Fokus' (Zadar, December 1989) Aralica himself comments on these days:

¹⁵⁶ V.Viskovic, op.cit., p16-17

*Po tom obrascu, po kojem su se odvijali svi takozvani slučajevi, a bilo ih je na tisuće pretvarajući se u vrlo djelotvoran mehanizam kontrole, počeo je prvi od tih napada, onaj vezan za "Goranovu nagradu". Počeo je napisom urednika "Narodnog lista" o nagrđenom piscu i ratnom komandantu sjevernodalmatinskih odreda, umirovljenom generalu. Bilo je to ono o "nebudnosti", "o ulasku na mala vrata", jer je nebudnost nagradila pisca i jer su nebudni borci pozvali svoga ratnog komandanta na proslavu osnivanja brigade. Ostali napadi, onaj na scenarij, film i roman, pa djelimično i ovaj na "Tajnu sarmatskog orla", koji je simpatičan jer ukazuje na zamor i izraubovanost mehanizma budnosti, vodili su se po sličnom receptu. Pokušavalo se preko osude secnarija i filma, pa i romana, uspostaviti kontrola nad rukovodećim tijelima i institucijama društva i politike, koja su toj kontroli izmicale, sileći ih da se o slučaju izjašnjavaju i za izjašnjavanje dobivaju pozitivnu ili negativnu ocjenu, u oba slučaja da priznaju arbitrazu.*¹⁵⁷

An increase in negative feelings towards the leadership of the communist party and the political system in the former Yugoslavia in general, resulted in radical changes and the introduction of a new, multiparty system. This is the second external reason which led to the change in Aralica's position in Croatian literature.

Comparing him with Meša Selimović whose writing was also influenced by traumatic experience with 'The system', his critics maintain that Ivan Aralica chose the form of the historical novel to articulate his own emotions and thoughts. It seems important at this point to emphasise that Aralica explored historical themes in his earlier writings too (Konjanik, Opsjene paklenih crteža) but, as mentioned before, did not succeed in fulfilling the anticipation of an artistic vision. In addition, in his continuing affinity with historical detail in the trilogy and novels to follow, his evident **appreciation of religion, familiarity with a folk tradition, knowledge of old crafts**

¹⁵⁷ I. Aralica, Zadah ocvalog imperija, Znanje, Zagreb 1991, p12

and acquainted use of language, a question emerges: why did he return to the historical novel as a form of expression? As much as one agrees with Velimir Visković that Aralica did not use the historical novel only as the perfect shield because of the label 'political dissident' (which enables him to write more openly) - it would not be wise to ignore the fact that this form without any doubt was a safe starting point. Not only did it provide him with a time distance but it also enabled him to create his images in an environment and atmosphere where he felt very much at home. Referring to Lotman's distinction between '*estetika istovjetnosti*' and '*estetika oprečnosti*' and focusing on Aralica as an admirer of patriarchal principles and values who is loyal to the old tradition of the fatherland - Velimir Visković interprets him as an author of '*estetika istovjetnosti*'. He claims that Aralica '*ne može ni biti radikalni zastupnik "estetike oprečnosti" jer bi ga to nužno odvelo u negaciju tradicije*'¹⁵⁸ Three years after Visković's observation, in the epilogue of Aralica's contemporary novel Majka Marija (Zagreb 1993) Josip Pavičić says:

*Ivan Aralica voli za sebe kazati da je katolički pisac...Kažemo li naime da je katolički pisac - pisac vjerskog nadahnuća ili svjedok vjere u književnosti ili, jos uže, pisac koji je širitelj vjerskih (katoličkih) istina, rekli smo manji dio istine o Araličinoj književnosti. Aralica jest svjedok vjerskih istina i katolički pisac, ali je ponajprije pisac.....Etičke vrijednosti na kojima se zasnivaju Araličine pripovijesti potječu iz katoličke, točnije zapadne kršćanske kulture.*¹⁵⁹

Therefore, as both of these, '*estetika istovjetnosti*' and the Catholic religion, entail the same recognition and appreciation of the

¹⁵⁸ V. Visković, op. cit., p 14

¹⁵⁹ J. Pavičić, op. cit., p 291, emphasis mine

fundamental principles of a tradition, and as Aralica is an author who cherishes inherited patriarchal values and principles - the historical novel becomes the perfect 'tool' **to preserve and to preach** the same values. Exploiting the chronicles of Franciscan friars and diaries of travellers coming from the various parts of the Ottoman Empire and the West as the main source of data for his novels, Aralica focused on the historical novel in order to express his admiration of patriarchal principles and ethics. Presenting both positive and negative experiences from the past he praises traditional values and the notion of the patriarchal collective. That is to say, Aralica's disagreement with the concept of modernism discussed earlier is not based only on his belief that modernism discouraged the creativity of Croatian writers (including himself!) but, it is based on his general understanding and interpretation of life. Josip Pavičić underlines Aralica's belief that the writer is '*misionar koji svome čitatelju pomaze da shvati tko je, da ga ohrabri, i da mu tako pomogne da u rvanju s teškoćama koje mu nameće život, i povijest, ne poklekne.*'¹⁶⁰ Thus, when the writer takes on this role, there is no better approach than the form of the historical novel. Also, by maintaining a time distance, Aralica has a chance to advocate his ideas and opinions by calling upon either positive or negative experience from the past, whichever is needed. In 'Historia est magistra vitae' style - he seeks authority from these lessons. In other words, the historical novel was the perfect stage for Aralica for the celebration of traditional values and the notion of the patriarchal collective.

Aralica's historical trilogy (Put bez sna, Duše robova and Graditelj

¹⁶⁰ J.Pavičić, op.cit, p 294, emphasis mine

svratista) and the novel Asmodejev šal describe the **struggle and survival of Croats** from Rama during their migration towards the West and through the historical events in the period between the 17th and 19th centuries. The author follows the destiny of the Grabovac family and at the same time, with a convincing commitment and passion for authentic details, he introduces his readers to the different cultures, religions and customs of the people who lived together in this part of the world. Put bez sna is the first novel in the trilogy in which, focusing on an average man in the main role and historical personalities in supporting roles, Aralica writes about the fate of the Croat under pressure due to the clashes between the Ottoman Empire and Venetian Dalmatia. The first conflict begins when one of the last descendants of the richest Muslim family in the region, Treho Kopčić, insults the symbol of the Catholic faith of Simun Grabovac's family and ignites a spark of ethnic and religious conflict. As the conflict between the two families progresses, Simun looks for protection and help from the priest Pavao Vučković. Padre Vučković is an ideal emissary of his church as he appears in the trilogy offering the Catholic faith and concern for its followers, always there to provide help and shelter:

Po njegovim padovima i usponima, po tomu kamo je sve dospio i otkuda se uspio vratiti, po tomu što je pamio a što namjerno zaboravlja, znalo se da Vučković nije čovjek koji bi lio suze nad razvalinama i jadao se nad izgubljenim duže nego što bi spoznao da je nešto razoren i nepovratno otišlo. Taj čovjek nije znao šta to znači raznježiti se i zbuniti. Uz stalno budni um, koji smišlja šta valja činiti, on u sebi nosi maglu koja, kad na dušu pada, a ne na koševine uz rijeku, nije ništa drugo nego raznježenost, pažnja, obzir i osjećaj dužnosti kao osnove čovjekova poslanja na ovome svijetu.

Duše robova, p173

An intelligent and well educated man, capable of taking the role of a leader, with full understanding of the community, Vučković is genuinely involved in his people's everyday lives as well as in the political destiny of his Croatian motherland. As the conflict between Venice and the Ottoman Empire escalates and life between neighbours of different religions becomes extremely unpleasant and frightening, he guides the Croats in their migration from Rama towards the West. Following the migration in the context that specifies this period of Croatian history, the narrator at the same time follows the paths of Vučković's own life and destiny that will take him to a Baghdad prison at the end of Put bez sna. Interrupting his main story several times, the narrator reveals the saga of Vučković's past and his personal life.

In Duše robova the author follows the destiny of the second generation of Croats from Rama at the beginning of the 18th century, through the destiny of Matija Grabovac. The new clashes between the Ottomans and the Venetian Lion drive Matija into warfare against the Turks. By refusing to sell his slave, a Muslim soldier who was given to him as a war trophy, and setting him free, Matija Grabovac breaks the law and finds himself in trouble. Just as his father Simun had done thirty years before, Matija also seeks help from Padre Pavao Vučković. So, the reader meets Vučković once more, as he once again tries to save a lost 'sheep'. Using digression again, the author reveals the mystery of Pavao's presence in Croatia in describing his life and escape from the Baghdad prison. In the end, after a series of unfortunate circumstances make him a fugitive for the second time, Matija becomes disillusioned with his own people and decides to leave for Rama. But, immediately, with another deviation - in the form of

hallucinations - the author establishes a dialogue between Matija and his dead friend, in order to remind Matija how important it is, in spite of everything, to have faith and love for his people and his fatherland:

Tebi se dogodilo najgore što se živu čovjeku može dogoditi: da si sve što imaš uložio u ljubav prema svojima, a požnjeo progon. Pa se bojim da svoje ne zamrziš. Je li da ti to nećeš učinit svom satniku Mocvuni?.... Ne treba biti sebičan, pa voljeti život samo onoliko i ono što je tebi dano da proživiš. Ničiji život nije bogzna šta da se u njega zaljubljujemo. Život treba voljeti kao što se voli veliko ništa, sveobuhvatno ništa. Smisao svega sto imamo ispunjen je besmislenosću svih stvari koje su nam dane da ih imamo. Od ničega neće biti ništa, sve što imamo propast će, svi koje volimo nestat cae, ali će trajno ostati to da posjedujemo i volimo, da smo posjedovani i voljeni, da gradimo kratkotrajno i propadljivo. Tako zidamo kuću, tako osnivamo obitelj, tako se držimo svoga naroda - od ničega ništa, ali ništa u svemu sve je što imamo i bez čega ne možemo....Hodaj po Varvari i traži mjesto gdje je rasut gar i kovačka troska koja lako ne propada. Kad je nađeš, stani, tu ti je djed imao kovačiju, i ti je tu podigni, i kuj plugove i handzare.

Duše robova, p 343-344

The stories about the life of Father Pavao and Matija's hallucinations are not the only instance when the narrator's story is interrupted in Aralica's writings. Very often in his work the focus is similarly shifted from the main story. Digressions become a regular occurrence in Aralica's writings, appearing in the form of letters, legends, and separate stories inside the main story. In the novel Graditelj svratišta, (Zagreb 1986), with prophecy as the basic frame for all further developments in the novel, an enigma that needs to be resolved, and Jakov's retrospections, the author also includes digression in order to deliver some of his conclusive comments. These memoirs of Jakov Grabovac (Matija's great-grandson), entitled Graditelj svratišta, are set around 1808, when Dalmatia, occupied by Austria, since the fall of

Venice, was given to Napoleon. The focus of the novel is the construction of the inn on Turija (for the use of Napoleon's troops) but also the economic and political struggle of the Croatian people while the construction proceeds. Jakov is the engineer in charge and as he embodies the suffering of an ordinary man during these years, he also reveals 'digression stories' of the lives of his forefathers, his sister Cvita's and his own. In addition, Aralica's novels demonstrate two types of digression. One which accommodates more background details about the characters, and one which becomes a 'universal symbol' empowering the author to make general statements. In this framework, every so often the author takes on the role of the omniscient storyteller. For instance, in Put bez sna he interrupts the main story, interjecting the tale about the swineherd Pako to teach the reader that '*...gdje ti se jednom posreći, drugi put neće. Sreću ne možeš ni uhvatiti ni dočekati, nego samo susresti, zato hodaj, zato hodaj; neki će reći da bježiš, a ti tvrdi da tražiš.*' (p 123) Or, in Duše robova, where the author infiltrates a lesson about punishment for prostitution into the central story:

Ispričat ču vam strašnu priliku koja govori o kazni što će snaći takve žene....Jedna pokvarenica živjela u Bablju a prodavala se između "Tikve" i "Pletonke". Onda se razboli, leže na postelju i umre u groznim mukama. Dok je ona bila na odru pod bijelim krovom, pred njenom kućaom pokolju se dva psa, jedan bijeli i drugi crni, kojih u Bablju ima više nego nezakonite djece. Kad njihovu ciku čuše ostali psi, dotrčaše sa svih strana i učas ih pred pokvarenicinom kućom bijas čitav čopor, režali, lajali, klali se. I svi nagrnuše na pokojnicu. Kidali su s nje pokrivače i odjeću, iskidali platno na komadiće, a nju ostavili golu golcatu. Ljudi su ih jedva otjerali ostima. Tijelo žene sahraniše onako golo. Ali, što psi učiniše s njenim pokrivačima i haljinama, to učiniše i od njezina groba. Vjetar ju je šibao, sunce peklo, spirale kiše. Sramota za života, stid poslije smrti.

Duše robova, p 247

Aralica's novel Asmodejev šal (1988) is not written as part of the trilogy but it is connected with it, because a member of the Grabovac family is again the one of main characters. It is most likely that this novel contains one of the writer's prime digression stories which delivers a warning lecture about the destiny of a sinful woman, in the form of Martin Grabovac's dream. Once more, the story is told by Jakov Grabovac who begins the revelation about his father Martin using the form of an axiom:

Svaki čovjek svoju dušu zatvara teškim vratima, najviše oni što pričaju da u njih nema tajni, ali ih je malo koji su se uspjeli sasvim zatvoriti, koji nisu dopustili da se u njih poviri i vidi kakva im svijeća u nutrini gori, kakvu sjenu baca, tko u nju ulje nalijeva i tko stijenj žeže.

Asmodejev šal, p 12

Jakov explains how, travelling around Bosnia and Dalmatia and retailing goods made in the family's smithy, his father meets the trader Plavša who is concerned about the fidelity of his wife Niža. After hearing the story of their marriage and at the same time helping Plavša to rationalise the correctness of his apprehension, Martin agrees to help, without knowing that it will lead him to personal disability and tragedy. While the reader learns more about Niža, her marriage and the routes of Martin's 'investigation', s/he is also faced with a lesson about the consequences of adultery or infatuation with another man's wife. As Martin's dream occurs in the world of Asmodej¹⁶¹, he foresees Niža's future and also his own - beneath the

¹⁶¹ Aeshma Deva - in Iranian mythology is the demon of lust; The Croatian writer Antun Gustav Matoš has used him as the name for an evil

arches of the inferno:

...- *Tako brate! Nemaš nikakva razloga da se kriješ. Znaš li ti nekoga tko se meni sakrio? Ne znaš? Pa, ne znaju ni drugi....Pazi ovuda! Vidiš li onaj luk desno, do njega ćemo. Taj će vjerovatno biti tvoj.Odozdo je uskipjela vatra i dim kao mlijeko u loncu i plamen je liznuo rese šala. Tako zapaljena, Asmodej ga je nevidjenom brzinom i spretnošću ovio oko Martinove desne ruke, kao što se vije povoj oko dojenčeta. Ugleđavši kako se iz goruće vune šala, smotana oko njegove podlaktice i zapešća, kap po kap cijedi crvena masna krv, gusta kao borova smola, čiji se miris posvuda širi, kad je spazio da i ta krv počinje gorjeti, Martin se od straha probudio i ugleđao ono što je i u snu video - svoju ruku pretvorenu u baklju.*"

Asmodejev šal, p170, 178

This **detour mode** appears to be continuous in Aralica's work and can be detected in 'smaller sizes' too. Very often (periodically entirely unnecessarily), he exercises small interferences, with the clear motive of insinuating advice or proposing ethical and moral standards. In these cases the advice (or axiom) are not only the outcome of a separate tale injected into the primary story, but they emerge as the narrator's own words - as he decides to address the reader directly. Allowing a leading story to be interrupted by these forms of digression or, beginning the novel with one of them (The novel Majka Marija begins: 'Never say never!'), - the author indicates their significance as he tries to conceive a direct form of communication with the reader. Aralica's literature becomes **didactic** when, using an axiom, he enters the world of **collective experience**. The writer appears before the reader as an educator using the wisdom of the 'common people' that developed as a result of their experience in the past. For instance:

..Matić ga je obavijestio da noćas krišom, Pavao Vučković odlazi u Split i

Simun će poći s njime.

Kad se kriješ, ne krij se sasvim, i miris će te odati. Krij se tako da te što manje ljudi vidi, ali da nijednom ne bude čudno što te na tom mjestu susreće. Tako da nisu krenuli u ponoć nego u zoru, i sunce im je granulo kad su bili na kamenu iznad Orašca.

Put bez sna, p 26, emphasis mine

It seems appropriate at this point to note that Aralica also engages this mode as he draws pictures of the Croatian landscape or old costumes, admiring the beauty of old crafts or indicating his sympathy for ancient customs:

I ti primi moju dušu, Matija Grabovce, i čuvaj je kao što bi svoju čuvao - rekao je Mesud dok je Matija jezikom čistio zajedničku krv na svojoj ruci od zapešća do vrha jagodice.

I zamjena duša je bila izvršena, po prastarom obredu, bez svjedoka i ceremonijala - majstora, činovnika, vladara, bez ikoga u četiri oka, voljom dvojice ljudi koji su shvatili da je čizma vraški tijesna, da će se još susretati i da će još kad god koji od njih biti u nevolji i tražiti pomoć, izvršena onako kao što se taj obred vršio stotinama godina unazad, mnogo prije nego što se nad ovim brdima i poljima prostrlo hrvatsko ime. Kanda je iz tla niknuo kao što niče vriesak i, prenošen s koljena na koljeno, obnavlja se svaki put kad čovjek i čovjek, podijeljeni vlašću, ideologijama, vjerama, ratovima i vladarskom glupošću, traže za sebe spas mimo onih koji javno laju da ih štite.

Duše robova, p 167

As much as these digressions have given Aralica's literature what might be termed a 'spiral' and 'curved' shape, they are not only a recognisable feature of his literary style. It was they that granted this author, very strongly and emotionally attached to the **Croatian motherland**, a chance to highlight its **cultural and collective identity**. It is through these digressions that the author is able to be

directly engaged in the proposition of principles of collective experience.

The philosophy of collective values in Aralica's work could also be analysed in the lasting presence of one particular symbol: the house. In the varied structure of his digressions there are common descriptions of the construction process of houses and pictures of their interior or exterior appearance. But, these houses are more than a sketch, more than a mass of bricks and mortar. They are not just the locus where one lives. Aralica's house means home as the place of man's beginning, the place of his roots. The home in Aralica's novels is the first environment of every man's upbringing, the first place where he develops a knowledge of the meaning '**to belong**' somewhere and '**to be part of**'. Hence, it is also the place where the process of nurturing his **collective consciousness** begins. For these reasons the house in Aralica's work becomes 'the centre of the Universe'. The description of the forced migration of Croats from Rama in Put bez sna is probably one of the best indications of how strongly a man and his house are united in Aralica's writing.

Vojska je zapalila Kopčiće, a ostala sela, Rumboke, Sčit, Ploču, Podbor, Sopot, Soklić, Proslap i Varvaru zapalili su njihovi stanovnici, svatko svoju kuću, jer je Vučković rekao :

- Pred nama će sutra biti mnogo planina, ali je planina veća od svih prag rodne kuće. Tko njega pređe, taj će sve strmine, polja i klance preletjeti kao lastavica. Da nas ta planina ne bi spriječila, raskopajmo je i predajmo plamenu.

Put bez sna, p 215

No doubt, in the portrayal of these painful and unwanted departures,

the author engages his own emotions as he tries to articulate the tragic experience of man's impotence to influence *kismet* which forces him to burn down his own home and to cut his own roots as he steps into the uncertainty of the future. Furthermore, when one of his characters does return to a solitary and uninhabited home, Aralica does not celebrate this as a happy moment but underlines the sadness of such experience as a universal pattern:

Samo onaj tko je došao na prag rodne kuće u kojoj nema živa stvora, dočarat će sebi kakvu vijavici u duši podiže dvorište obraslo travom, hvoje kupine koje su se pružile preko puteljka i pirika koja je nikla ispod praga. Samo će oni znati što je strah od susreta s dvorišnim vratima i plotom, koji kaplju od starosti i koje bismo mogli dodirom sami porušiti

Graditelj svratišta, p18

Aralica's characters have to leave their homes many times, always because they are forced to do so. In the historical novels this is mainly as a result of ethnic conflicts and historical events. On the other hand, in Aralica's contemporary novels, Okvir za mržnju (1987) and Majka Marija (1992), it is mostly due to the **conflict between an individual and the communist system**. The novel Okvir za mržnju represents Aralica's departure from a historical framework and his engagement in an illustration of the more recent Croatian past. It is the story about the destiny of Martin Kujundžić, a student of the Teacher's Training College in Knin (Croatia), a few years after the end of The Second World War. It is the story of a 'believer' with confidence in the communist system who meets the darker side of the

system when his family refuses to join the 'zadruga'¹⁶². Illustrating Martin's fate, his expulsion from the collective, the behaviour and actions of ambitious and aggressive zealots of the communist system, Aralica writes about an authoritative, **dogmatic regime and its power over an individual**. By exposing the 'tools' of force used by the communist system to pressure the Croatian peasants to join the 'zadruga' and the unfortunate destiny of those who refused such a proposition, Aralica exposes the brutality of the system but also the **immorality, hate and vindictiveness** of its faithful servants. He reveals their fanatical readiness and eagerness to retaliate against the 'collective enemy':

Drugarice i drugovi, među nama je neprijatelj - rekao je Maglica glasom od koga se ledila krv u žilama, jer je stvarao dojam da je ugrožensot opća i neposredna, da izvan opasnosti nije nitko i da je katastrofa tu, samo što nas nije pogodila. - Mi tu živimo s njim danima, godinama, ne prepoznajemo ga. Mi smo slijepci kad ne vidimo kakva nam opasnost prijeti. I da nije bilo sretnog slučaja, da se nije sam raskrinkao, mi bismo i dalje sjedili s njim i vjerovali mu. Nedopustivo sljepilo, drugarice i drugovi!

...Dok mi drugarice i drugovi, sahranjujemo posmrtnе остатке graničara Milutinovića, dok omladina obasipa cvijećem tenk koji kroz Niš prolazi s njegovim ljesom na kupoli, dok naši mladići ginu da bismo mi mogli uživati mir, Kujundžić piše stricu da mi zabijamo nož u leđa našoj omladini. Da, nož se zabija! Ali, tko ga zabija? Zabijaju ga oni što pucaju na Prokletijama i Staroj planini. I zabija nam ga Kujundžić ovakvim pismom. - Maglica diže pismo iznad glave i zamaše njime kao zastavicom. Opet čegrtaljke i povici da se pismo spali. - I onda, kad nama Kujundžić radi istu stvar što nam i oni rade, zašto ga ne bismo smatrali neprijateljem? Gorim od njih! Gorim, drugovi! S njima ćemo mi lako, a on među nama rovari.

Okvir za mržnju, p 259

¹⁶² cooperative

While Okvir za mržnju (1987) was written at a time when communism in the former Yugoslavia was hearing to its end, the novel Majka Marija (1991) was written during the period when the question of national identity was becoming one of the most important obstacles in the lives of the majority of Croatians. It was written at a time when in order to create a clear vision of the national culture and the national identity it became essential to distinguish clearly between its 'exclusive' and 'inclusive', elements and to divide national values into 'positive' and 'negative' categories. Bearing in mind Aralica's orientations and strong political involvement in the development of the new Croatia, it comes as no surprise that Majka Marija stands as a guide to specifically Croatian values. (This is probably also the reason why the book is included on the compulsory reading list in Croatian high schools today.) After some years spent abroad, the main character, a rich emigre Mate Vodopija, returns to his motherland Croatia at the end of the nineteen eighties. In his attempt to reclaim the house and all the land given away by his aunt, Mother Marija, he exposes the people who deceived her, in their greed for her land. In addition, while he once again describes the suffering of people who found themselves involved in a conflict with the communist system, through the portrayal of his characters, Aralica also clearly indicates who (and what!) exemplifies a direct **danger for the national culture and identity** of Croatia. For instance, the author evidently associates 'the threat' with those who lack respect for their own religion:

Proka uze ikonicu i ode majci, koja je u kuhinji doručkovala.

- Cuj, stara - rekao joj je - Ovo nećeš držati uza se dok si u mojoj kući. Ako ćeš to uza se držati, onda se vraćaj u Međare. A budući da u Međare ne možeš, ja ću s

ovim ovako. Lupio je ikonicom o kamen slivnika, polomio drvo i s njega oljuštilo boju. Ostatke je bacio u peć, gdje su učas izgorjeli.

Majka Marija, p 171

Portraying characters who, like Prokopije Matijević, an ex-communist and local Party leader in Majka Marija, demonstrate a lack of attachment to their own roots, Aralica shows them to be individuals ultimately deprived of an ability to respect 'otherness'. Further, exposing their personal greed and desire for success within the framework of an agnostic system, the author exposes them as the worst obstacles to Croatian national heritage and identity:

- Suti, znam od riječi do riječi šta ćeš mi reći. A ti ne znaš što će ja tebi reći. Zato šuti i slušaj... Prvo, kad si se iz grada preselio u Ivanovo, ikonicu si ponio, ali je nisi objesio na zid. Gdje ti je? Da nije opet u zahodu? Objesi je iznad kauča, da je stalno možeš gledati. I nemoj slučajno da je još koji put skineš. Gledaj tu ikonicu i vraćaj se vjeri svojih djedova. Mrzio si katoličku crkvu i, da bi je uništio, progonio si svoje pravoslavlje iz sebe..

Majka Marija, p 177

Danger for Croatia is also represented by hypocrites and people who are '*od onih ljudi koji prošlost ne osvjetljavaju da bi se ona sama vidjela, nego je osvjetljavaju da bi se spram tog osvjetljenja oni vidjeli.*' (Majka Marija, p 193). The threat comes from Croats who are, like Ante Opančar, prepared to abuse 'collective feelings' and to sell out their own national identity in order to make a profit for themselves:

Vi biste mi mogli organizirati jednu glamuroznu turneju po Americi, na kojoj bih držao predavanja o hrvatskom jeziku. To se danas traži i plača! Spomenuvši plaćanje počeo je trljati dlan o dlan. Iskonska gesta svih srebroljubaca!

-Išlo bi to - nastavio je tonom laskanja i nagovaranja. - Još kada bismo turneji dali zvučno ime, recimo "Hrvatske suze". Ako vam se to ne dopada, onda recimo "Hrvatski plač"Ako se udruži moja vještina cijeđenja suza i vaša poslovnost, ne jedan, još ču deset paviljona sagraditi.

Majka Marija, p 209

Drawing a parallel between Aralica's historical and contemporary novels it seems appropriate to conclude that all of them have in common the author's continuing concern with the question of **Croatian national identity**. Furthermore, their analysis establishes as Aralica's main aim a clear intention to educate his readers, to raise their national consciousness and foster their pride in the Croatian national heritage. There is no doubt that Ivan Aralica is what Velimir Visković calls '*pisac svijesti i savjesti svojega vremena i svojega naroda*' and that he raises his *demos*, **ethics of patriarchy and loyalty to the nation above the urban and cosmopolitan elements in literature**. His characters have a strong sense of being Croatian and they are ready to suffer and fight in the name of the nation. In addition, as the changes that took the place in Croatia at the end of 1980's underlined the importance of all these elements they also provided Aralica with the title 'Najveći živući hrvatski spisatelj'. Yet, one must bear in mind that Ivan Aralica is not only an independent intellectual but that he also embraced political power as the Vice President of the House of Counties in the new-born state of Croatia. Therefore, as every writer is in position to influence his/her *demos* through the written word, the literary work of writers who become active politicians doubles not only their influence, but their responsibilities too.

Aralica's male characters

'Perhaps because we have not spent enough time studying the warriors of the past, we do not have a psychology with which to comprehend our own warrior caste.'

Klaus Theweleit, Male fantasies¹⁶³

The leading characters in Aralica's stories are men. They are the centre of his concern: masters who make decisions, both historical and every day ones; leaders of nations, generals and soldiers, priests and believers, 'heads' and 'brains' of the family who consider their actions as honourable and patriotic, important and glorious. They are placed in the middle of a psychological storm, confronted with a decision to make, or the consequences of one made before. Furthermore, Aralica's male characters are strongly attached to their roots and the writer himself underlines the importance of this attachment:

I onda, kad se malo prošetaš po svijetu i sakupiš nešto iskustva, vidiš da se braća kod kuće ostavljaju, a ne nalaze u svijetu jer ih tamo niko ne gubi.....i kuća

¹⁶³ K.Theweleit, Male fantasies, Polity Press, Cambridge 1987, p xiii

mu je samo njegova kuća, krov samo onaj što mu ga je otac ili on sam složio, prostrani svijet se sveo na tvoje dvorište, a sva braća postala samo onaj koji ti je po krvi brat ili vas je braćom učinila njiva do njive; hrana, koje ima posvuda i kojom se hrane ptice nebeske, hrana je samo ono što klijia u tvom vrtu, što je u tvom hambaru i u tvojoj zdjeli. Sve se, kažem, suzilo na svoju prirodnu mjeru. Zato se i događa da se ljudi rđaju kao kozmopoliti a umiru kao nacionalisti.

Duše robova, p 212, emphasis mine

Within the context of different historical upheavals, political and social changes which took the place in Croatia since the 17th century up to the present day, Aralica presents a large number of men, from ordinary peasants to historical figures. However, most of his novels clearly indicate that these male characters may be examined mainly in relation to their loyalty to their nation, conflict with a ruling regime and their passionate love for women.

The male characters in Aralica's historical novels may be classified in three groups. The first group are historical figures whose portrayal is usually juxtaposed to a description of relevant historical details. Besides illustrating characters like Napoleon and Eugene of Savoy, Ivan Aralica examines the role of some of the Croatian political leaders at the time and the way their actions were reflected in its history. Perhaps the best examples are the portrayals of Andrija Dorotić and Jozo Glumčević whose presence is continuous in the novel Graditelj svratišta. These two male characters represent two different approaches to Napoleon's occupation of Dalmatia. The main character in Graditelj svratišta, Jakov Grabovac, wavers between Dorotić's call for armed resistance and Glumčević's passive response, marked by crafty collaboration. The portrayal of these two male characters gave

Aralica a perfect opportunity to explore the meaning of resistance to occupation and its goals when the national identity is in jeopardy,

The second group of male characters consists of those who are portrayed as defending the bastions of the Croatian national identity and Catholic faith, through times of historical turmoil. These men are individuals in the sense that they have a different appearance, different personalities and a different job to do but there is one strong similarity among all of them - they are bearers of collective feelings with a firm religious training, always expected to be in touch with enduring traditions. For these male characters possession of these 'collective' feelings ultimately means their defence of them. When the stability of 'the group' is in jeopardy in any way, they take action to defend it. To accomplish this task and to maintain 'the collective', they impose 'necessary force'. Sometimes even morally unacceptable, but nevertheless for them 'inevitable'.

Uvijek me je čudila lakoća s kojom pucaju u ljude oni koji su pošli da odbrane pravdu od nepravde - kaže Glumčević na kraju svoje bilješke.

Graditelj svratišta, p 30

Some of Aralica's male 'defenders', like the priest Pavao Vučković (Put bez sna) and friar Jakov Grabovac (Graditelj svratišta), are true **spiritual and ideological leaders of the Croatian nation**. Both of them are portrayed as intelligent and well-educated men, capable of taking on the role of leaders with a full understanding of their community. In their portrayal Aralica clearly emphasises the importance of the historical presence of the voice and influence of the Catholic church in Croatia. Padre Vučković (Put bez sna) is genuinely involved in his

people's everyday lives just as he is solemnly present in political negotiations with the Venetians. As the conflict between Venice and the Ottoman Empire escalates and life between neighbours of different religions becomes extremely unpleasant and frightening, it is Padre Vučković who guides the Croats in their migration from Rama towards the West. However, one particular reaction of Pavao Vučković in his communication with the Venetians is perhaps the best indication of how important the defence of the nation, national culture and traditional code is for Aralica's male characters. That becomes indisputable when even Pavao Vučković, a holy man, finds it hard to overcome the temptation to use violence in order to defend his national identity:

Posvuda su me, kao Zeno večeras, uvjeravali da sam sin kurve i razbojnika, da potječem od prljavog, razvratnog i krvočnog naroda, da se imam stidjeti čim se sjetim što sam i od koga sam, i da moram biti zahvalan kad me netko prima sebi, kad sa mnom govori i pruža mi koricu kruha. Moram biti poslušan i primati sa zahvalnošću sve ispravke u svojoj glavi i sve izmjene u srcu - oni koji vrše te popravke žele me učiniti boljim, civiliziranijim, naprednijim, oni su majstori, a ja sam dijete sjena, mraka i kaljuže.....Došlo mi je da viknem; dosta! Srećom, pa nisam. Jer kako sam podigao glavu i zinuo da zaustim, onako mi je ruka ostavila viljušku i skliznula pod stol. Osjetio sam je kako traži otvor na haljini kroz koji dolazi do noža. Odgurnuo sam svoju vlastitu ruku, kad sam video šta hoće, i zatvorio usta.

Put bez sna, p 263, emphasis mine

Similarly, Friar Jakov Grabovac, the narrator of the novel Graditelj svratišta and an engineer in a charge of the construction of an inn on Turija (for the use of Napoleon's troops), also demonstrates a tendency to act outside the principles of Christian morality and its

ethical values. In order to collect a ransom for his nephew, and enough money to complete work on the inn, he becomes involved in the ventures of outlaws lead by *harambaša* Matan Bilić. Commenting on the character of the friar Jakov Grabovac in *Graditelj svratišta*, one of Aralica's critics, Josip Sentija, says:

*Francuzima se nije mogao suprotstaviti drugačije nego jednakim načinom: oteto treba oteti, spram otimača mora se biti otimač, po svaku cijenu; na nasilje ne možeš odgovoriti drugačije nego nasiljem.*¹⁶⁴

Ironically enough, the radical actions of these holy men and Sentija's evident approval of the clear textual implications that the only response to violence is violence, ultimately challenge the fundamental principles of the Christian faith which are supposed to be the code of conduct of these male characters. In addition, when it comes to the defence of the nation and its identity, it seems that, in Aralica's novels, even the key ethical demands of a religion can be 'stretched' far beyond their boundaries. That is to say, the extreme actions of Aralica's holy men are a clear indication not only of their personal devotion to their nation but of their capacity for loyalty and readiness to defend its existence.

Another group of defenders of the Croatian nation illustrated in Aralica's novels, are those who like Šimun Grabovac in *Put bez sna*, Matija Grabovac and Mesud Zunić in *Duše robova* or Didak Bunčić in *Graditelj svratišta* represent the 'common people'. Even though they lived in a different historical times and their lives are a summary of distinct episodes, they have something in common too. Their elementary existence is constantly disturbed and threatened by

¹⁶⁴ J. Sentija, *Beletristička povijesna studija* in *Naša knjiga* 19-20, Zagreb, svibanj 1986, p 36

historical changes. All of them are, in one way or another, forced to fight the battles of their foreign masters as well as those for their individual survival in such a context. They are forced to leave their homes like Simun Grabovac in Put bez sna, participate in human slavery like Matija Grabovac in Duše robova, or to become outlaws like Didak Bunčić in Graditeljsvratista. In such a context, the *individuum* of these male characters is less important in Aralica's portrayal. It is the unfortunate destiny of an ordinary Croat, who had to serve and fight his foreign conquerors throughout the centuries, that becomes the main focus of the author's attention. The portrayal of these men clearly emphasises Aralica's compassionate understanding of the unfortunate and troubled lives of Croats throughout history as well as his resentment towards their long-lasting enslavement. His male character Mesud Zunić in Duše robova, says:

Sudeći po tome koliko su se ljudi uživjeli u život koi su im drugi namijenili, čovjek je životinja koju je samo pas pretekao u poslušnosti i pokoravanju. Saljivčine kažu, da je bio samo malo strpljiviji, a misle na psa, danas je čovjek mogao služiti psu. A cinici istu stvar prikazuju na svoj način, pa kažu da se pravo to dogodilo: čovjek služi psima.

Duše robova, p159

The third group of Aralica's male characters are also Croats, but those who like Frano Gundulić in Put bez sna or Grimani in Duše robova, are ready to betray and ignore the interests of their nation in order to achieve personal wealth. These male characters are **corrupted and willing servants of ruthless rulers**. They are prepared to sell themselves to foreign masters and to offer their assistance even if it is against the well being of their own people. Aralica highlights them as

a threat, embarrassment and disgrace to Croatian nationhood. Some of them, like Frano Gundulić in Put bez sna are members of the higher social class. Others, like Grimani (the illegitimate child of a Croat mother and unknown Italian soldier) in Duše robova, are local mercenaries paid to intimidate the 'common people'. Nevertheless their portrayal suggests some resemblance. Both groups consist of characters without dignity or individuality. The mercenary Grimani, 'to je onaj koji lako vara, a prevare mu niko ne otkriva.' He is the one who, 'potican nagradama', is prepared 'udružiti se i sa crnim đavolom samo ako je protiv Hrvata.' The narrator describes his relationship with Grimani's masters:

Sitno profiterstvo i prezir pream Hrvatima bilo je duhovno vezivo između Grimanija i njegovih gospodara. Cinilo mu se da s tom mržnjom postaje sudionik gospodareva prosvijećenog i posvećenog kruga. I on je kao njegov gospodar imao pred sobom ljude niže vrste kojima je mogao suprotstaviti svoje nedostizivo znanje i društveni položaj. Ništa nakaznije nego kad sluga oponaša gospodstveni duh svoga gospodara! Ta je ružnoća osnova istini da je sluga najgori gazda. Potkupljiv jer mu od dobiti ovisi društveni ugled, a neumoljiv jer pred nadređenima mora posvjedočiti upravljačku sposobnost, on ne preza ni od čega da bi se s jedne ljestvice sluganstva popeo na drugu, ne mareći što se istodobno spušta niz ljestve ljudskih vrijednosti.

Duše robova, p 41

Similarly, Frano Gundulić, in his ambition to satisfy his greed for prosperity and wealth, is not discouraged by numerous insults that he receives from his masters. Aralica's narrator suggests that one of Gundulić's biographers wrote:

da je to bio ozbiljan i strpljiv čovjek: zahvaljujući tim osobinama, više nego sposobnostima, postigao je visoki čin, jer se nije dao obeshrabriti uvredama

koje je primao više nego itko drugi; u krugu carskog dvora postao je voljen, jer je bio jedan od onih ljudi koji nemaju vlastito mišljenje pa prihvaćaju tuđe, da li slučajno ili s predumišljajem, uvijek onih od kojih na dvoru zavise.

Put bez sna, p 253

Even though Aralica's historical novels are crowded with male characters, all of them may be seen as belonging to one or other of these three groups. As shown so far, it appears that majority of these male characters, regardless of the group they belong to, are portrayed in the context of their relationship with their nation. In addition, the emphatic loyalty of Aralica's male characters to their national tradition comes as no surprise if one has in mind the words of Aleksandar Flaker in relation to Croatian literature:

*Ona se tako, od tridesetih godina dalje, ponaša kao da na temelju novoštokavskih govora, ponovo nastaje (premda su štokavski pisali Kačić i Reljković), i kao da ne mari za postizanje estetskih ciljeva, već samo služi razvijanju nacionalne svijesti. Njeni pjesnici su ujedno političari, a hrvatski su političari često i pjesnici, pa možemo reći da se voljom svojih pjesnika i književnika stvara moderna hrvatska nacija.*¹⁶⁵

This is not the place to explore the connection between Croatian literature and Croatian politics however much Aralica may be seen as the living proof of Flaker's words. What is intended is to underline the existence of a very important ambition of Aralica's work and to highlight his intention of using his male characters as the bearers of the author's own aspirations. In Aralica's novels with contemporary themes Okvir za mržnju and Majka Marija his main male characters are

¹⁶⁵ A. Flaker and K. Pranjić (ed), Hrvatska književnost prema evropskim književnostima, Liber, Zagreb 1970, p 7

protagonists in what Josip Pavičić, in the epilogue to Majka Marija describes as '*represivnom jugo-socijalistickom, u biti staljinističkom sustavu*'. In these two novels the author introduces his readers to male characters like Martin Kujundžić in Okvir za mržnju or Mate Vodopija in Majka Marija, who both clash with the rule of the communist system in their own way. Not prepared to play the roles expected of them, not giving up their ideas and hopes, they find themselves involved in conflict with the ruling system. It seems important at this point to emphasise some similarities between Martin Kujundžić, the main male character of the novel Okvir za mržnju, and the author himself. Aralica himself studied for his teaching degree in Knin, Martin Kujundžić attends a Teaching Training College in Knin; Aralica is a writer, Kujundžić begins his writing career in a school newspaper; and finally just like Aralica, Kujundžić is also expelled from a 'collective' as a 'traitor' and obstructionist of its socialist development. Both of these men came into conflict with the communist system as they abandoned its doctrine and had enough courage to challenge it. While, through his involvement in 'Maspok', Aralica conflicted with the official policy of the communist system, Martin's conflict begins as his family refuses to join the 'zadruga', ultimately rejecting an official policy of the ruling system. Also, his discord with the system develops on a more personal level, as Martin publicly demonstrates his disagreements with the teacher Vinko Maglica, a fanatical devotee of the communist system. Therefore, by challenging Maglica's opinions and decisions, Martin begins to challenge the system that his teacher represents.

Obratno od Korine koja se oslanjala na intuiciju, Maglica je video da je šala vješto sastavljena i da će s Martinom ubuduće imati više posla nego do sada. On

se tobože drži ispravne političke linije i ono što je uš proglašava uši, ali je njen skriveni cilj da prokaže onaj trenutak kad on, Maglica, nije bio na visini zadatka koji je sebi postavio: da pokaže oštar stav i budnost. s jedne strane, a s druge strane prema liječniku bude dobrohotan i didaktičan. Jer, da to Kujundžić nije htio reći, zar bi mu bilo potrebno sliku prekriti letećim sjemenjem cicibana i pravdati se nekakvim likovnim rješenjem za ratnu situaciju? Ne treba se zavaravati, Kujundžić ulazi duboko pod kožu, i kad može, svrdla, grize i izazivlje svrbež kao svrabov ušenac.

Okvir za mržnju, p 50

Both of them, Aralica and Martin Kujundžić, were exposed to a great number of humiliations and personal pain and, in the end, both of them were isolated and restricted in their activities. These similarities between the author and his character are noted in order to emphasise a depth of the author's understanding of his character. That is to say, they clearly suggest that Aralica included many details from his own biography in his portrayal of Martin Kujundžić. In addition, Martin does not represent only an individual who becomes disillusioned with the communist system in the context of the brutal implementation of its doctrines. He represents the author himself. Furthermore, in his portrayal Aralica does not articulate only his rage towards the system which dismissed him so brutally. He also articulates his anger towards individuals who are, like teacher Vinko Maglica in this novel, extreme devotees of communist ideas. Maglica is portrayed as representative of those **sightless devotees** who sincerely believe and blindly accept communist teaching and the force of the system which implements it. The behaviour of Maglica and his devoted students towards Kujundžić, the brutality and 'creativity' of their punishment, reveal the extent of their radicalism.

U tom prostoru tjesnu za trezven razum Maglica je ponovo ustao i, kao da se izvlači iz blata, ponižen i ukaljan, kao da je groza njega pritisla, a ne Martina, rekao, tražeći od gledališta suosjećanje u svojim mukama:

-Slažem se sa Korinom, ovo seviše ne može podnositi. To prelazi ono što čovjek može podnijeti. On je, taj Kujundžić, ovim nožem pokidao sve mostove između she i nas. Među nama je ponor.

...Zavitlali su čegrtaljkama, ali sada ne svi u isti mah. Raspodijelili su se u dvije grupe, jednu od ulaznih vrata lijevo a drugu desno, i dok bi jedni čegrtali, drugi bi seodmarali...Tako su, poslušavši zapovijed čegrtaljki, Mrdalj s jedne a Turić s druge strane uhvatli Martina za ruke ne dopuštajući mu da ustane kad je htio ustati...Ona su ga dvojica čvrsto vezala za stola. Na zatiljku je osjetio nešto hladno, ljugavo, kao zmijska koža. U Cvitkovićevoj ruci, Martinu iznad glave, koju je podigao da vide i oni iz stražnjih redova, bila je niklovana mašina za šišanje..

.-Evo šta ćeš ti biti - rekla je Marica i prolila mu šalicu razrijeđene tinte po licu s takvom slašću...Srćom u posljednji trenutak shvati što namjerava pa oči zatvro samo kapcima jer mu ovoga puta Mrdalj i Turić nisu dopustili da ih zaštiti dlanovima. Srćom jer bi mu razjarena Korina i u otvorene oči sasula lužnicu punu luga.

Okvir za mržnju, p 261-263

In the novel Majka Marija, Aralica's main male character Mate Vodopija is also portrayed as one of those who come into conflict with the communist system. As a young man, he leaves the country by sea, running away from its strict regime. Many years later, after the downfall of communism in the former Yugoslavia, he returns as a rich emigre from Canada. No doubt Mate exemplifies all of those Croats who, because of their disapproval of the ruling regime, had to leave their country and reestablish their lives somewhere else. The author explores the extent of the antagonism between communism and the individual by focusing his attention on yet another migration of Croats. Just as under the foreign rulers in Aralica's historical novels, once again Croats are forced to leave their homes. However,

with the fall of communism, political changes enabled postwar emigres to return to Croatia. It seems important to emphasise that Aralica himself has been in direct contact with communities of Croatian emigres living and working abroad. In 1992 and 1993, he visited them in USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa. After his return, he wrote a series of articles about his perceptions and feelings experienced during these visits. Additionally, there is good reason to believe that the portrayal of Mate Vodopija is also important outside his conflict with communism. In the conclusion of his commentary on Majka Marija, Aralica's critic Josip Pavičić says:

*Aralica svojim romanom uspijeva ohrabriti povratnike koji se otkupom svoje zemlje, njenim ponovnim okupljanjem, bave u izvanknjizevnoj stvarnosti. Aralica, kako rekosmo, pri povijeda da zabavi, ali i da podrži. On je pisac i misionar.*¹⁶⁶

Therefore, having in mind that the character of Mother Marija personifies Croatia the Motherland and Mate's declaration at the end of the novel: '*kupovat ću samo ono što još ne znam i što mi je oteto*', one is bound to conclude that this male character has been created in order to underline an importance of regaining the land that has been taken away from the Croats. In the light of these words, Mate Vodopija clearly becomes an avenger of exiled Croats. With the words '*Majko, vratio sam se da pokupujem sve što je bilo naše.*' (p 290) he attempts not only to expose frauds and hypocrites who have stolen pieces of his Motherland, but to seize them back in order to reconstruct the shattered entity. In Mate's efforts and persistence to retrieve 'Goleševe dvore', the house where he grew up with his aunt, Mother Marija, and implied illustrations of the Motherland in need, Aralica

¹⁶⁶ I. Aralica, MajkaMarija, Znanje, Zagreb 1993, prologue Josip Pavičić, p 300

establishes a role model for every Croatian emigre.

U zapuštenim selima, gdje su ostala samo starčad pa mrtvace nema tko nositi na groblje, jer nema mladih ramena da se na njih oslove nosila s lijesom, od nekog vremena je ušlo u modu da se prilozima što ih starci daju kupe lijepa, crna mrtvačka kolica, na kojima će jedno za drugim, u paradnom mimohodu, bez ičijeg truda, biti odvozkeni na vječno počivalište - piše mi vlasnik berlinske pržionice kave i nastavlja - Pa ako svoj dolar nisi spremam investirati ni u šta, a ti se, molim te, vrati u domaju, pa investiraj u ta kolica. Neka naše stare ne vuku po cesti od kuće do groblja, neka ih voze paradno kao što su odvoženi oni koji su njihova sela opustošili!

Majka Marija, p 37

Aralica's voyeurs

When not defending the patriarchal group 'he' belongs to and the codes 'he' believes in, and when 'he' is not conquering new land and subjugating new people, man in Aralica's novels becomes obsessed with women. This is something else that all his male characters have in common. They are observers with an undoubted desire for the female body. Aralica's male characters are voyeurs who scrutinise every woman, everywhere. Prostitutes in the darkness of streets, virgins in church, women at the market, in the forest:

Dok je on stanovaao na Unišču i pio vodu s Grabovika, vidao je Milica snahu kako svaki dan, vijalo ili lijevalo, dolazi u šumu po drva. Gledao bi je skriven iza nekog kamena..

Graditelj svratišta, p 228, emphasis mine

One of Aralica's novels, Asmodejev šal, may be seen as, simply, a

voyeuristic theatre. The main female character, Niža, spends most of her time showing her body to her husband Plavša, getting undressed in all sorts of places, even in prison:

Zato je haljinu raskopčala, a sve one krpice od bijelog platna, što ispod nje stoje, svukla i maknula u stranu. Tek tada je zajahala stolicu i Plavšinu pogledu izložila svu golotinju, od grla do ruba čarapa na bedru poviše koljena... Niža je raskopčala i smaknula svu odjeću da Plavša vidi na njoj sve od grla do koljena..

Asmodejev šal, p 86, 87

As a man in Aralica's work, Plavša is an unusual character because he does not really possess the qualities appreciated by the 'macho' community. He is a successful, hard-working man but, as far as women are concerned, the author describes his approach as rather soft and insecure. By the standards of 'masculinity' he could be categorised as a 'weak man'. He is overwhelmed by his erotic feelings, aroused by the scent of woman's body, but anxious enough to believe Niza's story about her 'virginity vow'. People laugh at him, '..smijali su se do iznemoglosti. Cuo ih je kako za njima govore: - Ode Plavša ! Sad će i Tahir!' (Asmodejev šal, p 99) But, even though Aralica describes him as an emasculated and ineffective man, he invites compassion and sympathy for Plavša. He understands Plavša's inability to cope with his wife's 'games' because, as far as the writer is concerned, they come from an evil seed. They are the product of a seductive woman who is capable of capturing a man in the unavoidable trap of so called 'sexual desire'.

Zato Plavša i nije moga zaključiti da je igra sa mirisima djevičanstva samo jedna od erotskih igara ove profinjene i domišljate žene, izdanak njene ludosti i genijalnosti, koji postaje pročišćen, razložan i uvjerljiv svaki put kad su u pitanju

njeni tjelesni prohtjevi. Sve što je ona Martinu napričala otkako je dosao na Kupres samo je odraz bogatstva mašte jedne žene, izuzetna ljubavna predigna koja se želi utemeljiti na mudrosti, na iznimnosti, na satanizmu.”

Asmodejev šal, p 116

Plavša is certainly not presented as a macho hero but he is exactly what Aralica needs - a voyeur. Being denied the satisfaction of his erotic hunger, his voyeurism becomes somehow acceptable, or at least that seems to be what Aralica wants his readers to believe. By creating such a naive character for whose 'suffering' and 'agony' the reader feels occasional sympathy, the writer also creates an ideal environment for a prelude to voyeurism. Deprived of intimacy, left with no choice, Plavša becomes used to the role Aralica has given to him. He even begins to enjoy it:

Navikavao se uživati u gledanju a da pri tom ne osjeća kako je prikraćen, jer je prikraćenost davala snagu gledaocu, pa što je prikraćenost veca, to je strast gledaočeva žešća.

Asmodejev šal, p 50

Unlike Plavša, the majority of the male characters in Aralica's novels exhibit brutal behaviour and lack of libido-control. They have no respect for 'her' age, virginity, religion, or the closeness of family ties. Balas, in Duše robova does not hesitate in his desire for his step-daughter:

Lomljava jablanovih grana i Tonku je slomila, kad je poslije pitanja - što je tebi Ane moja - doznala da joj je na Jurjevo očuh počeo lomiti grane i otada ih lomi svaki dan kad ostanu sami.

Duše robova, p 122

Similarly, Tahir beg in Graditelj svratišta, has no consideration for Diva's virginity and her spirited refusal to involve herself in sexual activity with him. In order to satisfy his sexual drive, he becomes ruthless:

Tahirbeg joj je otkopčao dugmad na haljini, počevši odozgo prema dolje...potegnuo je bijelu ramsku suknu, i sukna je pala oko stopala.... prstima prebirao po čipkama na njenim prsima...razderao je čipku na Divinu prsluku, obujmio joj sisu...

Graditelj svratišta, p 48, 49

And, once again, this is precisely what Aralica needs: it gives him a perfect setting and 'steamy' atmosphere for his voyeurism. The extent of the author's enjoyment becomes most visible in the story 'Nema grijeha u stopalima'. Playing on the edge in Asmodejev šal, here he goes one step further towards what could be described as pornography.

Zavukla je šaku u njedra da među dva prsta protrila bradavice koje su je, otkako je nagazila mirisavku, svrbjele toliko da joj je dolazilo vrisnutidok se nisu probile kroz vuneni jastučić, nabrekle bradavice, koje je podljev krvi oresao, gorjele peckavom vatrom od piljenja oštih ovčjih dlaka; a kad su se vrškom probile kroz vunu i dodirnule prsluk, Anuška je vrisnula od zadovoljstva...

'Nema grijeha u stopalima', p 235

The author's imagination goes even further: 'Anuška je noću, dok je kroz otvoren prozor mirisao jorgovan, usnula "žensku zabavu" sa crvenim rupcem oko vrata. Dolazio je odnekud sa visina' ('Nema grijeha u stopalima', p 236). If previously he managed to stay hidden behind the eyes of the male characters in his novels - the author comes out into the open. In addition, his voyeuristic appetite and taste become even more

explicit and evident in the following paragraph where he intends to justify his own sexual preference:

S one strane rijeke, dva su momka bez zavisti gledala kako Ceribaša uzima najskuplju stvar na tržnicama ovog svijeta, skupu samo zato što se rijetko gdje slobodno prodaje, a bez zavisti jer je ugodno gledati kako oganj pali slamu, iako ga ti nisi potpalio.

'Nema grijeha u stopalima', p 245, emphasis mine

Another similarity between Aralica's historical and modern novels is the continuing presence of a voyeuristic (pornographic!) atmosphere with Aralica's male characters as the main participants or storytellers. In Majka Marija, once again a woman becomes an object of the man's sexual imagination. In his visit to Rahela Mate Vodopija describes some 'relevant' and 'interesting' details from her past:

Ali, kada su Raheli sise ispale iz bluze i stale se trti o njegova leđa, kad su joj se usne našle na njegovima i jezici im se izmješali, kad je mala Rahela stala dahtati kao što su dahtale i dvije starije žene koje je dotad upoznao, akordi su se odreda prosuli kao biseri s niske, gitara se našla na podu, a ruke su pošle prema Raheli koja je podivljala ljubeći nastavnika glazbe.

Majka Marija, p 143

For Aralica's male characters a woman is '*bjeloputa, s jakim bokovima i ispupčenom stražnjicom, sisata, okrugla lica.....jestiva, upotrebljiva, vrijedna i podatna....*'. (Okvir za mržnju, p 53) Nevertheless, while they perceive and treat 'her' mostly as an object of their sexual desire, Aralica's male characters at the same time demonstrate a degree of a fear of women. The Catholic priest, Pavao Vučković, has never

experienced a relationship with a woman, but he still fears 'her':

Pitaju ga u šali: Oče bojiš li se žena? On u šali odgovara: Tko se zla ne boji? Pitaju ga: zašto zlo kad je to najveća radost? Odgovara: trebalo bi da bude, ali koliko čujem od drugih i koliko sam vidim, bila krotka ili goropadna, sa ženom je teško izaći na kraj.

Put bez sna, p 134

In his study Images of Woman in Literature David Holbrook explains this fear:

We all emerge from a woman's body and are created by her creative power; we are drawn out by her psyche. Therefore, in the symbolism of our perceptions of the world, she is both a great mystery and an ideal positive power. Woman is also the creature we are terribly afraid of because she once had the power of life and death over us. She was once the creative mirror in whose face and response we saw our being emerge.¹⁶⁷

A man's fear begins with the fact that once upon a time he was entirely dependent upon a woman and that she had physical power over his life, in a process beyond any kind of male control without which no human being would have any chance whatsoever. Or, as Holbrook says: '*The reality is even more extraordinary and terrifying than that; all were once, so to speak, "inside a woman's psyche"*'.¹⁶⁸ Holbrook also insists that:

Our capacity to become ourselves and to relate effectively to the world are drawn out in us largely through the powers of the mother. This is why woman is both so mysterious and terrible. And because she has the power of life and death over

¹⁶⁷ D. Holbrook, Images of Woman in Literature, NY University Press, NY and London, 1989, p 7

¹⁶⁸ ibid., p 60

*us and is only human, she is feared.*¹⁶⁹

Furthermore, Aralica's male characters are trained to fear women. It is not coincidental that Padre Vučković is one of those who emphasises his uneasiness towards 'female beings' as he represents the voice of the Catholic religion, so deeply ingrained in the souls of these men. In addition, as its obedient followers, who are haunted by an understanding of female sexuality as the mythical evil apple and the concept of an angry and punishing God, Aralica's male characters are conditioned to fear her.

In conclusion, it is important to emphasise that the lives of Aralica's male characters are limited and defined not only by 'Thou shalts and thou shalt nots'. Throughout the novels, Aralica's men are also constantly required to demonstrate loyalty to their nation and to defend its existence, by any means. Additionally, they are urged to retain its customs, cherish its heritage and nurture its identity. By portraying some of his male characters as 'role models' for the fulfilment of such anticipations, Aralica unquestionably outlines the route to be followed. Ironically enough, in their eternal struggle to satisfy the requirements imposed on them, these men emerge as strained creatures whose lives are timelessly and firmly controlled by fear, the fear of God's punishment and the fear of being identified as a disgrace to the nation.

¹⁶⁹ ibid. p 11

Aralica's female characters

Aralica's female characters do not share man's friendship, decisions or adventures. There is no equality, love or respect for them. They are clearly women from a strong patriarchal community who relate to the world only through their motherhood, domestic role or as the part of the sexual cult. Aralica divides them into two categories. The first are 'good women', those who live the system: virgins, housewives and mothers. The second category are 'bad women', those who, in the author's view are social and moral deviants. Writing about all of them, Aralica's attempt is not only to underline a viable morality for women to follow and the priorities they should value but also to alert men to what women can do to them.

From early childhood Aralica's women are trained, without questioning, to accept the moral values by which woman is connected with evil and is the one who carries the burden of sexual crime and guilt. Aralica's woman is Eve, the seducer, because of whom we are condemned to be mortal. 'She' is the destroyer of men's peace of mind, with the power to kindle the fires of male lust and awaken evil in him. A whole series of passages in his works highlight Aralica's compassion for helpless (powerless!?) man and his disturbance because of a

wicked woman. In all these cases he expresses his conviction that it is she - the temptress - who is to be blamed for capturing the man in the web of sexual desire.

A nije sigurno da bi oni svraćali u prljave uličice gdje se te žene zavlače u smrdljive kuće, da ih prije toga na glavnim ulicama građanke, prozirno i golišavo odjevene, ne raspale do bijesa. Žene s ulice što se koče i talasaju, što brzaju stražnjicama i šapuću usnama ispod paučinastih koprena, te kurve što nude sve a ne daju ništa, krive su što su oni opsjednuti ženama, što misle samo o nogama i dojkama.

Duše robova, p 185

Aralica is very much aware of the power that a woman gains by awakening male erotic desire and it intimidates him. He realises the importance of this triumph over a man: making him suffer 'in the grip of passion', she becomes an independent person while he becomes weak and defenceless, '*ne shvačajući otkud u tom tijelu toliko privlačnosti, a u njemu toliki izljev zadovoljstva, bilo da tijelo gleda bilo da ga dodiruje*'. Furthermore, Aralica indicates his belief that in such context he has to pay the price, as he '*mora ispunjavati svaku njenu želju, i tešku i ponižavajuću*'. Also, he becomes '*veći ovisnik nego pijanac o rakiji*' not even realising how at that point '*je ona.....postala nezavisna*' (Asmodejev šal, p 124).

The fear of an independent woman is very strong and very disturbing for Aralica. This is why he keeps warning his male characters that the call of the siren is perilous and harmful. He even threatens them indicating that '*čovjek, bio odgojen na ulici ili u tamnici, bio sa zrnom pameti u glavi ili s glavom punom piljevine, neka se samo približi ženi, i u pakao će s njom !*' ('Nema grijeha u stopalima', p 245) As the guidelines in

these implications Aralica very often calls for words of 'wisdom', words of old and wise men with a life experience behind them, mostly teachers of religion. Promoting the image of devilish woman in his work and underlining how dangerous she is, he seeks authority from well established patriarchal sources to confirm his argument. He offers words of advice and comfort from religious books (The Catholic church's Book for the Education of Young People) with an aspiration to demonstrate the existence of the obstacle since the story of Eve and the apple and man's lasting struggle:

- *Nauči nas dide šta je to što nas ženama privlači?*

- *U tom privlačenju djeluju dvije sile, jedna izlazi iz muškog, druga iz ženskog. Sa ženske strane sila vuče kćinom u kojem je više žica: to je dobra hrana i užarena krv, to je želja da bude mazena i voljena, to je kićenje i potreba da bude zapažena, to je nuđenje, nametanje i očijukanje, to je raskalašnost. A s muške strane uže kojim nas Sotona tegli u grijeh ispleteno je samo od dvije žice: od požude i prigode.*

- *Šta da radim dide, kad tako jake sile mnome upravljaju?*

- *Bježi od prigode kroz vatru i vodu, kroz krš i šumu, i spasit će se.*

Duše robova, p 251

Encouraging a man, with the voice of religion, to withhold his desire and to abstain from any sexual act purely for pleasure Aralica ties himself to the ideas of the traditional Catholic doctrine. He supports its claim that an intimate act with a woman exists only for the creation of new life, that any other initiative is a sin against God and that women in their lust provoking bodies, represent vice and evil. Re-examining the Church's sexual morality and addressing questions such as: Why is sexual pleasure automatically wrong?, Why should

believers have to choose between faith in God or a rewarding sex life? and: What would happen to the Catholic Church if the concept that sex is wicked was to be abolished? , Kate Saunders and Peter Stanford, in their book Catholics and Sex¹⁷⁰ say:

*It is impossible to discuss Catholic sexual pessimism without discussing the Church's hostility to women. Far from being separate issues, they are two sides of the same coin. The Church hates and fears women because women - according to traditional patristic and scholastic theology - are sex.*¹⁷¹

They accentuate the idea that even though the Catholic Church's attitude to woman has modified, '*the modern Church still categorises women as either nuns or whores, with married mothers in the middle, a blend of both*' and that in the Church's belief '*it is still far, far easier for a woman to commit a sexual sin than a man.*'¹⁷² Further on, Mary Anne Ferguson, in her book Images of Woman in Literature says:

*In the Biblical creation myth, Eve, the mother of us all, is the temptress who brought sin and death into the world. But the Virgin Mary, passively acted on by the Holy Ghost, pondering in her heart the experience of her Son, is the Queen of Heaven, of us all. Eve could be tolerated as a necessary evil; Mary was worshipped as a model for all woman kind.*¹⁷³

As much as Eve represents the seductive side of every woman, because of which 'we are condemned to be mortal', the Virgin Mary provides an idealised vision, a role model for woman. J.P. Kenny, (a Jesuit) describes her as a woman of dignity with unstinted generosity and wholehearted commitment to the Lord's will. For him she is a woman

¹⁷⁰ K.Saunders and P. Stanford, Catholics and Sex, Mandarin, London, 1992

¹⁷¹ ibid. p16

¹⁷² ibid. p19

¹⁷³ M.A. Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, Houghton Mifflin, Boston 1973, p 6

of exceptional faith and prayerfulness. In his book The Meaning of Mary for Modern Man¹⁷⁴ he says:

*Virginity as a Christian value, is of course, much more than abstention from sexual experience.... It is commitment to love as Christ loved - giving rather than getting, ministering joy to the other rather than snatching at pleasure for oneself, serving rather than being served.*¹⁷⁵

Talking about the Women's Liberation Movement he insists on 'espousal of doubtful causes; assortment of extravagances; defence of questionable practices; the copious coarseness and vulgarity of its propaganda'. Strongly arguing against the saying, doings and writings of Germaine Greer (especially her book The Female Eunuch) he goes one step further:

*The great pith and moment of her enterprise and message is that women must be treated, respected and loved as persons, not just exploited as chattels or cheapened as 'sex kittens'. If this is the kernel proclamation of WL and of Germaine Greer, then it is profoundly religious, biblical, Christian (for true religion, the Bible, Christianity are not only theological but also anthropological). Besides, it is precisely what BMW stands for: the dignity of womanhood in itself; the sanctity of womanhood dedicated to the Lord through the contemplative habit.*¹⁷⁶

This is not the place to argue whether or not the Virgin Mary was the first feminist, but it is worth stressing that Kenny himself does not deny the fact that the virginity of Mary (and all commitments that go with it) was and is imposed on women to follow if they want to be accepted as 'women of dignity, poise, serenity and exceptional faith' and if

¹⁷⁴ J.P.Kenny, The Meaning of Mary for Modern Man, Spectrum, Australia, 1980

¹⁷⁵ ibid, p 57

¹⁷⁶ ibid, p 58

they want to achieve '*the security, the strength and the joy needed if one is to go out*'. The Virgin Mary provides an faultless, ideal model for women. In addition, this is why for the self declared Catholic writer Ivan Aralica, a woman-virgin takes such an important place in his novels. To begin with, Aralica's narrator in the novel Asmodejev šal suggests:

Ako je razdjevičeno, ako se s njega skine aureola, tijelo nijedne žene ne može više zračiti snažnim i ničim nepomuckenim ženstvom, onakvim kakvo se javlja samo u glavama darovitih muškaraca.

Asmodejev šal, p 40

Throughout his novels the adored figure of the Virgin Mother and the solemn words of the Bible are imposed on Aralica's female characters as their only guiding light, even in life-threatening circumstances. After the bully Tahirbeg has 'reserved' her, ordered that no man should approach her or offer her marriage and when all attempts of her family to help her failed, Diva, in the novel Graditelj svratišta, still believes that St Ambrose will protect her as she searches for comfort in his words:

Znaš li šta sveti Ambroz kaže o djevcicama? - pitala me je.

- Ne znam.

- Nije se čuditi, kaže sveti, da vas anđeli čuvaju. Vi same ne samo da sličite anđelima nego se i branite nevinošću, anđeoskim oružjem.

Graditelj svratišta, p 44

In order to cast more light on the origins of Diva's faith in St Ambrose and his teachings, it seems important at this point to emphasise once again the words of J.P.Kenny. In his argument about discussion

whether the Virgin Mary is rightly hailed the Mother of God - J.P. Kenny refers to Ambrose:

*In the west, Ambrose (+397) instructed consecrated virgins: Primus discendi ardor nobilitas est magistri. Quid nobilius Dei matre? (The first eagerness to learn comes from the excellence of the teacher. What more excellent than the Mother of God?) (De virginibus 2.27; cf In Lucam 2.26)*¹⁷⁷

There is no doubt that in order to be accepted and recognised as 'good women' within their patriarchal communities, Aralica's female characters have to remain untouched and to protect their virginity, by all means. Mara Milivojević, in the novel Duše robova, goes to court in order to prove her virginity. She takes legal measures to demonstrate to her fellow villagers that her body is 'clean'. As she does not want to be condemned by the club of 'good women', Mara has no choice but to take these measures. She is humiliated, insulted in the middle of the church, in front of all the community - but her feelings and her emotional struggle are not important. What is important is the fact that, after she is put under the church's observation for three months, it is proved that she is not pregnant. Additionally, she can return happily to her community and continue to live her life as a proud member of the 'good women' club. Ironically enough, she does so only in order to be raped and then killed by the same man who accused her of being pregnant in the first place, the man who invented the whole story in order to cover the traces of his crimes against women.

As mentioned earlier, Diva Grabovac, in Graditelj svratišta, also finds herself in a struggle to protect her virginity. As the young Turk

¹⁷⁷ ibid, p 6

Tahirbeg, threatens to deflower her, she shouts at him:

- Sto god činiš Tahirbeže - rekla je Diva kad je podigla trepavice i pogledala ga zelenim očima - činiš na svoju diku i sramotu. Ali, što god ti učinio, u jedno budi siguran: ja ču sačuvati svoje poštenje i svoju nevinost.

Graditelj svratišta, p 34

Throughout her struggle with Tahirbeg, while he is humiliating her and evidently threatening to rape her, Aralica's narrator leads the reader to believe that at during these moments

Diva je živjela život kršćanke Anastazije koju je pomamni rimske tribun zatvorio u tamnicu. Cetvrti dan, kazuje predanje, dođe tribun k njoj da joj oduzme poštenje. Anastaziji pritekne u pomoć anđeo Božji i oduze napasniku vid... Taj anđeo dotaknuo je vršom krila i Divi oči, samo da joj javi: 'Tu sam da ga oslijepi!' (p 54)

As the narrator continues to describe Diva's struggle with her attacker, he also unquestionably establishes a model for the behaviour of the woman urged to defend her virginity.

- Jesi li dobro pogledao moje tijelo? - reče Diva. - Možeš me slobodno odriješiti i izvići kolac iz rukava, ja se neću braniti i neću bježati. Ono što je za tebe neosvojivo, moja duša, u ovom tijelu neće biti dok ti budeš s njim...

...Razderao je čipku na Divinu prsluku, obujmio joj sisu. Ona se nije ni pomakla. Htio ju je prostački obljubiti i obljubom poniziti, ali, kako se nije branila, njegov trud oko njenih bedara bio je poniženje za njega sama: kao da je amo došao da od zelenooke primi milostinju, malo užitka za duge dane ludovanja. Nekako bi i prešao preko toga, ali krv se nije palila, kako je obećavao Risto, pa ni tu milostinju nije mogao uzeti.

Duše robova, p 55

Nonetheless, as she makes him realise that he has no power over her, and that that she does not fear him, Diva has to die. She is punished not for refusing to participate in sexual activity with Tahirbeg but for taking control over a man. She is punished because

Ova ga je žena svojom pričom o razdvajaju nevine duše od tijela koje drugi prljaju, privela spoznaji da i nije moćan koliko mu se čini da jest, da ne može imati sve što želi, da nemože učiniti sve što mu padne na pamet. Bio je jadan sebi samu. Vidio je svoje lice u vedru vode, gadljivo, ali se na nj nije htio zgoditi

Duše robova, p 55

In this episode about the fate of the virgin Diva, Aralica clearly demonstrates a 'polar approach' to the portrayal of his female characters. While the Temptress Diva is punished for awakening a man's lust and overpowering him, the Virgin Diva is glorified as she dies happy defending her virginity:

-Hvala Bogu što mi je darovao milost da svojom krvlju obranim svoju nevinost. I vi ga hvalite kad me budete spuštali u zemlju - bile su njene posljednje riječi koje će se pamtit i izgovarati u bezbroj prilika.

Graditelj svratišta, p 56

The Virgin Diva becomes a legend and her grave becomes a place of great importance for the celebration of virginity. It becomes a place of pilgrimage for women who are, once again, divided into two categories:

U laganoj prepirci sa ženom ljutom na svoju kćer, doznali smo da ima dvije vrste djevojaka koje iz dva razloga dolaze sa svojim materama na Divin grob. Jedne su slične staričinoj kćeri koja je rano obudovjela, koja je do sada zavela pet

mladića i za koju ljudi, kad je vide kako bjesni, kažu: 'Vidi se da nije bila na Divinu grobu.' Takve dolaze, ako dođu, da Diva unese mir u njihovu dušu, da oslabi njihove putene nagone i pohlepu za gizdom i bogatstvom. One bi na ovom mjestu trebale shvatiti da je duševni mir stečen samoodrivanjem kudikamo bolji od mira koji očekujemo kao nagradu nakon zadovoljene strasti. U drugu grupu spadaju mlade, neljubljene i nezaljubljene djevojke, u kojim je sve pripremljeno i da se zaljube i da se udaju, koje je zrnje dovelo do talasanja od koga povremeno gube ono razuma što ga imaju, onako mlade i nezrele. One mole Divu da ih sačuva u napasti kao što je sebe čuvala, da priguši u njima ružne snove i puste želje, da im vrati pribranost kad se počnu gubiti i zanositi, da ih sačuva od krivog odabranika, da izabere boljega ako im bude prilika da biraju i da, ukratko, mirno prebrode nemirne vode djevojaštva.

Graditelj svratišta, p 65

But Diva's grave becomes important not only as a pilgrimage for virgins. As she died protecting her virginity in a struggle with a barbaric Turk, Diva's grave also becomes a symbol for the **defence of the Croatian nation** and an important bastion in the protection of its sexuality. The barbaric attack on Diva acquires a more universal meaning in the context of the conflict between Turks and Croats described in Aralica's novel. That is to say, the portrayal of Diva's fate has significance only as an illustrative example in the framework of the general suffering of Croats under Ottoman rule and their attack on the innocence of the Croatian nation. Jakov Grabovac, her nephew, says: '*Ljudi se na klanjaju grobu, nego onomu što on za njih znači.*' (p 65) In addition, her grave becomes a memorial which symbolises Croatian innocence and a place where they can pray for its protection.

-Je li ovo praznovjerje? - pitao me Balaš kad smo ostali sami.

-Zašto bi bilo? Ako ovaj narod želi sačuvati uvjerenje da je nevin, zašto ne bi imao pravo na prikladan oblik molitve kojim će okrijepiti svoje uvjerenje? Ako je svako slično vjerovanje sračunato na pomaganje čovjekova opstanka, bit će da

je i vjera u nevinost usmjerena istom cilju i da, kao i ostala vjerovanja, ima pravo na svoj opstanak.

- Znači, ti misliš da joj kosti ne bi trebalo prenijeti u rumbočko groblje i prekinuti s tim kultom?

-Prenio ti njene kosti nekamo ili ih ostavio gdje jesu, ovi će ljudi i dalje dolaziti ovamo po okrepu.

Graditelj svratišta, p 65

In the episode about Diva Grabovac, the author clearly indicates an ambition to equalise the virginity of a woman with the 'virginity of the nation'. Although 'she' is only a passive spectator in the political or armed defence of the national values, Aralica's female character is clearly given a role on the bastion of the 'sexual front'.

While virgins in Aralica's novels are associated with the innocence of Croatian nation, mothers are a metaphor for Croatia itself. That is to say, the figure of a mother, an asexual symbol and a creator of a race, is another female figure in Aralica's novels whose portrayal evidently has relevance only in relation to Croatian nationhood. Having in mind Aralica's writing in general, perhaps this comes as no surprise as the role of the mother and the maternal refuge, in one nation's imaginings, are viewed as crucial to the existence of the nation. Referring to Jonathan Goldberg's essay on colonial New England the editors of the book Nationalisms and Sexualities say:

In the rhetorical system Goldberg describes, women are predictably enshrined as The Mother, a 'trope of ideal femininity, a fantasmatic female that secures male-male arrangements and an all male history.' This idealisation of motherhood by the virile fraternity would seem to entail the exclusion of all

*nonreproductively-oriented sexualities from the discourse of nation*¹⁷⁸

To begin with, in the novel Put bez sna the author raises his voice in praise of the Faultless One who delivered every son to this world. In almost the same words that Maxim Gorky used in his Tales of Italy,¹⁷⁹ the character Pavao Vučković calls:

O zločo! O nevjero! Zar se mlijekom može opoganiti kuća? Zar ima nešto sladje, čistije i zdravije od zdrave matere mlijeka? O sljepočo!

Put bez sna, p 35

But Vučković's mother as a 'real woman' has no voice of her own. She is an unimportant and silent character. As a 'real woman', she is a 'sinner' who has broken religious and patriarchal rules by becoming pregnant outside marriage. Ultimately she is a woman without even limited choice. Just like a piece of property, she is given to her father's servant, a poor man for whom her large dowry is the perfect way out of his own impoverishment. It is the end of her womanhood and beginning of an endless motherhood. By the age of thirty three she has eight children and she dies giving the birth to her fifteenth child. The letter which Pavao Vučković receives from his family clearly demonstrates how his mother's death is less important than the death of cows and sheep:

...u tom tužnom pismu o stočnoj moriji nakon koje će i ljudi od gladi

178 A.Parker, M.Russo, D.Sommer, P.Yaeger (ed), Nationalisms and Sexualities, Routledge, NY London, 1992, p 6

179 M. Gorky, Tales of Italy, The story 'Mother', Foreign languages Publishing house, Moscow, p 82, 'Let us sing the praises of woman, the Mother, whose love knows no obstacles, whose breast has nurtured the whole world! All that is beautiful in man, is derived from the sun's rays and from his Mother's milk.'

umirati, oni mu sasvim uzgredno, na kraju i ukratko, jer je list bio ispisan, saopćavaju da mu je na Jurjevdan, kad momci i djevojke u zoru kuće kite zelenim granama, u petnaestom porodu umrla majka, dijete je živo, nju je Bog pozvao k sebi.

Put bez sna, p 137

A 'real mother' in Aralica's novels is a woman whose life is limited to the responsibilities of bringing up children, taking care of her husband and household. The portrayal of Jakov's mother in Asmodejev šal, is yet another example of how, by becoming a mother, a woman in Aralica's novels ultimately becomes just a 'family keeper', an asexual symbol who does not ignite any depths of passion in her husband any more:

Ali' kada ga je did Prvan ukorio da zapušta ženu, dajući mu na znanje da nije zadovoljan jednim unučetom, pokorio se i ostao kod kuće nekoliko mjeseci.... Teško je reći koliko je uživao u tom ladanju, u toj kasnoj ljubavi sa ženom koja je mogla biti dobra majka njemu i njegovoj djeci, ali ljubavnica nikakva, jer joj na licu od stalne brige, koja je tamo zasjedala kao oblak na planinskom timoru, ljubavi izazov nikada nije mogao naći mjesto.

Asmodejev šal, p 199 - 200

In addition, what remains important through out of Aralica's novels, is man's perception of a **mother figure** and his emotion attached to it. In the novel Put bez sna, the narrator evidently indicates that these feelings are more than just a son's love for his mother. In the light of her son's feelings, Vučković's mother is not just a woman out of whose body he emerged. She is the mother of the nation, mother of all Croatians, Mother Croatia:

Da neka žena iz Rame ima svoj portret, priča je samo po sebi. A kako je u središtu te priče Pavao Vučković, zaslužuje da se dvaput ispriča, jednom, da se čuje kako se portretirala ramska seljanka, a drugi put, da se razmisli zbog čega Vučković taj portret sobom nosa. Nešto takvo svakoj je policiji poslastica, jer ta slika mnogo više znači nego se u prvi mah čini. Bio bi propust ne potražiti njen skriveno značenje, a izbjegavanje da se o toj slici razmišlja neoprostiva nebudnost, i Državna bi inkvizicija morala postaviti pitanje službenikove revnosti. Tko bude znao čitati, u ovoj će slici vidjeti jedinu Vučkovićevu nastranost, njegovo političko uvjerenje, svojevrsno sljepilo koje se na sto načina dade korisno upotrijebiti, bilo da se ide čizmom na njega ili da se njegovo sljepilo uskladjuje sa državnim interesima.

Put bez sna, p 135, emphasis mine

In the quotation above there is a clear connection between the mother figure and Vučković's love for his **motherland**. Additionally, Vučković's mother is not the only mother in Aralica's novel whose portrayal has significance only within her symbolic representation of the Motherland Croatia. In his contemporary novel Majka Marija, all political deviations lose their meaning and importance as they enter in the arena of motherhood. The mother Marija loves her sons equally, even though one of them was a partisan-hero and the other two were 'bandit' and 'ustaša';

Dijeljeni su joj darovi, a na gozbama je sjedila uvrh stola. To bi čudnije bilo da je ta čašćena majka palog partizana, čim se noć zanoćila a slavlje utihnulo, dolazila na spomenik i kosturnicu, uzimala bukete cvijeća i nosila ih na grobove dva svoja druga sina, 'bandita' i ustaše, ako je to bio.

Majka Marija, p 272

Just like Vučković's mother, Mother Marija is important only as the mother of all her sons, of all Croats, regardless of their political

orientation. She personifies Mother Croatia whose land is stolen from her by those who forced so many Croatian sons into yet another migration.

As mentioned earlier, another group of female characters in Aralica's novels are those who are portrayed as **social and moral deviants**. In the case of these women the author appears to suggest that they who represent a **danger for the Croatian nation**. Within the portrayal of female characters who lose their virginity outside marriage Aralica clearly suggests that woman's virginity is not simply her own private affair but that it is rather a collective matter. Furthermore, illustrating 'collective trials' to which these women are ultimately exposed because of the 'sin' committed, the author reveals the extent of collective rage in its self-appointed right to judge these women. Imprisoned in the framework of the patriarchal myth about a 'failed woman', the chorus of virgins in Duše robova stands up against 'sinners':

Druge nedjelje, kad su se djevojke skupile, župnik je sa oltara prozvao Pavicu Bartulović i Maru Milivojević. Pavica je pognula glavu i otišla u kućicu iza crkve, gdje je čekala komisija, a Mara nije htjela da ide, bunila se, vikala, htjela pobjeći, ali su je djevojke, kivne na one koje im krnje ugled, uhvatile među se, zderale joj gornju odjeću i polunagu je dovele pred Balaša.

Duše robova, p 336, emphasis mine

In the novel Graditelj svratišta Aralica also describes the confrontation between 'good girls' and 'lost sheep'. Not just one voice, but many voices of virgins humiliate Cvita in front of all the village. Unable to prove the purity of her body she remains on the 'outside' of the patriarchal law. She 'lost' her virginity with the man she loved but

circumstances separated them. As an unmarried woman she gives birth to a child whom she then leaves in an orphanage. When she returns to the village, she 'dares' to replace the hat, a symbol of a girl's virginity, on her head. This sad attempt to rejoin the dance of virgins is viciously interrupted:

- Ti nećes igrati s nama - rekla je Ilinka. - Eno ti ženetina, pa s njima igraj!

Kosa Bašić, djevojka s druge Cvitine strane, proširila je Ilinkinu kaznu, kao da su se njih dvije o tome prethodno dogovorile.

- Djevojke - rekla je Kosa curama koje su mirovale, ali su se i dalje držale za pasicu. - Hoćemo li ovoj dopustiti da nosi kapu na glavi?

Ibezumljena od straha, zanijemila, Cvita je osjetila da joj je kapa ugrožena. Objema ju je rukama poklopila, kao da je brani od strašnog vjetra koji će naočigled naroda sa obje strane rijeke skinuti s nje znak djevičanstva što ga bespravno nosi.- Ako mi njoj dopustimo da nosi kapu, momci će reći da se ispod naše krije što i ispod njezine - rekla je Kosa, vrisonula i poskočila, jer je bila manja od Cvite, pa je ispod Cvitinih dlanova iščupala kapu i bacila je u prašinu.

Graditelj svratišta, p 249 - 250

The cruelty of 'good women' and their bitter fight against the 'bad one' is nothing new. Patriarchal rules and attitudes push them to this point as it is in their own interest to underline the distinction between 'bad' and 'good' women. Acting accordingly to the rules of the patriarchal society, these women stand up, not against men who also break their virginity vow by engaging in an intimate relationships before marriage, but against a woman. Tragically enough, predisposed by the hypocrisy of the moral values and standards of patriarchal communities these women become their own judges and prosecutors. They themselves become an effective voice of patriarchy. For patriarchy itself, it is very important that this distinction between two

categories of women is underlined by women themselves as it defines the 'crime' as a far greater one. Nevertheless, the fate of 'women judges and prosecutors', is as sad as is the fate of 'women defenders'. Trained without questioning to accept the 'legality' of patriarchal rules by which a woman is the one who carries all the weight of 'sexual crime', they become nothing but patriarchy's puppets. They become active and tragic participants in the control that the patriarchal community exerts over her, the 'vicious one' who kindles the fire of male lust and the one who awakens evil in man. Perhaps the best illustration of such an 'evil woman' is provided by Aralica in his novel Asmodejev šal. His main female character is clearly a rebel against the patriarchal community. She does not accept the imposed rules and refuses to live her life by them:

A Niža se nije dala pokoriti. Nije se pokajnički busala u prsa niti je kazala da je glupača veća od svih, ili bar toliko kao sve ostale. Nije lijepu kosu sa čela gurnula pod kapu i maramu da je nitko ne gleda i da ne bude pohotljive misli, već ju je izvlačila na čelo i vila uvojke. Nije prestala krojiti prsluke i haljetke od napadno šarenih i vezenih tkanina, nego je izvezla sve neobičnije šare, a kod Zidova pokućarca naručivala platna kakva u Donjem varošu, Kozluku i Podstinju nijedna cura nije nosila.

Između nje i samozvanih zastupnika čudoređa, koji su, prikrivajući to zahtjevom za poniznošću, tražili prosjek i osrednjost u svemu, vodio se podmukao rat: ona je prkosila, oni su je ogovarali.

Asmodejev šal, p 30

Niža is evidently a woman who opposes the established rules and shakes society. She is a woman who awakens man's physical desire and by doing so, she destroys his dominance. To put the point another way, Niža is a woman who dominates man. Refusing to be

part of the furniture in a doll's house in which the patriarchal community looks on women, Niža becomes a woman who liberates herself to a certain degree, by choosing manipulation of man's sexual desire as her way out of her patriarchal imprisonment. By making a mockery of her husband Plavsa, her virginity vows and the strongest pillar of patriarchy - marriage - she chooses to swim against the stream and to step outside the established boundaries. The men who desire Niža are different in their ages, social and marital status, but they all have something in common: sexual desire. Sexual desire because makes them crumble into pieces in front of Niža's feet:

*-Carobnica - rekao je Grabovac, ispod glasa, na kraju dubokog uzdaha.
Nepotrebno, tu nije bilo mjesta divljenju, još manje otkrivanju onoga što misli.*

Asmodejev šal, p 134

No doubt, by manipulating patriarchy Niža achieves her own kind of victory over it. As far as patriarchal rules are concerned she annihilates most of them: she breaks her virginity vow before the her marriage, she is sexually active outside of her marriage, she refuses to have children and she makes a complete fool of her husband. Niža overturns the traditional social order of male domination and challenges the 'normality' of life and marriage. For that she becomes a heroine indeed, but there is a price to be paid. Her moral autonomy and the life outside patriarchal boundaries are entirely unacceptable by patriarchal standards, therefore Niža must be punished. In the form of Grabovac's dream, the author indicates what punishment awaits Niža. Asmodej (Aeshma Deva - the demon of lust) is the one who is expecting Niža's arrival in inferno and planning her

punishment:

Nju mi dovedite - rekao je Asmodej - radi nje sam ovamo i došao. Radi moje nevine zavodnice....

...Vragu što je sjedio na ženinu ramenu zapovijedi da po nadvoju lukapod koji namjerava smjestiti nevinu zavodnicu ispiše ono što je već morao znati i izvikivati s njenog ramena dok ju je ovamo dovodio, da je bio malo snalažljiviji: OVO JE PORTRET DAME KOJA JE, CINECI DRUGIMA ZLO, CINILA ZLO SEBI SAMOJ.

- Penji se i ti na drugo rame - rekao je Asmodej prvom vražiću do sebe, koji je na zapovijed podvrisnuo i, kao da je buha, skočio i začas se našao na ženi.

- Evo momci, ovim ćete se poslužiti da je ukrotite - rekao je Asmodej i onoj dvojici na ženinim ramenima pružio vatrene češalj - Cešljajte je polagano, naizmjenice, danonoćno. Svaki put kad joj češalj prođe kroz kosu, neka joj isčupa po jednu dlaku. Ta je kosa mnoge mučila, i one koji su je mrsili na jastuku i one koji su za njom čeznuli kao za nedostiznom stvari. Sad je čupajte! Ali, pazite, nikad više ne počupajte starih dlaka nego što naraste novih. Neka joj kosa ostane bujna, neka vatrene češalj ima šta čupati. Jer, ne lezi vraže, moglo bi se desiti da očelavi, pa biste na neko vrijeme morali prestati sa češljanjem. A njeno češljanje na vijeke vjekova mora biti neprestano.

*...OVAJ ČEŠALJ, OVA VATRENA SPRAVA,
POKLON JE ASMODEJA NIŽI,
DA SE NJIME ULJEPŠAVA.*

Asmodejev šal, p 170

Niža is not the only one of Aralica's female characters to be punished for her 'sexual crimes'. In his story 'Nema grijeha u stopalima', for enkindling Ceribaša's lust and because of her seductiveness and sexual desire, Anuška suffers greatly. After becoming Ceribaša's wife, she is locked in the cellar by her mentally retarded husband, existing only in order to satisfy his enormous sexual appetite. Five years latter, after his death, she is free to go but only one sight of her

indicates her tragic fate:

Trebalo je vidjeti tu izbezumljemu ženu, smežuranih obraza, izgrebanu, s upalim očima, pogrbljenu i uplašenu, kad su je poslije Ceribašina pokopa pustili iz prizemlja kule i rekli da ide kamo hoće. Nije znala kamo da kreće sve dok je dizdareve sluge nisu zaokupile kamenjem, a ona potrčala ka Lugu. Po njenu tijelu i ponašanju vidjelo se koliko ju je stajalo što je onoliko hitro na jezercu postala nevjesta dizdareva sina, a koliko ga je pet godina činila krotkim, tihim i umiljatim. U njegovim svirepostima nestajalo je njen tijelo, a u sebičnim i sladostrastnim kricima njena duša i pamet. Ne treba se čuditi što nije znala kamo da pođe kad su je pustili na sunce. Onaj koji je ostao bez ičega, ostao je i bez cilja.

‘Nema grijaha u stopalima’, p 246

Undoubtedly, just like Niža, Anuška is punished for not withholding her sexual desire and for awakening a lust in a man. She becomes an example of moral deviant, she exemplifies a ‘sin’ that is to be avoided. Aralica’s narrator clearly indicates the lesson that should be learned from ‘crimes’ of a ‘fallen woman’:

Tako je kružila nekoliko godina a da nije znala reći zašto s te putanje kad god ne skrene. Možda je htjela poručiti onima koji će jednom nagaziti na mirisavku da čovjek ne uzlijeće ni kao leptir ni kao ptica, da čovjek hoda stopu u stopu putem koji su i prije njega gazili, da je zabluda mladosti mišljenje kako s njima prestaje hodanje a počinje let, da je od svih uzleta čovjeku dostupan samo mučan uspon i da svaki bijeg od koračanja po ustaljenom putu svršava kruženjem po putu.

Bilo je ljudi koji bi pri susretu s njom začepili prstima nosnice dok je ne mimođu, tvrdeći da to ne čine što bi je željeli uvrijeđiti, već zato što su osjetljivi pa im svaki grijeh, a blud napose, smrđi kao lešina u kolovozu. Sreća što takvi ljudi nisu preplavili svijet, sreća što ima mnogo viske onih koji ustrajno podnose zaudaranje grijeha. Oni znaju da smo Anuški dužni za pamćenje kako se naša strast ne da ničim podmiriti nego onim što oduzimamo od sreće u mirnom životu.

‘Nema grijaha u stopalima’, p 246

In most of his novels, Aralica's female characters are faceless - it is just their names that change. As shown so far they are mothers, virgins, 'sinners' and 'losers', placed mainly in one frame, their relationship with a man. Interestingly enough, in his contemporary novel, Majka Marija, Aralica introduces his readers to some new aspects of female sexuality. As much as this comes as a surprise, it also invites further examination of this text in order to understand its purpose. Majka Marija becomes a novelty and a surprise when the author introduces the characters of a professional prostitute and a lesbian. The portrayal of a prostitute is certainly not unique case in Croatian literature, nor is the growing existence of prostitution in Croatia¹⁸⁰ news. However, one must not forget that the subject of homosexuality is rarely mentioned or spoken of in this part of the world. Until 1977 same-sex relationships were illegal throughout the former Yugoslavia and in 1989 homosexuality was still:

*illegal in Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and the province of Kosovo. The punishment is 1 year of prison. Of course, it concerns male homosexuality only. The Penal Code doesn't mention lesbianism except in Croatia which labels lesbianism as a 'sick act between women.'*¹⁸¹

It is unlikely that Aralica developed the lesbian character out of his personal understanding of Freud's theory that a human being is bisexual by birth and that only through later physical and

¹⁸⁰ Katarina Dobrović, ARKZIN, broj 6, Godina III, Listopad 1993, Zagreb, Hrvatska.

Nakon policijske racije u petnaest zagrebačkih salona za masažu 27. i 28. rujna, sugovornika iz te branže gotovo da je bilo nemoguće naći. Akcija MUP-a provedena je u namjeri da se utvrди krije li se zaista iza paravana tzv. salona za masažu javna kuća. Privredene su 74 osobe, od kojih je 12 stranih državljanke, po sumnjom da su se bavile poslovima vezanim za prostituciju....

¹⁸¹ P. Snyder, The European Women's Almanac, Scarlet Press, London 1992, p. 391 (text of Suzana Tratnik, member of Lesbian Section in Slovenia, written in 1989)

psychological development does s/he choose the way in which s/he will satisfy her/his sexual need. It is even more unlikely that this lesbian character represents Aralica's contribution to the growing consciousness of the gay community in Croatia¹⁸², even though the author himself is obviously aware of the presence of this community and of its need to become more visible. So, why did Aralica underline the existence of prostitution and homosexuality in Croatian society and why has he chosen female characters as representatives of both of these socially 'deviant categories'? Prostitution and female-to-female eroticism symbolise the sexual corruption of the homeland, non-reproductive sexuality, and the sexual freedom of women. Both of these types of female sexuality stand against God and religion, against everything that is patriarchy - against Man:

*Women need to discover their own sexuality in order to escape the inauthentic definition they have grown up with. For many heterosexual feminists, personal discovery has involved exploring autoerotic and homoerotic sexuality in addition to - or as an extension of - heterosexuality. For others, freedom from patriarchal definition is possible only within lesbian relationships. In a sense, any claim to female sexual self-definition challenges male orthodoxy. Confronting male sexual power also means claiming the right to refuse to be defined indiscriminately as a sexual being.*¹⁸³

In addition, it seems that a growing awareness of the existence of prostitution and the increased visibility of homosexuals in Croatia, activated the need of a writer with a mission to alert his nation to the

¹⁸² Milivoj Djilas, ARKZIN, broj 6, Godina III, Listopad 1993. Zagreb, Hrvatska.

U sveopćem kaosu, beznađu i neorganiziranosti u kojima se nalazi domaća homoseksualna populacija kao pravo iznenadjenje stigla je vijest o osnivanju sekcije LIGMA. LIGMA je prva i trenutno jedina organizirana skupina ljudi u Hrvatskoj koja vlastitim zalaganjem i aktivnostima pokušava problem homoseksualnosti postaviti kao problem ljudskih prava.

¹⁸³ H. Haste, The Sexual Metaphor, Harvester Wheatsheaf, Great Britain 1993, p 176.

danger of these 'deviant categories'. Women in Aralica's novels are undoubtedly expected to project and protect national values and ideals. In addition, any 'female rebel' who challenges the limits of its conventions, needs to be identified as sinful and disgraceful.

In the context of Aralica's constant concern for the stability and well-being of the Croatian community, one is bound to conclude that his novels seek to identify appropriate guidelines for his female characters. They emerge in the form of the patriarchal values and the strict programme of the Catholic church. Any attempt of Aralica's female characters to step 'outside' these rules, certainly carries the consequence of expulsion from respectable society and later punishment in *inferno*. Furthermore, it appears important to stress that Aralica's repetitive concern regarding the prospect of 'female resistance' to the proposed guidelines, is mainly focused on her sexual autonomy and the existence of her 'sexual power'. A woman's sexual activity, in Aralica's novels, is clearly tolerated only within the legitimate context of heterosexual monogamy and even then only for the specific purpose of the reproduction of the nation. In any other context, it is emphasised as dangerous, disruptive for men and best avoided. However, the existence of 'female rebels' in Aralica's novels and their attempt to venture outside of the imposed boundaries, clearly indicates the presence of women's tendency to challenge the limits of patriarchal conventions. Nevertheless, by constantly denying them access to their own sexuality, condemning their personal inclinations, and ultimately negating a woman's individuality, Aralica's novels themselves offer an example of the patriarchal concept which calls for domination over a woman.

Selenić's themes

Nije život nešto sjajno, ko što mlad čovek misli, život ti je tu da ga proživiš, ništa više sa njim ne možeš da uradiš. aš kad oćeš da ga siluješ i praviš boljim na snagu i uz inat, on se džilitne i klepi te. udi miran i uči se da uživaš u onom što ti daje, malo je, ali jedino je što u njemu postoji.

(S.Selenić, Pismo-Glava)

The literary opus of Slobodan Selenić includes short stories, novels, plays and several theoretical studies about drama as a form of expression. He has also translated works of Agatha Christie, Brendan Behan and Edward Albee into the Serbian language. With all of his six novels, this author made a significant impact on the contemporary literature in the former Yugoslavia. Rejecting the established rules of socialist-realist literature and its taboo subjects, Selenić offers a modern way of looking at people's position and functions within a communist system. Focusing on periods of conflict between different political, moral and social categories, Selenić observes human destinies, different personal experiences and sufferings in the context of historical events. His 'first person' narrators come from various social and political backgrounds. They are intellectuals, educated abroad, disabled warriors, students or

peasants at the beginning of their urban life - all of them threatened by the chaos of historical events. Throwing them into a turmoil of self-analysis, Selenić recognises hidden ethical whirlpools inside the human mind, and emphasises human individuality. Remembering and questioning their lives from a time distance and revealing stories mostly in the form of inner monologue, Selenić's narrators enter the world of self-discovery. In a sense his novels have the characteristics of confessions where the narrator's monologue becomes a form of communication, an inner dialogue with him or herself and a first step towards self-liberation.

Unveiling the internal psychological worlds of his narrators, Selenić as an author strives to identify what defines a human being in moments of historical upheaval, and in what way history is able to manipulate individuals at that time. Each of Selenić's novels is a saga about a 'life', unprotected and vulnerable as it is, thrown into the wheel of history. It is a saga about 'a life' crisscrossed, and inevitably affected by the lives of other human beings. After reading all his novels it seems appropriate to conclude that Slobodan Selenić believes that human lives are inequitably exposed to changes which are out of their own control, and that, in a brutal way, history plays games with all spheres of human life. In particular, Selenić's novels underline the disastrous effects which social and political changes impose upon the nucleus of society - the family. Most of his novels occur within a family or in a setting that has all the traits and distinctions of such an organisation. Through the interference of wars and revolutions, history annihilates existing family values and ways of communication. It brings dilemmas and crisis, it inflicts new ethics and codes. Additionally, the family becomes a battlefield with

its own quarrels and disagreements, where nobody wins but, nor does only the family lose. One of Selenić's critics, Predrag Palavestra says:

... *Selenić pokazuje da svekolika srpska duhovna svest, u stvari srpski kulturni identitet, najvećim delom počiva na porodičnoj zajednici i porodičnoj tradiciji, i da je poraz porodice bio početak propadanja nacionalnog samopouzdanja.* ¹⁸⁴ (epmhasis. mine)

Selenić's first novel, Memoari Pere Bogalja, (Prosveta, Beograd) was published in 1968. He was thirty-five years old and, in his own words, had nothing to say before this book. The year when the novel was published is well known for the students' demonstrations in the former Yugoslavia and their demands for the reestablishment of civil and human rights, and the establishment of democracy. It would be hard to believe that this historical framework and the bitterness of the narrator's language, regarding his personal disappointment in the values of The System as well as in 'the absolute truth', are not juxtaposed. The young Communist, Pero Prokić, who lost his legs during The Second World War, began his post-war life as a fanatical follower of the Communist Party and proudly earned his nickname Korchagin.¹⁸⁵ Blinded by belief in the victorious communist revolution, he throws himself into political activities with no mercy or tolerance for anyone who does not follow. Analysing the characteristics of the communist system, Selenić explores an atmosphere of **fanatical devotion to 'the cause'**, destructiveness and the brutality of 'justice'.

¹⁸⁴ Predrag Palavestra, p 174

¹⁸⁵ Nikolai Alekseevich Ostrovsky Kak zakalialac stal

Trinaestogodišnjeg Bruna Kekića izbacio sam iz škole kao prikrivenog esesovca. Njegovu godinu dana stariju sestru, lepu devojku Jelenu, prijavljenu da se ljubakala, proterao sam, ne proveravajući optužbu, polugolu kroz omladinski špalir srama, posle čega se, na moje zadovoljstvo, Bruno ubio revolverom svog streljanog oca, izdajnika. Sećam se da sam sa gađenjem mislio na njegovu nesposobnost: pucao je tako nespretno da je metak samo okrznuo srce. Još čitavih deset dana visio je između života i smrti, na koncu koji nikako nije hteo da se prekine, i molio je, kad god bi došao svesti, da mu spasu život. Bednik.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 106

In the novels to follow Selenić continues to look into the reasons for this extreme loyalty to The System as well as into the outcome of such devotion. The novel Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, published in 1980, underlines the existence of different forms of this type of faithfulness in the portrayal of one of the main characters. In the post-war years, a young Albanian, Istref Veri, arrives in Belgrade from his native Bregovi, from a community where the philosophy of the blood-feud still existed. The fifteen year-old boy begins a new life living in the darkness of dirty basements, working very hard, going hungry more often than not:

Trenutke neponovljivog mira i skrušenosti doživljavao je Istref svake večeri kada bi se - izranjavljениh ruku od rada sa smrznutim predmetima na železničkoj stanici ili na drvari u dnu Francuske, usana oduzetih od hladnoće, bezosjećajnog nosa sa zaledenim slincima - vraćali u svoj vlastiti vilajet i zbijeni jedan uz drugog oko mangala sa raspaljenim žarom, čekali da provri voda za čaj od šipaka - najslađi i daleko najukusniji napitak koji se Istref seća da je ikada popio.

Prijatelji s Kosančićevog venca, p 30

But, despite the hard life Istref Veri is determined to 'survive' and succeed. His fanaticism differs from that of Pero Prokić in Memoari Pere Bogalja but it is also extreme. It has its shape in his endurance and determination to integrate himself into The System and to play a role in the new communist era.

Imao je utisak da bez prestanka, sa uspehom doduše, obmanjuje sve one koji ga pitaju, jer on im ne otkriva osnovno: da nije pronikao u smisao svih tačnih odgovora. Međutim, uporan, rešen da uspe, privikao na stradanje i muku, Istref se nije predavao, već je još prilježnije, zabijao znanje u glavu, tešeći se varljivom nadom da će odjednom, kao munja na noćnom nebu, neka nova činjenica osvetliti smislom sve prethodno naučene.

Prijatelji s Kosančićevog venca, p 196

In Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, as well as in the later novels, Selenić suggests that a person incapable of adjusting to the communist system is an individual in search of 'problems'. He emphasises that to embrace an outside world as an open-minded participant requires readiness to change personal actions and attitudes and can lead to potential disagreement and disapproval. On the other hand, the communist system expects not only uniform behaviour of the collective, but also their applause together with gestures of acceptance. Analysing **individual adjustment to The System** in his novels, Selenić focuses on the process by which an individual begins to believe in the concept of 'communist culture' and its ideas, fostering them as his or her personal goals. In addition, s/he becomes a 'person of ideology' who does not only adopt The System's code and its concept for the masses, but delivers its teaching and executes its verdicts. Furthermore, Selenić expresses not only a

concern about the existence of fanatical belief in The System, but also the presence of solidarity with acts committed by The System, regardless of whether they are justified or not. Entirely devoted, one of the main characters in 'Pismo-Glava', Radiša shouts:

Kažu,apsili smo i tukli. I jesmo, i tukli smo i premlaćivali, i otkrivali i nabeđivali, i gore smo stvari radili, možda grešili, možda preterivali, ali vido bi ja te prefinjene koju bi pesmu pevali da mi nismo četres osme na otok poslali sve koji su zemlju teli da prodaju za ideje i položaje. Nemam ja tu nikakve dileme, nek se oni malo u glavu svoju intelektualnu; lako je sada pričati, onda nije bilo vremena za rukavice...

Pismo-Glava, p 274

Exploring this evolution of 'a person of an ideology' and a loss of personal autonomy within communist culture, Slobodan Selenić observes the different stages of the process of unification between the individual and the system. Additionally, he exposes one of the first, and typical bolshevik methods: the (ab)use of so-called 'red literature'. So often Pero Prokić spends all night reading '*Rozentalov "Dijalektički materijalizam"*', *Lenjinove "Aprilske teze"*, "Manifest", kao poeziju, kao što se iznova pročitava draga pesma koja nogate uvek iznova dovodi do ekstaze svojim narkotičnim i magičnim načinima'. (Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 106) In Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, the young and illiterate Albanian Istref Veri, begins his education under the supervision of his middle-class and Cambridge educated landlord. But, as Istref integrates himself into the system, he abandons his teacher:

Pa šta to radite tamo, - ispitujem te, ali si ti u odgovorima svojima sasvim neodređen, kažeš: - Prorađujemo.
 - Šta, pobogu, prorađujete? - ljubopitljiv sam ja, ali ti znatiželju moju ne zadovoljavaš, od drugih moram doznati da *Istoriju SKPb* analizujete, i da im ti,

kada se od ova posla umorite, čitaš naglas, glavu po glavu iz romana Kako se kalio čelik..

Prijatelji s Kosančićevog venca, p 269

For Mihajlo Medaković, the only son of professor Stevan Medaković in Očevi i Oci, 'red literature' was also an introduction to communist culture. His father remembers:

U svakom slučaju tek kada sam po kući počeo viđati (mada ih je krio od nas) Istoriju SKPb, Antiduhring, na geštetneru umnoženi, Komunistički manifest i delove Kapitala, ja sam razvoj događaja shvatio ozbiljno, ali ni tada stoga što sam se bojao da on može biti presudan za duhovni Mihajlov razvoj”

Očevi i oci, p 242

In all of his novels, Selenić undoubtedly focuses on the significance of the role which an authoritarian, 'red education' played in creating a **collective belief in the 'universal truth'** and an environment where people trusted that by integrating themselves into the new system they were building a better future. The realisation of such collective commitment to the 'communist truth' secured a perfect setting for The System where post-war warriors would carry out verdicts of brutal communist justice, having no mercy or doubt about the necessity of its methods. Probably the most terrifying example of an evil act of 'collective justice', carried out in the name of 'the truth', is given in Selenić's novel Timor Mortis (Prosveta, Beograd) published in 1990. As the canon fire around Avala, Čukarica and Banjica (the suburbs of Belgrade), announces the victorious arrival of communism in October 1944, Dragan Radosavljević, an ex-student of medicine, begins to write a book about the life of Stojan

Blagojević - Illustrissimus, his one hundred and four year old 'comrade-in-arms' who dies that same day. Dragan and Stojan met at the beginning of the war, when Dragan lost both of his parents in the blitz of Belgrade, and since then they have started to experience 'war-chaos' together with other inhabitants of Dobrinjska 15. In his 'memoirs', Dragan describes their everyday life during these times as well as portraying individual fates and human destinies affected by the war. At the end of the novel, as communism triumphantly arrives on the streets of Belgrade, one of the residents from Dobrinjska 15, 'little Bilja', becomes the victim of collective revenge. Accused of the crime of prostitution with a Nazi soldier and thus cooperation with an enemy, she is punished in the most terrifying way:

- Je l' se kurvala? - ali pre nego što stigoh išta da izustim, Crnamajka ponovo okinu:

- S Njemcima se avtovima vozala! Za Njemce đubre, golotrbo igralo! Crnamjkine reči i prst-svrdlo, uperen u raskuštranu Biljanu, okončali su suđenje. Presudu više ništa nije moglo izmeniti. Partizanka je znala šta joj valja činiti. Na njen mig, dvojica naoružanih partizana zgrabiše Biljanu svaki za po jednu mišku..... Svi su mislili da kurvu treba linčovati tu, na licu mesta. Jedna žena je objašnjavala novim pridošlicama da su fuksu upravo uhvatili na gomili sa Nemcem, koga je skrivala u svom stanu. Nisu bili zadovoljni ni ponašanjem patrole

- Sprovode je u zatvor kao da je general. Močuga je za nju.

- I makaze! Treba je ošišati!

- U govna i perje uvaljati - vikao je starac, visok, pogrblijen, podseti me izgledom na Illustrissimusa - tako se to radi !...

... Gomila je progutala Biljanu. Udarali su je, čupali, smetali jedno drugome, gurali se, međusobno gazili...Gledao sam kako tuku Biljanu. Prilazili su joj, udarali, pa se onda povlačili, ustupajući mesto drugima, kao na nekoj obrednoj svečanosti. Bilo je nekog čudnog, ceremonijalnog u haosu linča.....mršavi mladić polomljenog nosa smislio je završni udarac. Pojavio se odnekud sa zašiljenom letvom, sklonio rukama, levo i desno, one koji su se u tom času nalazili ispred Biljane, i pozvao

dvojicu u pomoć:

- Raskrečite joj noge - naredio je.

Pošto se Biljana opirala, priskočila su još dvojica, i uhvatili je za ruke.

- Švapskog kurca si gladna, kruv ti očinji jebem - rekao je mršavi u vojničkom šinjelu i, što ga snaga nosi, zabio raskrečenoj Biljani zašiljenu letvu - činilo mi se - do grla beloga.”

Timor Mortis, p 298-303

In one of his novels Selenić describes the arrival of collective justice and the 'new men' as the arrival of new conquerors of the world who see themselves in the role of liberators. From their point of view: 'A better future for all' and 'justice for all', are good motives to justify and defend their own crimes. This is why Radiša Prokić (Pismo-Glava), who works as a policeman during the Cominform years, has no doubt about what the 'sposobni i svesni' have to do. As a product of the new system and a person of the ideology without personal autonomy, he cannot step outside the 'collective' context. With no regrets for sending his friend Maksimilijan into prison for supporting The Cominform Resolution in 1948, and always using the plural - 'we' - as he justifies and defends his decisions, on one occasion Radiša says:

Da nisam tad sve ispričo Jakovljeviću, nego očuto, Zlatinu prijavu ne bim, ni lud tretirao kao prijavu, neg kao prikrivanje informbiroovca koje kažnjavam o isto kao neprijateljsku aktivnost; jedini način da se zlo iskoreni. Ima sestra brata da prijavi, drug druga, inače kriv je ko i onaj koji letke deli i organizacije osniva. Zato ja Jakovljeviću sve potanko:...

Pismo-Glava, p 279

But, after Abel's death Cain is no longer the brother, but a murderer. This is to say that with his words 'Ima sestra brata da prijavi, drug

druga..', Radiša indicates that in the new system nothing is sacred any more. Likewise, young Mihajlo, in Očevi i oci, sightless in his devotion to the Communist party, also threatens his own mother because of her working relationship with an English diplomat:

Samo da zname - dođe li ta špjunčina još jednom u ovu kuću, ja ću stvar prijaviti gde treba!

Očevi i oci, p 300

What kind of world is one in which a son turns against a mother, and a brother against a brother? What kind of system impales girls on a pole in the name of justice? Can that be called 'justice'? Having these questions in mind it seems appropriate to believe that, indicating a loss of fundamental ethical values within the communist system, Selenić intends to clarify how and when this system began to grow apart from the basic principles of humanity and how and when it became nothing other than a repressive system that attracted all those who believed that it was worth sacrificing anything and anyone for the 'communist truth'.

Concerns about the collective belief in 'the universal truth' within the communist system are present in all of Selenić's writings. His critic, Pavle Zorić, says that '*Slobodan Selenić želi, upravo, da suprotstavljanjem raznih filozofskih, političkih i u prvom redu 'egzistencijalnih' istina razori sam pojam jedne nesumnjive istine.*'¹⁸⁶ Analysing Selenić's novels in the light of Zorić's words, it seems appropriate to conclude that all of them represent a challenge to the existence of such a truth. In Selenić's first novel Memoari Pere Bogalja, the narrator Pero

¹⁸⁶ Pavle Zorić, 'Ludi dan istorije' (o romanima Slobodana Selenića) u Gubitnici, Srpska Književna Zadruga, Beograd, 1989, p 27

Prokić observes 'truth' as a big, branchy tree and advocates the existence of a political and artistic truth:

Istina je stvar dogovora, jedna demokratska kategorija, pre svega. Pored demokratske istine, a paralelno sa njom postoji i umetnička istina koja je u stanju dokraja da dovede ono što demokratska istina nije već dokrajčila Umetnička istina, u idealnom slučaju, treba da bude sadašnja neistina o prošlosti i budućnosti, uglavnom različita od prošlih i budućih istina. Do ovih istina ja nisam došao čitajući knjige - od malih nogu upućen na čitanje, ovako bez nogu, kao što su oni s nogama osuđeni na iganje fudbala ili neke druge igre za nogate - već upoređujući demokratsku i umetničku istinu o nekim, meni i memoaristima poznatim događajima s jedne strane, a suprotstavljujući ovim istinama treću vrstu istine, narativnu istinu. Narativna istina je najjednostavnija: ona uvek uzima oblik priovedača i po tome se razlikuje od umetničke i demokratske istine. Ja vrlo dobro znam da se narativna istina sa svoje strane deli na dve grupe, da mogu da postoje i dve vrste narativne istine o istom događaju. Jedno je pamćenje, a drugo je priča, od vajkada i još pre toga. Ja pamtim događaj u fiđelovačkoj šumi, i imam svoju istinu o njemu, mada znam i za Tankosavinu priču koja je istinu modelirala prema Tankosavinom običaju.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 69

Challenging the existence of 'a universal truth', in most of his novels Selenić reviews events through the eyes of more than one participant, offering numerous individual and collective 'truths'. The plurality of his 'individual truths', so visible in all of Selenić's writings, proposes rejection of an 'apriori' truth. For example, in Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, Istref's retrospections about the post-war days in the house of Vladan Hadžislavković do not accommodate Vladan's remembrance of these times, just as Stevan's 'truth' about the Serbs and Serbia differs from the impressions of his English wife Elizabeth.

The first of Selenić's characters who questions 'a universal

truth' is Pero Prokić in Memoari Pere bogalja, intriguingly enough, as he was one of the fanatical followers who believed in 'only one - communist truth'. But, unexpectedly, his confidence in the communist system and excessive enthusiasm are crushed. Firstly, he falls in love with Draga, a girl of bourgeois origin who becomes his father's mistress. Secondly, the break with Cominform and Stalin in 1948 led to unfamiliar personal confusions and unpleasant conflicts within society. Furthermore, when Pero's father finds out that Draga is pregnant, powerful as he is, he urges his own son to marry her. In addition, Pero becomes stepfather to his own brother. As far as his father is concerned, an 'ugly' situation has been solved, but young Pero 'Korchagin' finds himself in a web of major disillusionments and disappointments. Then, for the first time, Pero opens his eyes. As he discovers his own ability to love 'something' other than the Party, and as the basic principles of human morality are vanishing - the ex-zealot begins to doubt :

U mesto da jednim metkom svog, uvek otkočenog korčaginovskog revolvera likvidiram tu vruću, ljigavu, bolno oblu, šuštavo belu emociju koja mi je zaustavila jezik, pomela misli, ranila zdravlje, kap crne krvi ubacila u izvorski čiste predstave o vlastitoj kentaurskoj prirodi - pustio sam da kap, teška i zgrušana, potone na dno moje svesti i da se odatle, namerno zaboravljena, polako ali neprestano rastapa bojeći revolucionarna uverenja sve tamnijim i tamnijim prelivom. Rajsко zadovoljstvo pripadanja i poslušnosti bilo je nepovratno izgubljeno.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 120

Selenić's anxiety over fanatical devotion to the 'communist culture' and collective belief in 'the universal truth' reaches its crescendo in the portrayal of secondary characters such as 'Steva bez

uveta' (Steva without an ear) in Memoari Pere Bogalja, 'Savina bez ruke' (Savina without a hand) in Očevi i oci, even Bogdan Bilogorac in Ubistvo sa predumišljajem (Prosveta, Beograd, 1993). Just as Professor Stevan Medaković in Očevi i oci experiences some strange mixture of distress and despair as he witnesses how blind and intolerant the heroes of the new era are, throughout his novels, Slobodan Selenić portrays the sadness of the sightlessness and naivete of their personal optimism. In their portrayal he illustrates the fate of all those who believed in the proletarian future to come, but sadly enough, just like 'Savina bez ruke' and 'Sveta bez uveta', continued to play only an insignificant role in the development of the new system and were the last people to realise that things had changed:

Neki Sveta, kome je pored desnog uveta nedostajalo i deset centimetara kosti u butini leve noge, Blagojev zemljak, veliki junak i seljačka dobričina, najduže je živeo u svojoj seljačko-komunističkoj iluziji o ravnopreavnosti, zbog čega sam ga verovatno, tako dobro i zapamtio. Desetak godina stariji od Miloja i većine kapetana, majora i po nekog pukovnika koji bi se u te prve dane posle oslobođenja našao u našem stanu, Sveta bez uveta, intiman sa svima njima, sedao bi za istu sofru, evocirao iste uspomene, pio istu rakiju, uzimao bi reč ravnopravno sa drugovima sa kojima je ratovao četiri godine. Za razliku od većine drugih kurira, bombaša, seljaka kod kojih su i komandanti nalazili utočište zimi, i sira i hleba u gladi, on nije osetio kada je epitet 'drug' ispred imena postao titula na koju nemaju svi jednakopravo.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 34

It has been said already that Slobodan Selenić peruses society and its individuals from a time distance, usually through the eyes of a first person narrator. He is an author who scrutinises his characters. As an observer with a developed critical consciousness about collective ambitions and individual hopes within the chaos of

historical events, Selenić expresses a concern for the moral integrity of *the human being* throughout his novels. It seems appropriate to believe that Selenić's apprehension is associated with the appearance of a Balkan "homo novus", to use an expression of the Serbian critic Petar Džadžić. After the liberation of the country from the fascists, 'new men' arrive on the streets of Belgrade with a desire to erase any surviving remnants of the old, bourgeois society in the name of a new, proletarian system. The narrator-character (agent) Pero Prokić, in Memoari Pere Bogalja, describes this aspiration:

Ne ljudske, nego ni konjske noge, koje su Aleksandru velikom bile dovoljno brze da osvoji na njima pola sveta, meni nisu bile dovoljno nogate da stignem, da prestignem, da obavim, da ukažem, da sprečim, da pobedim, da očistim, da raskrinkam. Za razliku od Aleksandra, koji je osvojio pola sveta, preda mnom je bio duplo duži put: morao je ceo svet da postane naš.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 10

To achieve this goal, it has become imperative to remove any disturbing 'leftovers' from the prewar system. **The liquidation of the past**, that came with the arrival of communism, is one of the 'pattern themes' that exists in all of Selenic's novels. Writing about the 'old world' which is vanishing due to the aggressiveness of the 'new one', Selenić in particular accentuates the tragic disappearance of middle-class society and its ethics. Confronting these two cultures, Selenić exposes the insurmountable gaps and differences that appear between them. His character, Professor Stevan Medaković, does not believe his eyes watching these 'Huns and Visigoths'

kako prirodno i bez uzrujavanja, na lepak proliven po polituri našeg

skupocenog "Steinway"-a stavljaju komad novina i nastavljuju svoj posao kao da se ništa nije dogodilo; ili kako se sa četke, kojom neki od njih ležerno maše, prelazeći celu dužinu sobe, cedi crvena boja po podu, stolicama, zidu; kako blatinjavim cokulama ulaze i ne primećujući metalnu šipku pred ulazna vrata stavljenu baš zato da bi se prljavština sa đonova otrla; kako odvaljuju komade zida letvama koje unose u trpezariju ili buše Dobrovićevu mrtvu prirodu ne uputivši potom pocepanoj slici ni jedan pogled...

Očevi i oci, p 269

With a belief that 'Ako smo juče bežali, a danas gonimo, zašto ne bismo sutra stigli, zaduvani, ali srečni do konačnog cilja?' (Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 107), post war warriors in Selenić's novels follow their collective task: to erase the existence of everything that Vladan Hadžislavković (Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca), Vojin and Maki Dimitrijević (Pismo-Glava), Stevan Medaković (Očevi i oci) or Stavra, Jelena and Jovan Arandjelović (Ubistvo s predumišljajem) represented. Not for committing a crime, but for being born and educated in a middle-class environment, these people are disgraced and humiliated by 'newcomers'. Predrag Palavestra believes that

Selenićev građanski svet uništavaju protivnici patrijarhalnog morala i patrijarhalne porodice, ljudi mase i svet bez Boga, čemerni i izmučeni, gladni i surovi čovek, koji se u borbi za veći zalogaj i manju muku ohrabrio i osilio i tako od paćenika pretvorio u osornog osvetnika.¹⁸⁷

For the 'new conquerors' in Selenić's novels, the liquidation of the past becomes a priority as their new, 'proletarian culture' arises out of a victorious communist revolution. Perhaps one of the most interesting examples of significance is contained in the use of the

¹⁸⁷ P. Palavestra, Kniževnost kritike ideologije, Srpska književna zadruga, Beograd, 1991, p 176.

word 'liquidation' itself. One of Selenić's characters, referring to *furniture*, says:

Posle stola došle su na red stolice. Bilo ih je desetak - ni dve iste. Pa je onda stari iscepani kauč iz ugla sobe primio katoličku veru i posto ampir polufotelja, zahvaljujući jutarnjim petlovima: zakukurikali su pre nego što su lepotanu uspeli da mu progutaju kosti..... Za nepunu godinu dana od kada je prva stvar nestala iz salona, u njemu više nije bilo nijednog starosedeoca. Neki, zaista retki uspeli su da pobegnu ispred pogroma, sakrili su se na tavan, gde, verovatno i dan-danas provode dosadne i prašnjave dane, čitajući 'Dnevnik Ane Frank', ukoliko rđa nije već do kraja pojela njihove jednostavne duše. U kući ih više nema. Ni jedne jedine. Po Milojevoj direktivi, Draga ih je sve likvidirala. I tada - sad sećam se - tada mi se u glavi, bezobrazno nasrtljiva, uvukla ta rečenica, sa rečju koja je razjurila moje misli do tada mirno sakupljene oko stvari našeg salona. Pomiclio sam, sjećajući se žrtava pogroma i preostalih tavanskih zatočenika: 'Po Milojevoj direktivi, Draga ih je sve likvidirala' - i tu je bio kraj mojih lagodnih i bezopasnih meditiranja.

Memoari Pere bogalja, p 89

Constant conflict between 'the old' and 'the new' is present in all of Selenić's novels, but in Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, **the antagonism of two incompatible elements** is the main theme. It is a story about an 'off-the-map' village Bregovi and the capital Belgrade, about the remains of an old bourgeois society and coming proletarian civilisation. It is a novel about disharmony between the belief of individuals and the ambition of the masses at a time when 'the old' is to be replaced by 'the new'. Creating characters such as Istref Veri and Vladan Hadžislavković, Selenić portrays two opposite and unequal mental cultures with different class origins. Istref does not understand his landlord, just as his landlord Vladan Hadžislavković can never precisely understand him:

Još dugo je Vladan, po običaju govorio, ali malo je to pomoglo Istrefu da nađe pravi, razumljiv odgovor na mnoštvo pitanja koja su se nagomilavala u njegovoj napregnutoj svesti. U svakom slučaju, nerazumljivost, tamna misterioznost Vladanovog postupanja posle svetonikolske avanture, postala je za dečaka još veća. Pitanja se množe, a odgovori postaju sve nepouzdaniji.

Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p163

Istref symbolises the differences that came with the new system and the new people who inhabited Hadžislavković's home. On the other hand, Vladan is an unwanted 'leftover' of middle-class society who cannot comprehend the changes and cannot take any part in them. These two characters are confronted with each other as two worlds which would have never met without the war. In Selenić's latest novel, Ubistvo s predumišljajem, remembering these post-war days, professor Kojević expresses his belief:

Pitam se, eto, možete li vi, uz vašu, uz moju najbolju volju, pojmiti kako su čudno, kako su nespojivo različiti izgledali vaša baka Jelena prispeala u Tanjug pravo iz francuskog zabavišta i Krsman Jakšić iz zaseoka Korlače u nekoj planinskoj zabiti Kopaonika, tog decembra 1944. godine na drugom spratu Tanjugove zgrade u Frankopanovoj ulici? Krsman iz Korlača, major Ozne, bog i batina, možešta pomisli, a pomiclja svašta! I lepa Jelena, senjačka princeza odrasla na zrnu graška, odjednom nesnađena u urušenom svetu, obožavani očuh čami na Banjici i čeka da bude izveden pred 'Sud za suđenje zločina i prestupa protiv srpske nacionalne časti', molim vas lepo, brat se tek vratio posle dva meseca prinudnog rada u Borskom rudniku i samo ga potpuna iscrpljenost organizma privremeno štiti od slanja na sremsku klanicu!

Tek ih je jedno ludo vreme, gospođice Jelena, a ne i najbujnija mašta moglo spojiti!

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 19-20

Furthermore, accentuating the most obvious gaps between the 'old'

and the 'new' culture professor Kojević also identifies deviations visible in the domain of language. He recalls that "zavičajni dijalekt - na najvećoj ceni su bili crnogorski i lički - aktivistička neispavanost, rečnik Istorije SKP boljševika..." were part of the required manners. In Pismo-Glava the difference in language between Maki and Radiša causes their first fight:

..kad on, dosadno mu valjda više da piše, kaže meni da 'frljnem' olovku preko stola, a sve to govori onako kako ja govorim, kad grešim u akcentu. Zlata se smeje a on, kao ozbiljan, ponavlja još jednom i gleda me, ne smeje se, ali mu đavo iz očiju viri. Pi, kakva smo deca bili! Prevrši ti meni, pa kažem, ne mičem se da ga poslušam, već samo mirno kažem, a u meni sve kuva.

- Kaži tačno - pa mu kažem i puno ime - kaži tačno kako se kaže pa će ti dati olovku.

On u smeh, a ja bup po njušci. Poteče krv.

Pismo-Glava, p 77

Even if not the only one, Ubistvo s predumišljajem is most likely to be the best illustration of the linguistic disharmony between the two cultures as it demonstrates on the one hand the use of proletarian-bolshevik language and on the other, the language of an urban society. In this work, as in others before it, Selenić also underlines the existence of typical 'behaviour within The System's language', for example the language of the police:

..islednik je, ne dižući glave sa spisa, bez pozdrava, rekao samo: Sedi.

...Kojović, dr Branko Kojović?" pita me.

Da.

Ti si lekar?

Ne, doktor sam filosofije.

Nikakav utisak to ne ostavlja na njega. U partizanskom žargonu, znate, govorili su svima ti, a kada su hteli nekog naročito da uvrede, rekli bi mu da je

filozof.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 12

Furthermore, the language of the young girl Jelena Panić, narrator of the book and one of its main characters, is extremely rude and irritating. It is full of strong expressions and obscenities, so different from that of her grandmother, Jelena Arandjelović, a well-educated, well-spoken middle-class Belgrade girl.

Posle smo još nekoliko puta, u magacinu, na kartonima od ambalaže. Sve mi je radio. Nisam samo tela da mu pušim karu. Ima četvoro dece, jebote. Dvoje stariji od mene. Ali more, mesečina. Znam, jebiga, da će posle da ukćem od besa, ali odem na karton od ambalaže. Govno.

Međutim, zvao me Gruja kad se vratio u Beograd, ali nisam tela, pizda mu materina matora.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 91

On one occasion¹⁸⁸, Slobodan Selenić himself suggested that the language of Jelena Panić directly represents the language of young people in the former Yugoslavia and the way they spoke in his day. Even though one could question such a generalization, it has to be said that Ubistvo s predumišljajem, successfully exposes the destitution of language as an outcome of the influence of the proletarian-bolshevik vocabulary. In this novel Selenić clearly articulates an opinion about the changes which developed within the language of an urban society with the arrival of communism and its jargon:

Blasfemija! Kraj jezika, propast reči, kažem vam, mladi moji prijatelji,

¹⁸⁸ Public meeting with S. Selenić at University of London (SSEES) in London organised by Association of Serbian Writers Abroad, 13 September 1993.

jezik-ubica, eto šta je partizanski žargon bio.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 110

Furthermore, if we are to believe that language is a system of signs which exemplifies collective ideas, then we should also believe that language is not just an accidental system, but one that bears the norms, ethics and characteristics of that same collective. Selenić's character, Professor Kojović, acknowledges this theory, suggesting:

Treba znate, izučavati njihov jezik. Veoma zahvalan studij, verujte. Jezik ih otkriva. Sur, čoškast, jezik u kome se dobro nahode samo reči divljačke kaštige.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 109, emphasis mine

Indeed, the analysis of the language of a rising proletarian culture in Selenić's novels brings to light not only a specific mode of expression, but suggests that the impoverished language of Radiša (Pismo-Glava), Mirčetić (Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca), Miloje (Memoari Pere Bogalja) or Krsman (Ubistvo s predumišljajem) is yet another helpful tool in the offensive against middle-class society. For instance, professor Kojović remembers the way Major Krsman speaks:

Govori očajno! Kako je sve do početka rata živeo u planinskom zaseoku Korlače i, od petnaeste godine, u Raškoj i Kraljevu, gde je izučio pekarski zanat, govori s jakim akcentom tog kraja. Nije se toga stideo. Rekao bih čak da je namerno zanosio na tu stranu, ili zato što je htio istaći svoje plemenito plebejsko poreklo, ili, kako to umeju da čine obesne osobe, zato da bi pokazao oholost prema Beogradu i građanima:

'Ne zavijam ja po raški zato što n'umem po vaški, već zato što je po naški lepše', govorio je cereći se...

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 29, emphasis mine

There is no doubt that Major Krsman uses his language in a provocative manner and, accordingly, demonstrates once again the existence of an antagonism between the new and the old culture. However, focusing on popular language as a literary artifact, in his book Political Stylistics, Pascale Gaitet expresses his belief that the use of slang manifests a rejection of bourgeois culture in order to deny a state of linguistic submission. Gaitet suggests that '*the lower-class person attempts to compensate for a lack of real power by trying to create its illusion with strong verbal aggression and vulgarities that might shock the bourgeois...*'¹⁸⁹ In the light of Gaitet's words Krsman's argot intends not only to underline a distance between 'him' and 'them', 'his language' and 'their language', but also to demonstrate his determination to overcome 'their' linguistic domination. On the other hand, the impolite and disrespectful language of Jelena Panić and her urban youth generation, symbolises the 'new language', the harvest of proletarian-Bolshevik linguistic infiltration. Further, focusing on the specifics of language within the new system and its disharmony with the language of the middle-class and urban society, Selenić also emphasises the use of language as a tool of political resistance. The language of Vladan Hadžislavković in Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca represents a direct confrontation with the 'zavičajni dijalekt' of Puniša Mirečetić, just as the language of grandmother Jelena Arandjelović in Ubistvo s predumišljajem:

Ne i kozle Jelena! Vaša staramajka. Namerno, napadno drugačija, ona je svoja odudaranja u rečniku, oblačenju, humoru, nekim naročitim darom, uspevala predstaviti kao ličnu karakternu nastranost, a ne kao političko čifte. U tome je bila tajna. Recimo, Jelena nije smela, razume se, da ljude oslovljava sa 'gospodine' i

¹⁸⁹ P. Gaitet, Political stylistics, London, Routledge, 1992, p 15

‘gospodđo’, a nije, očito, mogla preko usana da prevali obavezno ‘druže’ i ‘drugarice’.

I šta je jogunica izmislila?

Muškarcima je govorila ‘tavariš’, a ženama ‘drugarkata’! Sumnjaju oni da je to neka kerefeka, ali ne smeju ništa da kažu protiv ruskog i bratstveno-jedinstvenog makedonskog.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 26

Similarly, professor Stevan Medaković in Očevi i oci emphasises the importance of language as a vital segment of human identity and individuality. He states:

Nije Elizabeta u pravu kad moj način govora ceni kao ačenje, ‘cvetni stil’, prenemaganje. Ja ne bih mogao drugačije. Ja ne bih bio ono što sam bio, dok sam bio, da sam pristao na svekolika njihova jezička podrazumevanja, ubrzanja i gramatičke prostakluge. Jezik nije čoveku dat samo zato da bi mogao tražiti papuče ili još malo čaja. Jezikom čovek, svaki ponaosob, pokazuje dušu, besmrtnu sa svoje jedinstvenosti sadržane u načinu, više no u predmetu, govora.

Očevi i oci, p 314, emphasis mine

Professor Medaković (Očevi i oci) is also one of Selenić's characters who advocates that a language is not only a list of terms corresponding to a list of things. This is to say, he acknowledges that fundamentally words are products of linguistic conventions, but that the same words have different connotations for Elizabeth and himself:

...- ja sam pomalo zabavljen, pomalo zabrinut, savršeno zapažao ono što drugi, moguće je, i nisu - da kraljevska pompa neobično uzburkava Elizabetinu englesku krv. Potvrđivalo se ono što sam vidovito naslutio još u Bristolu prilikom mog prvog pronicaanja budućeg odnosa između lepe strankinje i mene: kao što reč ‘more’ ne znači isto ostrvljanki Elizabeti i meni, okorelom kontinentalcu, kao što sunce ne sija isto odraslome sred atlanske vlage i stasalome pod mediteranskim

južnim nebom, tako ni kraljevska porodica ne može izazivati ista osećanja u sunarodnici Tjudora i Plantadženeta, sa jedne, i Balkancu čiji je kralj Milan tako reči juče prodao državnu železnicu da bi mogao da se kocka, sa druge strane.

Očevi i oci, p 134

Possibly one of Selenić's most powerful illustrations of the diverse meanings the same words hold for two different people, brought up in two different cultures, literally speaking two different languages, is the moment when Professor Medaković shouts at his son, in English '*I wish you were dead!*' Twenty years later Stevan Medaković asks himself:

Elizabetin krik je bio kratak, jer ga je prekinula hitrim stavljanjem ruke na usta što nikako ne smem zaboraviti kod razabiranja šta je značio i zašto je bio tako prodoran. Da li sam bio, izgledao, odista tako izbezumljen pa je Elizabeta poverovala kako nisam upotrebio puku frazu, tek izrazio ljutnju na retorički prejak način, već izrekao pretnju koju sam odista nameran ostvariti? Jezik, engleski jezik je deo Elizabetinog tela, odstojanje značenja od izraza gotovo ne postoji, ona ga, makar, ne zapaža, pa je moguće da je u njenom uvu pretnja imala doslovnost koja se smanjivala na putu od stranog do mog maternjeg srpskog. Da li sam zato, čudno prosvetljen u času bezumlja, izabrao da stranim engleskim u prostor naše kuhinje pustim strašne reči sinoubistva?

Očevi i oci, p 317

Analysing the use of the English language in Selenić's novels (primarily in Očevi i oci), one of his critics, David Norris, argues that for Selenić a language is more than just a communication system. For instance, Norris believes that for Stevan Medaković in Očevi i oci, the English language is not only a foreign language but moreover it symbolises unfamiliar values. He stresses that

upotreba engleskog jezika pruža tekstualni kontrast onome što je Stevan naučio iz svojih iskustava dok je rastao u Srbiji. Ona deluje kao sredstvo za uspostavljanje distance i izoluje ga u izvesnoj meri od svega što je strano njegovom senzibilitetu, smeštajući takvo ponašanje u prostor koji mu je tuđ. Uključivanje engleskih reči radi označavanja tuđeg prostora u Stevanovom sistemu vrednosti dobija još ekstremnije konotacije i počinje da se odnosi, moglo bi se reči, na sve 'što nije srpsko'.¹⁹⁰

There is no doubt that the English language in Očevi i oci represents unfamiliar values and an unfamiliar territory for Stevan Medaković, clearly incompatible with his Serbian heritage. Nevertheless, there is an intention here to suggest that this 'linguistic escape' is not only 'sredstvo za uspostavljanje distance...od svega što je strano' but it also becomes the first space from where Stevan would be able to observe freely, and more objectively things which are familiar to him, everything that is 'srpsko'. There is a need here to emphasise that differences between his homeland and the 'otherness' become more readable to Stevan with every new word of the English language. As he was gaining new linguistic knowledge, he was also opening windows which until that point were firmly sealed by his Serbian upbringing. One should not forget that Stevan Medaković arrives in England with clear guidelines how to be, before anything else, '*Srbin i muškarac*'. However, even though the author's concern about demands of the fatherland Serbia, its evident apprehension to foster any 'otherness' and an atrophy of 'individuality' in favour of 'collectivity', is perhaps more visible here than in the rest of his novels, this is not the only time that Selenic engages himself in analysis of these themes. In the course of his work, the author constantly examines and challenges

¹⁹⁰ D. Norris, 'Diskurs u savremenom srpskom romenu - Upotreba engleskog jezika u Seleničevom romanu *Očevi i oci*' in *Srpski književni glasnik*, mart 1993, vol. II, No. 3, p 159

understandings of definitions such as 'good' and 'bad' member of the collective. His novels reveal the agony of both groups, those who are 'good' and those who are 'bad', continually underlining the extreme danger of the (ab)use of these terms and unavoidable tragedies that occur as its result. Not only Stevan Medaković (Očevi i oci), Šampion (Pismo-Glava), Jovan Arandželović and Jelena Panić (Ubistvo s predumišljajem), or others who dare and aspire to question and challenge collective understanding of imposed definitions, are individuals who suffer. The accepted collective implication of the definition of 'good' member would result in the death of Bogdan Bilogorac in Ubistvo s predumišljajem and Radiša's betrayal of his best friend in Pismo-Glava. Further on, in Očevi i oci, due to collective demands to show his loyalty, young Mihajlo is, firstly, *svoje englestvo u jednom času, na izlasku iz dečaštva, prezreo, kao ljagu, štogod sramno, kao šugu na srpskoj koži osetio i od tada panično i bandoglavu nastao Srbinom biti u svemu, bilo to glupo i nedostojno, ili pametno i valujano* (p 296) and than completely abandoned his own mother.

There is no doubt that the world of Selenić's novels is the world of the 'collective', clearly one familiar to the author and created with a keen eye for the consideration of both sides of its 'medal'. It is the world of historical, political and social upheavals, powerfully illustrated by personal insights, individual reasons, motives and emotions that would influence an individual response. As within the framework of the plurality of 'individual truths' he unfolds the painful memories and distressing destinies of his characters, Selenić constantly challenges the meaninglessness of the fanatical desire to protect the 'collective truth'. Further on, he clearly demonstrates how

the power and dominance of a collective ambition could achieve a potential victory, but conceived on the scaffold of individualism.

Selenić's male characters

**'Svis oni, moja Jelo, svis oni, i
Stavro, i Krsman, i Jelena i Jovan,
svi iz ove naše knjige, Jelo, svis oni
nesretnici u zlu vremenu'**

(Ubistvo s predumišljajem)

As an author who makes a noticeable distinction between 'an individual' and the 'collective', observing them respectively, Slobodan Selenić has written novels without visible heroic characters. There is no person of distinguished bravery, no individual is idealised or glorified. There is no man of superhuman power, no demigods. Being primarily concerned with individual destinies, personal sufferings and tragedies in times of historical bewilderment, Selenić has written novels about ordinary 'men'.

In the essay 'Diskurs u savremenom srpskom romanu', Selenić's critic David Norris, said that Selenić's *'fiktivni svetovi prate istorijske događaje, ali ta istorija je predstavljena kroz junake koji nisu kolektivni tipovi'*.¹⁹¹ Selenić's male characters are loyal members of 'The Collective' and 'The System', leaders and carriers of the collective doctrine, believers

¹⁹¹ D.Norris, Srpski književni glsnik, Beograd, mart 1993, vol II, No 3, p 157

ready to protect without questioning, devotees who have knowingly integrated themselves into 'The Collective', and unfortunate victims of the collective mentality. But nonetheless, they are also disillusioned communists, ex-believers, intellectuals and 'middle-class leftovers', outcasts rejected by the new society after they condemn society itself,

Illustrating characters, such as Miloje Prokić (Memoari Pere Bogalja), Radiša Prokić (Pismo-Glava), Puniša Mirčetić (Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca) or Krsman Jakšić (Ubistvo s predumišljajem), Slobodan Selenić portrays devotees of the communist revolution who unquestioningly accept and deliver its doctrine. He illustrates characters shaped and defined by revolution to such an extent that they represent nothing other than revolution itself. Pero Prokić, Miloje's son in Memoari Pere Bogalja, describes his father:

Miloje mi se činio kao revolucija itself. Milojeva bliskost ili udaljenost od ciljeva i ideala Revolucije ne može se meriti isto kao što se ne može meriti Revolucijina bliskost ili udaljenost od Miloja. Oni su jedno. To i sada mislim. Tako je to i sada. Krene li Miloje malo napred, natrag, levo ili desno, znači da je krenula i Revolucija u tom pravcu. Znao sam to. Miloja sam retko vidao, ali sam tačno znao šta se događa sa njim zato što sam znao šta se dešava sa našom Revolucijom, čiji sam deo hteo da postanem. Znao sam da nisam postigao onaj stepen identifikacije kojim Miloje može da se pohvali...

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 152

All these characters of Selenić's matured during the Second World War or evolved as a product of the dogmatic Bolshevik post-war education. During that time, instead of an individual consciousness, they developed an ideological, collective one. In addition, performing only in the light of the 'collective identity', they never differentiated

their *individuum*. As this experience stays close to them, throughout Selenić's novels these male characters demonstrate an inadequacy to communicate with anything or anybody that represents a concept opposite to the 'collective' ideas. These narrow-minded individuals became warriors, partisan commanders and, after the victory of the communist revolution, devoted leaders of the new system, uncivilised and sacrilegious in their communication with an urban society and extremely hostile towards anything or anybody that represents a 'leftovers' from middle class society. They also reflect some of the attributes of the new, proletarian culture.

S druge strane, Vladanu je od svega najviše smetalo što i Mirčetić i ostali stanovnici opštežitija u dvorištu drže razne životinje, nogu vezanih za oluk na zidu, ili za stari jablan, i još više - što ih tu kolju i deru, ostavljajući po više dana svežu utrobu ispod njegovog prozora da smrdi i da je razvlače psi i mačke.

Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p 193

Further, they also demonstrate some of the new 'techniques of communication':

Kada bi Miloje, posle obilnog ručka, bio naročito raspoložen za šalu, i kad bi htio sa nama da uspostavi prisne odnose i da stvori drugarsku atmosferu punu uzajamnog razumevanja, on bi, odižući dupe sa stolice, gromoglasno prduo.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 173

All these male characters undoubtedly exemplify irritating behaviour and anomalies that had come with the new system, but also the death of certain moral values within the communist system. Holding

influential positions in the new system they foster a new life style with Afghan kilims and American bourbon. With the portrayal of these male characters, Selenić targets those who abused their positions while advocating equality and prosperity for the working class. Professor Kojović in Ubistvo s predumišljajem remembers when it all began:

Koščata, jaka životinja, gospodice Jelena, bije snaga i nekakva, rekao bih mačeća gipkost ispod njegove majorske uniforme od pravog engleskog štofa. Da li je već bio engleski? Decembra četrdeset četvrte? Jeste. Mislim da jeste. još nisu postojali "Diplomatski magazini", ali su već za sebe nabrali ono o čemu su drugi mogli samo sanjati.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 28

Furthermore, these characters are representatives of a rural society. In the words of Petar Džadžić their, '*zajedničko jezgro je vitalnost, arivizam, žed za životom, spremnost da se opstane.*'¹⁹² Their determination 'to survive' and 'to be', results in the evolution of selfishness. Probably, the best example of this process is Radiša Prokić (Pismo-Glava), who in order not to involve himself in any conflict with The System does nothing to save his father and sends his friend Maksimilijan into prison. Another example is the character of Miloje Prokić whose selfish and repulsive behaviour shatters his son's beliefs and hopes and drives his own wife to suicide.

'Močni i jaki pobednici' of the proletarian class enter into an urban society on tanks and white horses. One war was finished and the foreign enemies defeated. But, there was one more battle to win

¹⁹² P. Džadžić, Homo balcanicus, homo heroicus, BIGZ, Beograd, 1987, p 323

and it was against middle-class towns people who were clearly feeling very negative about the emerging proletarian regime and its culture. The true extent of the antagonism between 'urbans' and 'non-urbans' is probably most visible in the bitter words of Jovan Arandelović (Ubistvo s predumišljajem). As he realises that his half-sister Jelena is having an affair with Krsman Jakšić (a Partisan commandant from the village of Korlaće) in order to save their step-father Stavra Arandelović from prison, he reveals his outrage:

-Jejo, da ispričam Krsmanu kako je izgledao tvoj posljednji susret s Radojem iz Ripnja?

Jelena čuti, motri svoje šake mirno sklopljene u krilu. Ja napuštam Jelenu i obraćam se Krsmanu:

- Donosio nam je sir, živinu, jaja, taj Radoje, u razmenu za odela, porcelan, nakit. Pun je, gospodine potpukovniče, taj Radoje bio sebe, sveti se Radoje gradu, naslađuje se Radoje deranjem kože sa gospodskih leđa: 'Ne 'ukći, gospoja', govori Radoje Jeleni, isceren, gospodine potpukovniče, taj Radoje, nadmoćan -'već davaj, došlo naši' pet minuta. Prošlo vaše, Arandelovići! nema više leba bez motiku. seljaci smo sad mi bog i batina. Ajd, ako ne ukćeš, daću ti jedno jaje više.' A, znate, druže Krsmane, znate li šta mu je, ova ovde, u krilo gledeća 'gospoja' rekla? reci, Jejo, ne budi jogunica, ponovi za gospodina potukovnika šta si rekla Radoju iz Ripnja.

- Loše Jovane, izvan pravila - kaže Jelena, svejednako zagledana u svoje krilo.

- Izvan pravila, Jejo? Ti govorиш o pravilima? U ovom času? Nije ovo "Igra književnih podvala", Jejo, znaš ti to! Ova igra nema pravila. Ukinuta su. Svet nastavlja da se okreće u raznim pravcima, različitim brzinama.

Evo šta je, gospodine Krsmane, gospoja Jelena rekla Radoju iz Ripnja. Rekla je: "Marš u svoj brlog stoko repata." I ja sam, gospodine potpukovniče, tačno znao šta je Jelena rekla i pre nego što su se vrata s treskom zatvorila ispred nosa tog Radoja. Sve sam pronicao. Klervoajantan. Svaku Jeleninu reč. Kao da sam ih sve ja izgovorio. Sve razumeo, isto kao što sada ne razumem Jelenu - ništa! Ni jednu jedinu reč.

As mentioned earlier, with the arrival of communism many of Selenić's male characters demonstrate an extreme determination in their ambition to integrate themselves into the new system. They became obedient instruments of an ideology. Their desire to be part of a victorious communist revolution leads them to the capitulation of their individuality and development of a collective consciousness. It seems appropriate to note here that all Selenić's 'rural characters' are far more successful in the process of individual adjustment and integration into the new system. Or, at least, none of them dies by doing so. The young Albanian Istref Veri in Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca willingly 'blended' himself into the proletarian mass, only to become just one of many faceless devotees who live in state apartment buildings. Similarly, Radiša Prokić in Pismo-Glava becomes an integrated *homo novus* who, dazzled by the blaze of historical victory and encouraged by the mentality of the new society, proudly accepts the role of a brutal executor of communist justice. Both these characters come from small, provincial communities and both of them are 'adopted' by middle-class families, where they begin the process of integration into urban society. However, it seems appropriate to believe that with the portrayal of these male characters, Selenić indicates not only the tragic consequences of their fanatical determination to adjust, but also his own scepticism towards the success of such a process:

Pada Istrefu na pamet da je još onda, tek dečak, tek zapravo skinut sa kamena na kome je proveo ceo dotadašnji život, upravo otrgnut od ljudi Bregova za koje je do juče mislio da su jedini na svetu, jedva prispeo u taj basnoslovni Beograd - da je već tog popodneva na Kotež neimaru, možda samo na minut-dva pre nego što je Vladan upao u idiličnu sliku plemenske zdrženosti i unutrašnje

napetosti koja je kvarila Istrefov mir, pada Istrefu napamet da i sada, kao i onda, smatra da su čovečanstvo i kosmos podeljeni na dva kraljevstva koja se međusobno ne poznaju, i u kojima se, naizmenično, ne zna za postojanje onog drugog. Jedno je od kamena. Drugo je od kuća. U jednom su ljudi retki i posebni, razbacani po pašnjacima - jedan čovek u belom platnu, među dvadeset ovaca, čutljiv i usamljen pod velikim nebom koje se može sa okolnih vrhova, ako se popne na prste dohvatiti. U drugom su ljudi mravi, siti i gavanski bogati u svojim suvim prostranim stanovima što su kao sače po velikim košnicama tako raspoređeni da u njih ni kurjak, ni mečava, ni lukavstvom, ni silom prodreti ne mogu.

Prijatelji s Kosančićevog venca, p 21, emphasis mine

During the painful process of integration firstly into urban society, and, secondly, after the war, into the new communist system, Istref and Radiša are confronted with personal dilemmas and confusion. Nevertheless, they are determined to succeed. Responding to the expectations of the new society and its frame of mind, with a strong desire to adjust, these characters, no doubt, represent all those who willingly submit their individuality to any system. Portraying Istref and Radiša, Selenić also highlights the existence of excessive expectations imposed upon these men by their strong, patriarchal societies. These two characters never challenged the notion that a man must be a part of the collective. Radiša Prokić strongly feels his 'collective' roots:

Nismo mi Srbi, ideolozi, mi smo patrioti, deset smo ratova za sto godina dobili da bi bili slobodni, a sad odjednom treba slobodu za ideološki kikiriki da damo. Jebite se, drugovi, velim. Narod Kraljevića Marka i Miloša Obilića (prve su to pesme bile koje sam čuo), Hajduk Stanka (prve su to knjige koje sam pročitao), pa Matije Gupca, pa Tanaska Rajića, narod gedža što su bosonogi prešli Albaniju, koji svako nekoliko iljada kaplara za slobodu žrtvuje, narod Lole i Save - i da oćeš ne možeš ga u tom mlinu samleti!

Pismo-Glava, p 265

Similarly, Istref Veri remembers when his awareness of the 'collective' began to arise and how, while still living in native Bregovi, in his

mladu pamet se urezivala spora reč ujakova, bilo da svojim unjkavim glasom navodi kuranske sure, dove i salavate, ili prastara pravila Leke Dukađina: "Kad Arbanas ubije nekoga na putu..." - zvoni Istrefu i dan-danas ujakov glas u ušima; "Kad Arbanas rani iz puške..."; "Kad Arbanas ostavi verenicu...."; "Kad je Arbanas Arbanasu nešto dužan..."; "Kad Arbanas umre..." - i tako redom.

Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p 25

Istref was born and grew up in a community where everyone knew 'šta ko sme i zbog čega je nešto zabranjeno, ko je prvi i ko posljednji, šta je čija dužnost i koja su mu prava.' (Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p 27) Nevertheless, because of personal and historical circumstances, under the strong influence of communist education and with an attitude of the proletarian system, Istref leaves the past for a promising future. Tragically enough, he leaves behind his native 'kingdom', religion, rules and customs, only to become a victim of his ambition and yet another victim of the powerful mentality of the new system. By doing it so, Istref becomes one of those who had to live their lives between two diametrically opposed 'kingdoms' :

Ništa se iz jednog kraljevstva u drugo preko reke ne može preneti, nema mešanja, nema znanja stečenog po katunima koje bi bilo primenljivo u novom Istrefovom kraljevstvu, presipanje je nemoguće, nesvodivost potpuna! Osmesi ili tuča dva osmogodišnjaka u kamenoj avlji, sa tristo metara jednim metkom u slepočnicu pogoden brat Faruk, isplažena, siva jezika i dečiji zmajevi od novina,

drveta i bulumaća, reč i poreka, molitva i kletva - u dva vilajeta dve različite stvari znaće. Uzajamnim proveravanjem kraljevstva postaju nerazumljiva. Poređenje je svetogrđe.

Pa i u Beogradu, sa obema nogama na drugoj obali, Istref je jasno razlikovao jedno kraljevstvo od drugog, i uvek prekoračivao granicu koja ih deli sa punom svešću šta čini.

Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p 26

Many of Selenić's male characters try to integrate themselves into the new proletarian civilisation, but not all of them for the same reason. Mihajlo Medaković (Očevi i oci), Maksimilijan Dimitrijević (Pismo-Glava) or Bogdan Bilogorac (Ubistvo s predumišljajem) are not just blindly obedient individuals, seeking the privileges of communist power. They follow 'the stream' because of their own bewilderment. Mihajlo Medaković (Očevi i oci) is desperate in his attempt to prove that he is not 'riđokoso englešče' but a 'trustworthy Serb'. Maksimilijan (Pismo-Glava) follows the steps of his father Vojin:

Radeći protiv interesa svoje klase i svojih sopstvenih, moj mali otac pasuljaste glave nadrasta sebe za čitavu ljudsku glavu i za jednu kompletну dijalektičku suprotnost: žrtvujući sebe, on istorijski spasava mene. U meni je naš kraj, zahvaljujući Vojinu častan koliko i naš početak na početku prošlog veka. Mi umiremo da bi nova klasa i našom pomoći počela da živi na istorijskoj pozornici. Ja sam zaloga. Ja sam opravdanje onog što se dogodilo na trošarini: zadnja replika nad grobom Dimitrijevića, Dimitrijević koji svojim skojevstvom, verom u radničku klasu, pisanjem parola i učestvovanjem na akciji Kučovo-Brodice, jezikom koji tek uči nad mrtvim junacima završene drame opravdava svoje postojanje, Fortinbras koji priča ljudima priču o sjajno završenom životu jednog dijabetičara, jedne usahle porodice i jedne klase.

Pismo-Glava, p 193

Bogdan Bilogorac (Ubistvo s predumišljajem) is also lost in the chaos of the historical storm and his own understanding of 'the collective'. He is an ex-student of geodesy who planed to complete his studies '*kad čaćinu i matrinu kuću, jer ni čaće ni matere više nema, povratimo od zlotvora*' (emphasis mine, p 136). This language, used so often with the intention of justifying the war as an act of liberation from the collective's enemies, indicates yet another (ab)use of language for The System's goal and it insinuates that Bogdan has stepped over to the collective's side. Still, as Bogdan argues with his friend Joko Martić (Bijesni Pas) about the war between Serbs and Croats, his words suggest some doubt and defiance:

KRETEN 193 :

-*Jebem ti rat i ko ga prvi izmisli!*

BIJESNI PAS:

-*Čuj usru! Puklo ga malo u nogu, a gospo-student se upišo od stra! Ovo sad ti je, moj Bogdane, najljepše. Kad ti tvoj Joko kaže! Znadem šta govorim! Sve se more, sve se smije. Što nigde nije bilo, sad biva. Rođeni me se čaća boji!*

KRETEN:

-*Kad si pobio onolike ljude, sunce ti jebem.*

BIJESNI PAS:

-*Al nikoga iz tvoje kuće.*

KRETEN:

-*Zbog taki nas i drže da smo divlje zvijeri. Ne dodiruj me! S otim si rukama i klaoo.*

BIJESNI PAS:

-*Nijesam klaoo. A i da jesam! Dok nije od istočne vjere, valjat ne more. Volim puknut u Rvata neg da mi netko dade pol svijeta.*

KRETEN:

-*Ima dobrih I Hrvata*

BIJESNI PAS:

-*Teb su ova govna beogradska svu pamet popila!*

KRETEL:

-A teb su oči od krvi osljepile. Neviš više ljudi, a i sam znadeš da ima dobrih ljudi među njima.

BIJESNI PAS:

-Nema. A i da ima! Što bi ti tio! Oćeš da nas nadbiju? Jel to oćeš? Kakav si se to rodijo! Ni na kog se ne srdiš - konda i nisi čovjek, jebem te šonjavog.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 155

Nevertheless, Bogdan does not leave the collective behind, he follows it until his tragic death. It seems an interesting coincidence that Maksimiljan (Pismo-Glava) and Mihajlo (Očevi i oci), who also revealed a degree of uncertainty, die too. Maksimiljan is aware that 'velika riba još jednom hoće da proguta malu' but he continues to follow, confessing to himself:

Stid postaje moj stalni pratilac - konačno shvatam da nisam ono za šta se izdajem, da sam nesposoban, mali građanski bednik koji će tek uz veliku laž uspeti, kako-tako, a u osnovi traljavo i nikako, da obavi dužnost koju su mu Vojin, istorija i sudbina namenili. Radim i dalje sve što treba, ali sada sa definitivnom svešću da to radim samo zbog drugih, čak i bez onog minimuma vere koju sam ranije nalazio u samoobmani."

Pismo-Glava, p 198

Equally, Mihajlo (Očevi i oci) is not utterly convinced that integration into the arising proletarian system is fulfilling. However, for the sake of being 'one of them', he permits the power of the collective mentality to annihilate the strength of his own individuality:

- Ne smem - bio je uporan Majkl.

-Tako kaži.Trta. Uplašio se upišanko engleski.

Videla sam da ga je to pogodilo.Glupi moj sin. U centar tudžinske sujetе.

Besno je bacio ogrtač na zemlju, skočio na noge kao crveni petlič:

-Upišanko si sam - rekao je visokom i prvi potrčao prema reci....

-Ko je uhvatio? - pitali su, ili:

-Koji je isplivao?

-Mihajlo - odgovarao je Debeli, pogrlben od težine, sa lubenica u naručje.....Uzmite sve. Ja ne volim lubenicu - slagao je, ne znam zašto, a ja sam jasno videla da triumf Majklu ne donosi nepomučenu sreču, jer on nije pobedio nekog, nego bezobličnu veličinu. Bio bi nesrečan da je izgubio, ali nije bio srečan zato što je dobio bednu nagradu: zvali su ga imenom, bio je Mihajlo, a ne više Ridži kao malo pre toga.

Očevi i oci, p 218-219

Portrayals of these male characters indicate that they are conditioned to live up to certain expectations and that they are doomed to suffer pain and social rejection when they fail to achieve them. These characters and their destinies suggest an oddness of the mentality to which they belong. It is a male-dominated, patriarchal world, where men are not supposed to be weak, show grief or have feelings.

Mihajlo's father, Professor Medaković, remembers:

Plać mi je stegao grlo, ali znam da ne smem plakati. To Nanka ne dozvoljava. To nije srpski i muški, a ja pre svega moram biti Srbin i muškarac. Dok sam bio mali, međutim, često se ne bih uspeo uzdržati, i Nanka je bila nemilosrdna.

- Sramoto jedna - govorila bi strogo, ne kao sa detetom, već puna prezira - kako bi štgod teško u životu podneo kada zbog priče plačeš....

.....Kada je uvidela da se ja ipak suviše često ne mogu uzdržati od plača, jednom je rekla:

- Ne razumeš srpske junake i njihovu žrtvu, pa ti više o ocima našim i podvižnicima neću pričati.

Ko ne zna Nanku, pomisliće da je to bila samo pretnja malom detetu, na koju će do sutra zaboraviti. Ali ne. Mesecima nije htela da mi ispriča nijednu priču sa žalosnim krajem, sve dok nisam čvrsto ustvrdio da više nisam mali, već dovoljno odrastao i kadar sa mukama moga naroda bez suza se suočiti. I od tada,

zaistinu, više nikada nisam zaplakao.

Očevi i oci, p 45

Characters like Mihajlo, Maksimilijan or Bogdan are clear illustrations of how masculine qualities in their society are also measured by a man's competitiveness, unsentimentality and the strength of his unity with the collective. That is to say, in order not to be rejected and condemned to isolation, one has to embrace the collective code of conduct, and '*ne samo svoje navike, nego i sva ubedženja, i karakter koji stoji iza ubedženja, izmeniti da bi postao isti, ili sličan, da ne bi strčao.*' (Očevi i oci, p 220)

Referring to the characters of Stevan and Elizabeth Medaković, in the novel Očevi i oci, the critic Milivoj Marković says '*veruju da je u život ušao neki misteriozni proces dehumanizacije, a ne vide da je to, u stvari, preobražaj života što ga uslovljava revolucija. Oni ne vide i ne osećaju da su se pogrešno utkali u istorijske procese i da je ta njihova greška uzrok njihovog tragičnog udesa.*'¹⁹⁴ (emphasis mine) There is no intention here to discuss Marković's visible rejection of communism as a process of 'dehumanisation of society', but rather there is an aspiration to highlight his limited understanding of Selenić's characters. According to his oversimplifying statement, Marković clearly suggests that Selenić's characters could have stopped their personal tragedies, had they not made **wrong decisions**. Sadly enough, saying this, Marković disregards Selenić's own disapproval of the existence of an '**apriori right**' or '**apriori wrong**'. Furthermore, commenting on the character of Mihajlo Medaković, Marković also says that Mihajlo 'švata da su njegovi roditelji izvan konteksta pravih društvenih i istorijskih odnosa i on kreće putem revolucije, a taj njegov put za njih znači slom

¹⁹⁴ M. Marković, Nova raskršća romana, Jedinstvo, Priština, 1987, p 273

*njihovih ideała i, napokon, slom njih samih.*¹⁹⁵ (emphasis mine) There is an intention here to suggest that Mihajlo's 'revolution' began even before the real fighting started. His mother remembers:

A onda je moj Majkl stao da se menja. Prvo jedva da se moglo videti, pa sve brže i jasnije. Počelo je to menjanje, verovatno več kada Mihajlo je pošao u školu, ali prvi znaci videli su se, ja mislim u drugom razredu. U trećem i četvrtom osnovne bili su belodani, i samo rasejan otac Stevan mogao je "otkriti" promenu "iznenada", "preko noći", posle drugog gimnazije, kada se Majkl vratio sa džačke ekskurzije u Bled. A prvi znak pojavio se četiri godine pre, kada je Majkl jednom ujutru rekao meni da on mrzi što je ridžokos....nisam ništa pitala dalje, jer sam shvatila da ni Majkl nije sve raščistio u svojoj glavici koju su morali zbrkati novi odnosi, a u njih je zaglibio čim je izašao iz našeg porodičnog karantina."

Očevi i oci, p 212-213

Since stepping out of his 'family quarantine' and joining the collective, Mihajlo/Majkl¹⁹⁶ becomes a disoriented individual, or as some would put it today, a character with an identity crisis. Accordingly, it seems appropriate to believe that the relationship between Mihajlo and the Revolution should be observed as a relationship between Mihajlo/Majkl and his Identity. One must not ignore the fact that Mihajlo's/Majkl's identity is defined by the marriage between his Serbian father Stevan and his English mother Elizabeth, so the relationship between himself and his Identity could be observed as Mihajlo/Majkl - parents relation. In the portrayal of his parents Selenić makes clear that neither of them is highly devoted to their origins. Both of them demonstrate a strong capacity to criticise 'wrongs' within their own nationality just as, for different

¹⁹⁵ ibid., p 273

¹⁹⁶ Mihajlo in Serbian language, Majkl in English language

reasons, both of them embrace something of 'otherness'. For instance, in a desperate attempt to win her son back, Elizabeth writes in the letter to her cousin Rachel: '*Govoriču kao Srbkinja. Biču Srbkinja, da bi mogla sa Majklom razgovarati ravnopravno. Videćeš.*' (Očevi i oci, p 228) But, just as Elizabeth was losing Majkl by becoming 'Srbkinja', Stevan was losing Mihajlo by revealing his 'disability' to undoubtedly belong to the Serbian mentality:

Dok sam verovao da nema boljeg naroda od srpskog ne tražeći za to nikakva dokaza, dok sam moj guravi narod što svetkuje, slavuje, piruje, nedjeljuje, odmara brinući samo za danas, dok sam neradinost Srba tumačio kaoposledicu naše darovitosti (mi smo genijalna rasa, Nemci moraju da rade!), dok sam murdarluk video kao poslovičnu bistrinu srskog seljaka, primitivno i strašno rasipanje ljudskih života kao našu herojsku prirodu, a sve običaje i legende kao nepomereni dokaz srpskog genija, dok sam plakao zbog seče srpskih knezova i, ne okusivši piće, znao da je šljivovica najbolje od svih koja na svetu postoje, ja sam pripadao, bio, ono čemu u tim, prirodnim okolnostima nisam ni kada ni vlastan suditi.

Otrežnjenje je došlo postepeno, jedna etapa za drugom....

Očevi i oci, p 144

Not only Mihajlo's parents but even his grandfather Milutin Medaković is described as a man with a 'loose' identity whose

verničko srbianstvo, na tako pompezan način obznanjivano, nije se nikako usklađivalo sa dve druge njegove osobine: sa gospodstvenom odmerenošću u svim drugim postupanjima, i sa evropskim navikama u sitnim stvarima, kojih se nikada nije odrekao....Držeći se navika stečenih preko, jer, valjda, drukčije nije mogao, on se osećao krivim pred svojim pozlaćenim narodom u Šiljkanima i abanim nošnjama. Odbijajući o tome da misli, Milutin je protivrečnost između ukusa i opredeljenja usklađivao, znajući ipak, potišten i posramljen, da ona postoji."

Očevi i oci, p 42

For these reasons, it is likely that Mihajlo/Majkl developed a feeling of 'inferior identity' which together with the powerful mentality of collective and historical changes urged him to search for his own identity, an identity that **he** could be proud of. Accordingly, in the midst of the ambiguity of his identity, Mihajlo acts as if his parental connections were no longer meaningful as a means of solidifying that identity. In addition, he produces a 'new personality' that does not depend upon theirs any more. He embraces collective identity. Tragically enough, neither Mihajlo in Očevi i oci, nor Bogdan in Ubistvo s preduvišnjajem, realises that in the frame of collective identity, they are only two anonymous subjects without individuality. Mihajlo's and Bogdan's desire to be '**one of them**' leads them to their tragic death. Not being able to overcome its power these two men become victims of the collective mentality. As their collectives fight yet another war together with thousands of others, Mihajlo and Bogdan are lost in yet another cataclysm of history. Using exactly the same words in both novels to describe their deaths, Selenić describes the scent of collective death. He describes the sorrow and tragedy of the Srem front and its killing fields in 1945, and again in Croatia in 1993. He writes an eternal epitaph not only for his victim-characters, but for all those collectives who 'feed history with the flesh of their children'.

Za zlo ne uzimajte, mili moji sinovi, što vas u večitu počinku uznemirismo, ova Panić Jelena, student iz Bograda, i ja Vidosav Prokić, seljak ispod Avale. Vi ništa od teg nemate, ali drugara vašeg, Bogdana, izvadismo, kući da ga pratimo. Daće Bog, lepi moji momci, i vas će vaši jednog dana pronaći, kad završi ovaj jebeni rat, pa u rodnu crnicu odneti. Ja bi vas, sinovi moji, očinjeg mi vida, sve preneo sam, jednog po jednog bi nosio, na leđa ako treba, kada bi znao di ste i odakle ste, taki mladi i mrtvi. Ali ne znam - reče, i tu stade ridati.

Ubistvo sa preduvišnjajem, p 246¹⁹⁷

Selenić's male characters die in different ways. Some of them die in prison cells and on battle fields, others die on the inside, emotionally, as a result of major disappointments with the System they fought for and believed in. Pero Prokić (Memoari Pere Bogalja) and Svetozar Slišković-Šampion (Pismo-Glava) are fanatical believers who become expatriates. Disillusioned by the communist system, Šampion, ex-atheist, embraces the Orthodox religion, while Pero Prokić takes refuge in a world of irony and sarcasm. Perusing the world, with intense irony and powerful sarcasm, through the eyes of a disabled person who lost his legs during World War II, Pero unveils his broken hopes and unfulfilled love, revealing the agony of a disillusioned man. His irony and sarcasm, as well as Šampion's alcoholism, become the tools of self-destruction and self-protection.

Svetozar Slišković-Šampion (Pismo-Glava) is banished from society. His belief in the politics of the USSR during 1948, differs from the official policy of the communist party in Yugoslavia. Therefore, he is treated as a traitor and sent to Goli otok, an island, especially chosen for the detention of political prisoners. As he returns '*lepljiv od pljuvačke drugova, jednomišljenika, komunista*', in despair he screams:

A svako ko je nad ljudima hteo da vlada, Maksimilijane, prvo bi pod

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'Za zlo ne uzimajte, mili moji sinovi, što vas u večitu počinku uznemirismo, ovaj Stevan Medaković, profesor iz Beograda, i ja, Vidosav Prokić, seljak ispod Avale. Vi ništa od toga nemate, ali drugara vašeg Mihajla, izvadismo, kući da ga pratimo. Daće Bog, lepi moji momci, i vas će vaši jednog dana pronaći, kada završi ovaj jebeni rat, pa u rodnu crnicu odneti. Ja bi' vas, sinovi moji, očinjeg mi vida, sve preneo sam, jednog po jednog bi' nosio, na leđa, ako treba, kada bi znao di ste i odakle ste, takvi mladi i mrtvi. Ali ne znam - reče i tu stade ridati.'

Očevi i oči, p 342

pretnjom mača, lomače i čekrka proglašio sreću - obavaznom za svakog; patnju ličnu, duševnu, proizašlu iz zabuna i nedoumica - strogo zabranjenom; ljubav prema čoveku - grešnom, a ljubav prema čovečanstvu - svetom; da bi onda u ime te druge ljubavi, čoveka pretvorio u malu spravicu za postizanje velikog cilja, i tako mu u korenju osporio njegovu prvosazdanu vrednost. Istoriji je, Maksimilijane, čovek neophodan, on je njen materijal, od njegovog mesa se ona pravi, ali istorija nije nikada učinila ništa zbog čoveka, ona je tupo nezainteresovana za njegovu sudbinu!

Pismo-Glava, p 139

Once devoted to the communist party and its goals, Pero and Šampion become its most bitter critics. Furthermore, the irretrievable loss of their ideals and hopes forces them to confront their own blunders.

Sa nostalgijom, usred moje ogorčenosti, sa blagom setom se sećam predratnih zatvora, mog robijaškog detinjstva, čistog kao dečiji san, Iz Požarevca, Mitrovice, Lepoglave, sa bolom u duši prizivam uspomene na naše idilične štrajkove glađu, naše užogunjene borbe za zatvorenička prava, dečački iskrenu komunističku solidarnost, preradu ilegalnih materijala, druga Mošu koji prevodi 'Kapital'; setim se naših zavereničkih teoretskih sastanaka i svih načina na koji smo zagorčavali život policajcima i čuvarima zatvora, zatvora, Maksimilijane, punog lepih mladića, najmlađi ima osamnaest, najstariji nikad više od trideset godina, mladića kojima su reči 'partija', 'robija', 'komitet', 'ćelija' još uvek nove i opojne kao pesma nekih revolucionarnih sirena na moru kojim plovi čovečanstvo; setim se golobradih drugova koji, pristupajući partiji, znaju da ih kao nagrada čeka samo zatvor u slobodi, na partijskom zadatku, da se što bolje drže pred klasnim neprijateljem, što solidnije žive život u zatvorskem kolektivu, što više knjiga pročitaju po polumračnim budžacima spavaonice. setim se svega toga, mili moj, pa zatim pogleddam oko sebe, osvrnem se na svoje sapatnike, popljuvane, skinutih kapa, u stavu mirno, sa pesmom na usnama, pa me neki suludi bes uhvati, bes do pucanja, pa kad vidim da moram, ja riknem: šta uradiste, procvilim, šta nam ovo napraviste, pitam, u šta nas pretvoriste da vam krvavu, da vam smrdljivu, da vam svinjsku ...

Pismo-Glava, p 321

One of Selenić's critics, Pavle Zorić, believes that '*tragičan smisao njegovih romana proističe upravo otuda što se njegovi junaci osjećaju otuđenim od istorijskog toka.*'¹⁹⁸ No doubt Vladan Hadžislavković (Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca) and Stevan Medaković (Očevi i oci) are alienated from the historical arena. Not because they do not understand its developments and changes, but because both of these characters refuse to enter into the politics of the age. In a world where men are defined by history and politics, Vladan and Stevan are seen as 'crippled' characters as neither of them has developed the ultimate quality: unconditional loyalty to the 'collective'. Stevan Medaković is a man of bourgeois origins, an open-minded individual who refuses to follow the collective stampede. There is no doubt that he is concerned about the Serbian nation, its position and prosperity on the historical arena, but nevertheless, he does not hesitate to acknowledge its weaknesses too.

Patriotizam uz kritičnu svest je kao religioznost bez vere. To što u svakoj etapi ispitivanja otkrivam sve veću nesolidnost moga naroda, njegovu nesposobnost da upravlja svojom sudbinom, njegovu bahatost, istočnjačku lukavost, objašnjavao sam svojom uvećanom kritičnošću, povećavanom dioptrijom naočari.

Očevi i oci, p 144

Stevan Medaković and Vladan Hadžislavković are, in a sense, mirror images of each other. They are both of middle-class origin, well-educated individuals who dislike the arising proletarian regime and they are both in conflict with the collective. Furthermore, just as

¹⁹⁸ P. Zorić, 'Ludi dani istorije' in Gubitnici, Savremenici, Beograd, 1989, p 43

Stevan is unable to understand his son Mihajlo and his blind devotion, Vladan can not understand his protégé Istref Veri. Also, both characters are connected with a sensitive topic which, at the same time, proposes the most visible dissimilarity between the two: homosexuality. Stevan was introduced to homosexuality as young scholar at Bristol University in Great Britain. As he becomes the object of desire of his flatmate Robert Rackham, Stevan learns some 'dramatic' things about himself

Kada mi je Robert prišao i pokušao da se pripije uz mene, svejednako me ubedjujući da je ljubav među mušarcima čisitija i uvek veća nego među osobama suprotnog pola, da me nikad žena neće voleti kako me on voli, pomislio sam da postupim po jednom poznatom modelu, da ga udarim, ili, makar grubo odgurnem, ali pre nego što sam stigao da to učinim zaustavilo me, prosto onemogućilo saznanje da uopšte nisam besan na Roberta, da nemam ni najmanje želje da ga povredim, već da sam strašno, dotad neiskušano, ljut na sebe, ogorčen, postiđen okolnostima u kojima sam se odjedared našao.

Očevi i oci, p 29, emphasis mine

Later, Stevan finds out that one of his highly respected and admired friends, the intelligent young academic, John Downing, is also homosexual, and he realizes that this experience irreversibly disturbs his own perception of life and the world:

Znao sam da, doduše, nije homoseksualizam to što me ugrožava i zbunjuje, ali osećao sam da i on učestvuje u opasnom brkanju predstava o svetu koji mi je odjednom stao izgledati mnogo manje nesumnjiv i jasan koliko još juče, ili pre dva meseca. Sa mukom, kao nešto opasno, počeli su se u mojoj svesti oblikovati obrisi jedne nove, neobične zabrinutosti. Već to što sam kadar i spremam o homoseksualizmu, recimo, raspravljati sa nekim koji ga, ravnopravan, čak

nadmoćan, brani, ugrožavalo je same temelje moje sigurnosti, sve što sam iz svoje kuće, iz napaćene Srbije, od Nanke, pre svega, sa sobom kao vredno poneo. Odjednom mi se učinilo da neka velika opasnost vreba, da neopazice podvrgavam sumnji nesumnjivo, da Lesleyevo krevljenje, Johnova imeprtenencija, Rackhamova pretpostavka o mojoj seduktibilnosti, čaj sa mlekom i čuretinu s pekmezom, Biblioteka Britanskog muzeja i razjarena, a obuzdana Barbara, blaženo srećna Miss Trickey, engleska trava, engleski jezik natapaju i one predele moje duše za koje sam mislio da su nepromočivi, impregnirani srpstvom kao šatorsko krilo.

Očevi i oci, p 36

Selenic's critics acknowledge the presence of homoeroticism in Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, mostly by homophobically referring to Vladan Hadžislavković's 'vulgarnu agresiju homoseksualnog poriva'.¹⁹⁹ Yet, most of them have left the topic essentially unexplored. However, as much as there is an obvious presence of a 'homosexuality theme' in Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca and Očevi i oci, it is clear that Selenić has not written about homosexuality with the intention of challenging conventional ideals of morality. It is more likely that his intention was to underline Stevan's and Vladan's 'alienation' from society. Stevan Medaković does not for one second question his sexuality and he clearly expresses his repulsion. Still, this 'element' intensifies his ability to accept differences, to agree to disagree and to question his unquestionable, well learned, Serbian life style. This is to say that Stevan's willingness to consider homosexuality as the existence of 'otherness' just heightens his intellect as an open-minded 'collective outcast'. In relation to Stevan, homosexuality is just one of his first steps towards his real conflict with the collective. On the other hand, being homosexual, Vladan

¹⁹⁹ P. Džadžić, op.cit, p 340

incorporates 'otherness' within himself, even before the real conflict begins. Although his real conflict with the collective is the same as Stevan's, his homosexuality intensifies his isolation from the collective as with this potentially 'dangerous element' in his character, he is already threatening the virility of the Serbian man.

The Serbian man in Selenić's novels is not only defined by his destiny and place in Serbian politics during historical changes but he is defined by his sexuality too. Selenić's men are disillusioned warriors and ex-zealots, fanatical believers, sons without identity or 'defective fathers' who avoid politics only to become victims of the same politics, but most of them are lovers too. The pater familias Miloje (Memoari Pere Bogalja) and his son, the legless ex-zealot Pero Prokić, the diabetic Maksimilijan Dimitrijević (Pismo-Glava) and limping Dragan Radosavljević (Timor Mortis), the fanatical devotee Radiša Prokić (Pismo-Glava) and middle-class born Professor Stevan Medaković (Očevi i oci), 'integrated' Istref Veri (Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca) or warrior victim Bogdan Bilogorac (Ubistvo s predumišljajem) - regardless of their age, social status or physical condition and ability, most of the main male characters in Selenić's novels are sexually active. It is important at this point to underline this wide variety of sexually active male characters in Selenić's novels, as the analysis of their behaviour towards the female characters, unveils very similar, repetitive and almost identical manners.

Pero Prokić, in Memoari Pere Bogalja, is very pleased that his occasional lover Mila does not distinguish between him and 'those with legs'. He trusts not only that she is not repulsed by his stumps, but on the contrary, that she enjoys 'playing' with them during their

occasional sexual reunions. Pero displays his joy over her acceptance, but nevertheless he does not forget to mention 'the size' of his genitalia as an important credential of his sexual ability.

Pravila se kao da uopšte ne primećuje moju ogromnu kitu koja se ustobočila u gaćama još pre nego što sam skinuo pantalone.....Nastavila je da ga masira, a onda se namestila još zgodnije, i nasela je sasvim na njega, mada je moja kita nastavila da stoji uspravna kao crnačko božanstvo, uprkos tome što sam i drugi put svršio...Ne propusti priliku da pohvali veličinu i čvrstinu moje kite. Često priča o njoj dok radimo. Tepa joj, i moram priznati da mi je milo što to radi dok radimo.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 224

While writing his memoirs, Pero indicates the presence of Mila's affection and kindness. But still, Mila, his father's secretary, joint lover of father and son, is in Pero's eyes an individual without biography, '*vidljiva kad treba, opipljiva kad hoću, odsutna kad zaželete bez težine na savesti i u svesti*'. She is an object in their living room, an object that can be used and abused. In the belief of Marilyn French, the approach 'woman is equal to an object', is only the overture to physical abuse and attempts to justify it. She believes that in order to

*justify abusive treatment of women in their own minds (after all, most men love some women), men must view them as separate species, like pigs or dogs or cows (terms often applied to women)...The formula, superstitious at its root, achieves its goal only fleetingly, unsatisfyingly. Yet instead of abandoning this unsuccessful road to self-worth, men walk it over and over again, as if enough repetition will somehow bring them to the end - blessed relief from self-doubt.*²⁰⁰

Pero Prokić does exactly that. Satisfying his conscience with the

²⁰⁰ M. French, The War Against Woman, Penguin, London, 1992, p 183

conviction that Mila is a person 'bez prošlosti, bez budućnosti, bez ljubomore, bez morala, bez griže savesti', he begins to mistreat and physically abuse her:

Ipak volim da ode odmah uveče, jer se bojim da ne ponovim ono što sam, istini za volju samo nekoliko puta učinio, ali što uvek hoću ponovo da uradim: nekoliko puta je Mila zaspala pored mene, a ja nisam mogao da se uzdržim nego sam, zaspalu počinjao da je tučem. Jednom sam je tako gurnuo u stomak da je morala četveronoške da ode iz moje sobe, jer nije mogla da se ispravi. Zato ipak volim da ode ranije da ne bih došao u iskušenje. Ne mogu reći da mi je posle žao, ali čini mi se da nema smisla.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 225, emphasis mine

Still, Pero Prokić is not the only man in Selenić's novels who exercises the power of his masculinity by physically abusing women. In Pismo-Glava, Zlata describes the incident when her husband Radiša arrives home and finds his lover Draginja in the living room, talking to his wife:

- Radiša - kriknula je, i pre nego što sam stigla da vidim Radišu, ona je već stavljala nadlakticu preko lica da bi se zaštitila od njegovog udarca. Bez uspeha. Videla sam kako je udara levom rukom tako snažno da je Draginjina zaštitna nadlaktica prosto odletela na suprotnu stranu, pa odmah zatim desnom, od čega joj je krv potekla iz gornje usne i nosa; videla nepomična i sleđena u stolici, ruku prekrštenih na grudima, kako se Draginja zanela, kukajući, zapomažući, skočila sa stolice i počela kao krvava ispred gonilaca da beži čas na jednu čas na drugu stranu klateći velikim grudima, nespretna i nesigurna na pretankim nogama i visokim štiklama, dok joj Radiša sporo i preteći preprečava put.

- U pomoć - vikala je - joj, ubiće me, ubiće me - ponavljala je kad god se izvuče ispod njegovoh udaraca i pobegne u drugi kraj sobe - nemoj, nemoj, Radiša, neću više nikad, očiju mi, tebe, mi - govorila je, a on ju je samo sustizao i mlatio rukama, nogama, po glavi, po stomaku, gde god da stigne, čuteći, da bi samo s vremena na vreme, kroz zube, jedva čujno, procedio jednu, nekako tešku reč:

- Đubre - govorio je i tukao - đubre - kaže kao da obuzdava ječanje i sateruje je u jedan ili drugi ugao sobe.

Pismo-Glava, p 249

Similarly, in Selenić's last novel Ubistvo s predumišljajem, Professor Kojović remembers how Major Krsman slapped his 'temporary-lover', Milesa Vučelić across the face, indicating in that way his unhappiness with the indifference of Jelena, the woman he was actually interested in:

Već krajem januara Krsman prelazi pretposljednju, trinaestu stanicu svoje ljubavničke kalvarije: postaje unezveren. Grenlandska ravnodušnost Jelenina učinila je smešnim njegovo kamaranje s Milesom. Krsman počinje da mrzi i kinji našu svemoćnu kadrovkinju. Kada ju je jednom čuo da kaže 'moj čovek', ošamario ju je naočigled svih

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 33

These are not solitary incidents of physical abuse and domination of women demonstrated by male characters in Selenić's novels. Some of the men are even involved in forceful activities which in any civilised societies, would undoubtedly be identified as sexual assault and abuse. In Timor Mortis, Dragan Radosavljević forces himself on his neighbour Biljana, abusing her trust, her faith in his friendship, as well as her body:

- Stan, Drakče, šta ti je, joj, nemoj, kumim te, kuku šta me snađe, nemoj, Kuče, sramota je, joj, šta ćeš to, ne dam - preneražena, svakako, sluđena i nesnađena iznenadnom promenom u ponašanju njenog preobratitelja i propovednika moralnog imperativa.

Tu je nege u mom sećanju nasta prekid. Ne znam recimo, koliko je dugo Biljana pružala otpor i kako sam ga ja, konačno, slomio. Silom i prinudom, do

kraja, ili je, možda, ipak, napadnuta devojčica u jednom trenutku odlučila da dobrovoljno učini ono na šta sam je prisiljavao. Međutim, čak i ako je bilo tako, ako je odista dobrovoljno prestala da se brani, ja još uvek ne znam sa kojih razloga je to učinila. Da bi što pre okončala mučenje? Ili zato što se i sama uzbudila? Kao i ja - glavu izgubila?

Timor Mortis, p 246

In the light of Marilyn French's words again, Dragan Radosavljević also tries to defend and justify his aggressive action, speculating on the possibility of Biljana's own excitement and suggesting the 'loss of his head'. But, as his sexual aggressiveness towards Biljana is repetitive, his own arguments, unacceptable to start with, altogether lose their validity:

Kada sam dva meseca posle srepljivanja u podrumu, po četvrti put naskočio na Biljkicu, u našoj kuhinji, s leđa, dok je mešala kačamak u loncu na ringli štednjaka, prvi put sam bio sasvim svestan ravnodušnosti njenog krupnog tela. Nije se ni pokrenula. Puštala je da se grčim i tresem iza nje, ostajući u istom položaju u kome sam je zatekao. Čini mi se da ni varjaču nije ispustila iz ruke. Sklonila je lonac na mlečni deo plotne i čekala da završim što sam započeo."

Timor Mortis, p 255

Other male characters of Selenić's also demonstrate sexual and verbal aggressiveness. In Pismo-Glava, Radiša Prokić forces himself on his wife Zlata, regardless of the fact that she tries to object to this, imposed, sexual activity :

Bio je sinoć gori nego obično, kažem u sebi, a već pre nego što sam završila rečenicu znam da to uvek kažem. Ujutro uvek pomislim da je sinoć bilo gore nego prethodne godine, mada znam da je uvek isto. Kao i obično, pošto je završio

tiradu, opkoračio me je i pokušao da me poljubi u usta. Koliko god puta da on to pokuša, ja okrenem glavu. Kada hoće da je zadrži rukama gurnem ga i on, pijan i nestabilan, padne, pa se opet digne i pokuša isto. Tako dok se ne umori. Konačno diže ruke od te rabote, i leže po meni. Ne protivim se, jer znam iz iskustva da je uzaludno, čak priželjkujem da to učini što pre, da počne da ore po meni - hladnoj kao kamen, opruženoj po krevetu kao voštanica, raširenih ruku i nogu, sličnoj čika -Gliši, kako ga je nekada crtao moj mali sin, pogleda uperenog u tavanicu, gluvoj za prostakluge koje priča o mojoj majci Veri, o Švajcarskoj gde se ni izdaleka ne jebe tako dobro kao što on to radi, o fon Trigeru, koga uvek u ovim prilikama naziva 'izvesnim Trigerom'. Puštam ga da zahuktalo, nekako ogorčeno, ljutito, režeći, radi samo da bi što pre svršio, što pre se preturio sa mene na leđa i prevaljao u svoj krevet.

Pismo-Glava, p 51

Furthermore, just before he abuses his wife, the drunken and naked Radiša shouts:

Ja sam, bre, jak, ženo, jak ko zemlja - priča i nesigurno se klati na nogama, bože moj, govori, govori i uživa u opsenosti i prostakluku, bira najgore reči - kurat sam, bre, gledaj, to je kurčina, bre - govori i pokazuje svoju muškost koja na moje oči počinje da se diže - nije to zezanje, nije to pišaljka, nego kurac, jašta, kurčina - zbog nečeg više stežući pesnice, maše pred mojim očima kao da hoće da me uveri u nešto što ja osporavam. - Nisam ja šmoklja - viče na sav glas...

Pismo-Glava, p 50

With these words, Radiša indicates the existence of a powerful connection between his *individuum* and the size of his phallus. Not for the first time one of Selenić's male characters insists on 'the size' of his phallus as an important asset. As mentioned earlier, Pero Prokić (Memoari Pere Bogalja) also emphasises the 'respectable size'(?!). This is to say that Selenić's male characters identify the strength, beauty and essentials of manhood with the size of their genitals.

Sadly enough, by reducing themselves to one organ which then represents their masculinity, they become no more than victims of a patriarchal 'myth' were 'size matters'. Further, this identification suggests the existence of a phallocentric society in which, once again, these characters are conditioned to live up to certain expectations. An indication of these expectations, and a constant need to meet them, is also visible in the ongoing reassurance which Selenic's male characters obtain from their female compatriots. Pero (Memoari Pere Bogalja) is told and assured by a woman that his penis is '*neubičajeno velik i čvornat*'. In Pismo-Glava, Zlata compliments Maksimiljan's '*uspravnu i golu muškost*', and in Selenić's last novel, Ubistvo s predumišljajem, as Jelena Panić enters into a sexual relationship with Bogdan, she exclaims her first impression and appreciation:

Bacim rukopis na zemlju, skočim iz fotelje, dohvativim se kretenovog šlica. Uhvatim ga za muda. Pune šake! Izvadim mu karu. Lepa ko upisana!

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 93

Another indication of the important association between a man and his phallus in Selenic's novels is Pero Prokić's behaviour in Memoari Pere Bogalja after he discovers that his father is having a sexual relationship with Draga (the girl with whom he is in love). Earlier, comparing his own integration into the communist system with his father's success, Pero says: '*Znao sam da nisam postigao stepen identifikacije kojim Miloje može da se pohvali - bio sam tek u rejonskom komitetu ...*' This time, Pero's brutal attack on his own genitalia appears like a comparison between his and his father's 'manhood':

Ne plaćem. Suze mi besno izleću iz očiju i vrcaju na sve strane. Ne mislim

ništa. Apsolutno ništa. U desnoj ruci mi je. Tada još nisam znao da je neuobičajeno velik i čvornovat. To su mi znatno kasnije objasnile žene. velik i čvornovat, prepun nabreklih vena, crvene glave sa velikom rupom na jajastom temenu, boli me i peče u ruci. Ja nisam onanisao. Nisam ritmički i sistematično skidao i navlačionjegovu kožnu futrolu. Ja sam ga kinjio. Stiskao sam ga koliko mi je snaga šake dozvoljavala, udarao sam ga stisnutom pesnicom, zabadao u njega nokte, tako da je bio sav ulepljen krvavom spermom. Dva puta je iz otvora na njegovom temenu izleteo rafal žućkasto-bele, smrdljive sluzi, ali on je nastavio da stoji tvrd kao kremen i uspravan kao spomenik ljudskoj budućnosti. Patrljci i tepih ispred mene bili su uprljani spermom, lice mi je bilo vlažno, kao okupano kapima besnih suza koje dobrih pola sata nisu tekle, već su se otkidalre sa mojih očiju. Otpuzao sam do malog pisaćeg stola u uglu sobe, stavio kitu na ivicu stolice, uzeo mermernu mastionicu i počeo s njom da udram po njenim veličanstvenim, čvornovatim razmerama, tada još savršeno nesvestan kitinih čari. Bila je sva krvava i natekla kada sam končno ostavio mastionicu i konačno, počeo da plačem.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p160

Being deprived of Draga's love and in order to satisfy his erotic desire Pero Prokić becomes a voyeur. As Draga lives in the same house with him, with the status of his father's mistress, he has an ideal opportunity to satisfy his needs :

Ograda obrasla u bršljan, skrivajući mene gotovo savršeno nije prečila da vidim prozor i onaj deo sobe koji je prozor otkriva. Međutim, onda kada me je najviše zanimalo da vidim šta se događa u sobi (priznajem, otvoreno priznajem, vidiš, Davide, da priznajem), Draga je spuštala roletne. Nekoliko puta sam video Miloja golog, uokvirenog u ram prozora, kako diže roletnu u tišini koja bi usledila posle dahtanja u sobi. Samo jednom sam video Dragu.....Ranjen duboko streloom koja se, prošavši kroz moja pleća, zaustavila u srcu, dolazio sam na slušanja kad god bih video Miloja da odlazi u Draginu sobu.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 165

Denying him true love and placing him in a sexually active environment, Selenić almost evokes sympathy and justification for Pero's voyeuristic desire. Nevertheless, creating the very same setting in his novel Timor Mortis, the author establishes a pattern in his writings, and any possible compassion for Pero, or any other voyeur in his novels, loses its potential. For instance, Dragan Radosavljević lives his erotic visions (together with his flatmate, the centenarian Stojan) by observing Biljana every time she comes out onto her balcony, and repeatedly listening to the 'noise and sounds' coming from her flat:

Međutim, opšte uz nemirenje koje me je treslo dok sam slušao zbivanja s one strane zida, preraslo je u pravi eročki košmar tek pošto sam video na terasi i užagrena pogleda pomno razgledao 'Junonu', 'otetu Sabinjanku' 'unvergleichbare Flitchen', 'junge bauerische Hundin' - kako Biljanu dečijeg lica već sve nije nazivao rečiti Starac u svom voajerskom transu. Od kada sam video Junonine butine i sise, znao sam šta zamišljam, mogao sam pretpostaviti kako se kreću, kako drhte veliki delovi velikog i mekog bedevijicing tela dok krevet ravnomerno, potmulo, izluđujuće prati ritmičke kretanje ljubavnog para udaljenog od mene jedva nekoliko desetina santimetara....pa sam više puta doživljavao čudan preokret zamišljanja u stvarnost, imao žestoko čulan utisak da se odista nalazim među mekim butinama stasite devojčice.

Timor Mortis, p 228

However, Dragan, his flatmate Stojan in Timor Mortis and Pero Prokić in Memoari Pere Bogalja, are not the only voyeurs in Selenić's novels. Professor Stevan Medaković (Očevi i oci) also reveals some of voyeuristic attributes:

Valjda zato što ih dugo nisam video, pogled mi je prikovan za njene dojke, neobično, gotovo netesno bele, posute žutim pegicama, masivno teške, ali gipke,

tek malo opuštene nadole, sa svetlo-crvenim, krupnim bradavicama sred tamnija prstena oko njih.

Očevi i oci, p 183

While Pero, Dragan and Stevan favour the position of voyeurs, in order to fulfil their sexual needs, Miloje (Memoari Pere Bogalja) and Radiša (Pismo-Glava), choose adultery. There is no doubt that their extra-marital affairs are no more than pure satisfaction of their sexual appetites. This becomes an indisputable conclusion from the observation of the way these male characters treat their lovers. Hidden in the bushes, Pero witnesses 'love' moments between his father Miloje and Draga:

- Lezi, mala - rekao bi Miloje još s vrata, naviknut da štedi reči.

Pretpostavljam da bi Draga odmah legla, pošto nikada nisam čuo da je nešto odgovorila. Ili:

- Okreni se - rekao bi Miloje, i ja sam iza svog bršljana idiličnog izgleda, prosto video kako se ona poslušno okreće. Posle te komande, vrlo često sam čuo Dragu kako pušta krike koji nisu nimalo ličili na Milojeve uzvike zadovoljstva, već pre na krike bola, kao da joj neko skida ulepljeni zavoj sa rane ili čupa dlaku iz mladeža.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 166

It seems important to point out that both these characters, Miloje and Radiša, live in sexually 'incomplete' marriages. Miloje is married to Tankosava who is not part of Miloje's world any more, and about whom her son Pero says that '*još u našem malom stanu pored Kardorđevog parka osetila je da joj nije mesto u društvu kome je pripadao Miloje*' (Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 29). On the other hand, Radiša (Pismo-Glava) lives in an unhappy and superficial marriage, never being truly loved by his wife Zlata. Thus it seems appropriate to suggest that Selenić's novels

demonstrate an intention to justify adultery as an unfortunate outcome of these unhappy marriages. It is certainly Radiša's attempt:

Živimo tako, pod istim krovom, ja svoj, ona svoj život, i nema tu mnogo od života, ali bolje je u njemu neg u onom paklu, u kazanu u kom sam se tolike godine kuvao. Lupio ja rukom o sto, i možda sam udarcem naš brak razbio, ali jebem ti i taj brak u kome se stalno ko krivac osećam! Meni ipak bolje ovako. U kući spavam, u kancelariji radim, kod Draginje se lepo, brate, sa pravom ženom, od mesa, izjebem. Ja sam od krvi i mesa, nek Danci i ludi Amerikanci sa onim lutkama napunjениm spavaju.'

Pismo-Glava, p 296, emphasis mine

Interestingly enough, Mila (Memoari Pere Bogalja), a sexually active single woman, is in Pero's mind an unimportant object without biography, 'srećna zato što je živa i neopterećena okolnostima, nasmejana zato što uvek ima kita koje se pod čarobnim dodirom njenih nasmejanih usana krute nebu pod oblake' and she is described as the black sheep of the patriarchal flock, condemned for her freedom. On the other hand, the adultery of two married men, Miloje and Radiša, is seen as an outcome of their unhappy marriages, and almost requires sympathy. Further, Radiša's words not only attempt to justify his adultery, but they underline a strong patriarchal belief that only a sexually active woman is a 'real woman'. If she is not, regardless of the complexity of motives behind it, a man is left with no choice but to embrace adultery. Nevertheless, the sexual behaviour of Selenić's male characters indicates that marriage and family life, as the strongest pillars of the patriarchal edifice, are shaken not only because of historical turmoils. In a desperate attempt to satisfy all expectations

of the *esprit de corps*, to prove their 'manhood' and to hold on to their power and domination, these male characters fall into the trap of the patriarchal myth about the 'real man'. Meanwhile, they begin to exemplify the erosion of basic moral and family values and, ironically enough, thereby reveal all the weaknesses of patriarchy itself.

Selenić's female characters

Slobodan Selenić portrays his female characters mainly in relation to their roles in Serbian society. Accordingly, womanhood in his novels is illustrated through women who are wives and mothers, transmitters of national identity or lovers and prostitutes. For the most part, Selenić observes the relationship between the 'inner' world of his female characters and an 'outside world', in connection with their families, their emotional and sexual lives. Nevertheless, portraying the lives and fates of these women during times of historical and social changes, he seeks for the final jigsaw required in his representation of Serbia in general. Focusing on women's anxieties and concerns within the world of motherhood, domesticity or sexuality, the author identifies some of their reactions to historical and social changes. But, as Selenić's female characters are mostly examined in relation to their families, husbands, sons or lovers, their responses are also mostly activated as a result of the effect these changes have on a family. However, Selenić's portrayal indicates that like his men his women are also conditioned to live up

to certain expectations. One of them is to provide the basis for an understanding of the collective identity. In this case the woman becomes bearer and teacher of national culture and identity.

Unlike Aralica, Selenić does not identify mothers as primary transmitters of national tradition and qualities, but nevertheless, he refers to 'a woman' as a fundamental force in this process. Two of the most striking characters in this group are certainly Nanka in Očevi i oci and Milja Grubičeva in Timor Mortis. Stevan Medaković remembers his childminder, Nanka:

Nanka je bila seljanka, rekao bih, ali ne zato što nije znala drugačije - završila učiteljsku školu u Beogradu, obrazovana žena - već zato što je tako htela. Njen govor je ostao isti kao u zemljaka iz Kožetina i okoline, ali nekako brižljivo čuvan, svesno obogaćivan starim i zaboravljenim narodskim izrazima, negovan tako da je dobija skoro pesničku, vukovsku lepotu.

Očevi i oci, p 47

As much as Nanka cherishes the Serbian language, she is also determined in her attempt to make Stevan and his sister learn and understand what is 'srpstvo' and to raise them to be proud of their national identity as they became aware of it:

Nanka, brzo mi je to postalo jasno, nije pričala priče da bi nas zabavila, već da bi nas vaspitavala, i morala je u tome biti vrlo izbirljiva, pošto ja i danas pamtim odlomke pesama, legendi, saveta, izreka koje se sve zajedno sakupljaju u zatvoreni moralni red velike punoće. "Nada nema prava ni u koga, do u Boga i u svoje ruke", rečenica je koja mi se zasvagda urezala u pamet, tvrda kao čelik, nemilosrdna prema slabosti pojedina čovjeka. Život je u Nankinim pričama bio surov prema srpskom narodu, ali baš zato lep - rekao bih da tako treba tumačiti njenu filozofiju - jer pruža pojedincu časnu priliku da se žrtvuje. Za srpstvo.

Očevi i oci, p 45

All in all, Nanka is a metaphor for 'srpstvo' and keeper of its ancestral wisdom. Yet, she is also its defending bastion. While Stevan's father Milutin has no objections to the arrival of his English daughter-in-law Elizabeth, Nanka resents her completely:

Nanka, od prvog dana nepoverljiva i odbojna prema 'engleskoj kneginji', 'mutavici', 'minderpuzi, nije dodijavala Elizabeti koja bi bila i za strpljivu ostrvljanku nepodnošljiva, samo zato što je to spretno i uvek na vreme sprečavao otac....

...- Ako ne ume, neka nauči - nabusito je Nanka presrela strpljivi Milutinov pokušaj da opravda Elizabetu što ne zna tursku kafu skuvati....

Očevi i oci, p 191

In Nanka's eyes Elizabeth, who is not a Serbian woman (and could never live up to Nanka's standards), is no more than a disgrace for her husband and Medaković's house. In Nanka's world, where '*podele ljudi bile su jasne i dvodelne: žene i muškarci, gazde i sluge, časni i umni, pristojni, i oni koji su se izmetnuli u razvratne intereždžije*' (p 48), the changes and new European values that came with Elizabeth, are not acceptable. While Stevan's father is more open to these changes and possible influences of 'otherness', Nanka 's loyalty to 'srpstvo' is unfailing. This is not the only time that Selenić accentuates a woman as more patriotic than a man. Similarly, in Timor Mortis, Melania Milja Blagojević, is portrayed as a strong defender of the Serbian nation, unlike her husband Stojan:

Prema tom izveštaju, incident je nastao kada je zvanični program koncerta bio završen i kada su prisutni, mahom hrvatski zvaničnici i, naravno, učitelji, učesnici Prve skupštine, počeli spontano pevati Preradovićecu pesmu 'Bože živi' i Mihanovićevu 'Lijepa naša domovino'. Prema novinskoj belešci, u kratkoj pauzi

posle otpevane druge pesme, pesnik Matošić prišao je prvom redu u kome su sedeli Stojan i Milja, i rekao tako glasno da su ga svi u dvorani mogli lepo čuti:

-Milostiva Blagojević, zašto ne pojete pjesme hrvatske?

Izveštač (*nepotpisan*) kaže da je gospođa Melania odgovorila:

- Ne osjećam se dužnom pojati ako mi se ne poj.

Na to je pesnik Matošić, inače veliki pobornik Starčevića i intimni prijatelj Kvaternika, viknuo što ga patriotsko grlo nosi:

- Vlasi van! Van iz Hrvatske ko u Hrvatskoj hrvatsku pjesmu ne poj!

Zašto je već ova novinska *critica* - prvi ulov iz mutnog i neurednog sanduka - imala tako veliki, prosvjetiteljski značaj za moja konačna zaključivanja o slučaju Milja-Stojan? Ne samo zato što se već iz nje sasvim jasno vidi Miljino tvrdoglavu i prkosno rodoljublje, o kome Stojan u dnevničkim beleškama nije zapisao ni slova, i o kome u posvećenim istorijama nije rekao ni reči, već mnogo više zato što iz novinske *critice* nedvosmisleno proizilazi da je za razliku od Milje, Stojan hrvatske pesme pevao!

Timor Mortis, p 129

While Nanka represents a bastion of national identity within the family, Milja is the female bastion of society in general. If Selenić had the intention of indicating the appearance of the first Serban feminists in 1871, then Milja Grubičeva, middle-class born 'srpsko-pravoslavna patriotkinja', would certainly be one of them:

Milja je bila, naročito s obzirom na vreme u kojem je živela, jedna izuzetno samostalna, obrazovana i pametna žena. Zajedno sa profesorom Krestićem, jedan je od najzaslužnijih pregalaca u osnivanju literarnog udruženja srpskih omladinaca, đaka i studenata u Zagrebu i Pakracu. Bez njene pomoći, finansijske, moralne i organizacijske, teško da bi došlo do osnivanja pakračke Preparandije u vreme kada je država po svaku cenu stala širiti mrežu komunalnih škola, a smanjivati broj i sužavati delokrug školama pojedinih konfesija i nacionalnosti. Sve su to bila neobična nastojanja za ženu u tom muškom veku u kome se slabijem polu priznavali pravo na lepotu, na luksuz, na kačiperstvo, ali ne i na pamet i preduzimljivost u ozbiljnim narodnim poslovima.

Timor Mortis, p 131

Furthermore, Milja expresses her patriotism by giving not only moral and financial support, she also takes an active part in the defence of the Serbian collective by publicly articulating her opinions and writing for newspapers.

Naime, incident zabeležen u 'Obzoru' nije se dogodio slučajno baš na dan održavanja Prve skupštine hrvatskih učitelja. Pored brojnih Srba, učitelja, Skupštini je prisustvovala i milostiva Blagojevićka, sigurno sa namerom da napiše dopis za neki od srpskih listova u kojima je - da otkrijem konačno i tu tajnu - Milja tajno sarađivala, potpisujući se pseudonimom Boško Jugović.

Timor Mortis, p 132

Nevertheless, as the author himself underlines, Milja was an exceptional woman in a patriarchal environment, but there was an other side of her 'life-coin'. Her husband Stojan resents her because of her political activities and describes her as a cold-hearted wife and unfit mother:

Blagoslov materinske sreće nije zasjao u Miljinim grudima kada je na njenim rukama zaplakao sin Stanko...

...Najgora je 'protuprirodna mržnja' koju je majka u svemu ispoljavala prema 'svomu jadnomu porodu'. Neumoran je Stojan u opisivanju Miljinih majčinskih nastranosti.

Timor Mortis, p 121-123

Stojan attacks Milja's motherhood and femininity, resenting his strong, politically decisive and independent-minded wife, who constantly reminds him that his personal political conviction is weak and unreliable. With an attempt to improve his political position and to climb high in the political scene, Stojan married Milja mostly for

her money, not expecting that his wife would become his strongest political and moral judge:

Tek sada postaje jasno da Stojanovo ponašanje nije bilo moguće proniknuti dok nije utvrđeno postojanje jedne snažne i samosvesne Milje u njegovom životu. Sada znamo i razloge sa kojih je lukavi Starac, željan slave kod budućih pokoljenja, Miljino rodoljublje potpuno prećutao. Prećutao ga je zato što uporedjen sa stamenom Miljom, Stojan Blagojević počinje pomalo da izgleda kao - da upotrebim reč koju sam našao u krestičevom pismu - vešta vrdlama. Vrdlama kao Srbin, vrdlama kao narodnjak., vrdlama kao prijatelj, vrdlama kao suprug...

...Međutim, posljednja osoba koja bi mogla gajiti poštovanje prema 'politiku postojeće situacije' bila je svakako Stojanova stamena supruga, sva nastala da učini štogod korisno za rod svoj, za pravdu na svetu, za napredak i poboljšanje ljudi....vrlo stroga prema sebi, Milja nikako nije mogla biti popustljiva prema svome mužu, moralno aljkavom, uvek spremnom, čak i sposobnom da opravda svoje koristoljubljive sebičnosti pozivanjem na visoka i viša načela.

Timor Mortis, p 135, 136

Milja's patriotism, personal strength and dedicated political activism are too much for her husband to handle. He feels threatened by her, as most men in so solid a patriarchal society would. This is why the narrator Dragan himself expresses his sympathy for Stojan:

I mada sam, priznajem, privrženiji Miljinoj strani, ipak lako razumem šta je Stojanu moralo smetati kod njegove obrazovane i bogate supruge. Prvo, upravo to što je bila bogata i što je bila obrazovana. Nije lako biti dužnik bilo kome, a strašno je, verovatno, biti muž žene koja te izdržava i prezire. Nije lakše od toga - pogotovo ne u tom dobu u kome se idealnom smatra žena koja ne misli, a pristojnom ona koja čuti, čak i ako nešto misli - takmičiti se sa suprugom u znanju, sporiti se s njom oko moralnosti ili nemoralnosti jednog ili drugog, javnog ili privatnog čina. Međutim, iako ge je Miljino bogatstvo negde, skriveno, vredalo, iako se zbog njene misaone samosvesti, možda pred svetom ponekad ženirao, ipak je, uveren sam, Stojanu najteže padalo

to što u kući ima ažurnog moralnog policajca, nepodmitljivog rodoljuba koji sve njegove postupke budno prati i procenjuje sa stanovišta najviših ideaala srpskog naroda. Stojan je, naravno, smatrao da na najbolji, najrazumniji način, i sam radi za dobro srpskog naroda, ali, bez brze pameti, poznavalac ljudske duše, negde u dubini svoje morao je sijaset prilika osetiti da je ipak Milja ta koja brani hvalevredna srpska načela i predlaže ispravno postupanje, a da on, zapravo, traži puteve kojima je moguće proći bez bruke pred rodom, ali i bez ličnog gubitka.

Timor Mortis, p 139, emphasis mine

Milja (Timor Mortis) and Nanka (Očevi i oci) are not the only female characters in Selenić's novels who stand up to defend collective morality and its values. Mara Grubićeva (Timor Mortis) is portrayed as yet another devotee of collective ethics. In their name she condemns young Biljana for becoming the lover of a German soldier and arranges for her arrest after the victory of the communists, regardless of everything Biljana had done to save the life of Mara's granddaughter. Commenting on the latest war and violence in the former Yugoslavia, Julie Mostov, in her essay 'Our Women/Their Women'²⁰¹, says:

Paired with epic heroes are brave mothers who sacrifice their sons and husbands for the nation and tend the wounds of the fallen warriors and faithful wives who keep the hearth burning and who bear the future generations of heroes. Women in mourning, peasant women, forced out of their homes, women refugees packed into trucks with crying children, on the other hand, are symbols of the national tragedy and reasons for national revenge.

The brave grandmother, Mara Grubić, who escaped from Ustasha torture against the Serbs in Croatia, who lost her husband, son, two daughters, and, at last, found refuge with her family in Belgrade,

²⁰¹ J. Mostov, 'Our Women/ Their Women' in Peace & Change, Sage Periodicals Press, October 1995, Volume 20, Number 4, p 520

exemplifies precisely the 'destiny': Serbian national tragedy and suffering throughout the Second World War. On the other hand, Biljana, a young Serbian woman who becomes the lover of a German soldier during the Nazi occupation of Belgrade, is a symbol of a person with an identity problem. Becoming the enemy's lover, she betrays fundamental national values because, in wartime a woman's body is not hers any more, it is part of the collective body. To submit it willingly to the collective's enemy is a crime against one's own collective and, as Julie Mostov in her essay says: '*Women who fail to observe the borders, who transgress them through mixed marriages and other personal relationships or who engage in activities that otherwise push them to the margins of the community, are castigated.*'²⁰² Tragically enough, Biljana is punished in the most vicious way. The fact that she is accused and arrested by a woman is not surprising. It is yet another indication of a necessary distinction between "bad" and "good" women during times when the collective is in danger.

The transmission of national tradition and culture is not the only channel through which a woman is expected to secure the perceived needs of her nation. The maintenance of 'family' is also one of them as, in the words of Julie Mostov, '*women preserve traditions in the home, observe dietary and other ritual, and, through their chastity and modesty, reflect the virtue of the nation.*'²⁰³ Throughout Selenić's novel Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, Mara Veri, the wife of Istref Veri, utters not a single word. She is one of the many silent and voiceless mothers and wives whose main concern is the livelihood of their families.

Zastao je na pragu, bez reči je posmatrao Maru kako užurbano posluje oko

202 ibid, p 520

203 ibid, p 520

šporeta. Nije još ni maramu sa glave skinula. Kasni. Mantil je preko kuhinjskog stola bacila. Mora večera za izgladnelu decu i umornog muža na vreme biti gotova, pa tako, sva usredređena na posao, ne primećuje Istrefa iza svojih leđa

Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p 222

Her life is organised around the development of her husband's career. She is portrayed as one of those women who stand by their men and selflessly support them in their efforts to achieve their personal ambitions and goals:

Njegov latentni stid što je đak pored dece đaka; strah da nečim ne obelodani svoj najdublji motiv: da Dulju, Baškimu, Liriji i Tanji, da Mari pokloni za život oca i muža inženjera; njegovu žalost što ženu, preumornu od brige oko dece i prekovremenog rada (bez koga Istref ne bi diplomirao) još opterećuje i strepnjom oko polaganja - to slojevito, mutno, duboko osećanje koje je Istref uspešno potiskivao iz vidnog i emocionalnog polja, za Maru je bila jasna, prisutna realnost, muka koju je spremno umesto muža, u izvesnom smislu, na sebe preuzela.

Prijatelji sa Kosančićevog venca, p 226

A wife and mother figure is continuously present in most of Selenić's novels. But, closer observation indicates that he is a writer who does not simply praise this role with an attempt to glorify its significance. Instead, Selenić portrays this role parallel with its association with changes in a society. In the light of the relationship between Mara and Istref, Selenić implies that their marriage is more a result of circumstances due to historical and social changes rather than a harvest of passionate love. Describing Mara's arrival in Kosančićev venac, the author reveals that she also represents a part of the proletarian masses who arrived in the town after the victory of

communism with the ambition of integrating themselves into the new system. The relationship between her and her husband is described as '*vezanost dva sama čoveka u svet bačena, dva dodoša odrasla zajedno, stasala na isti način u društvena bića, ljubavnike, roditelje, građane.*' (p 226)

Just like Mara, Tankosava in Memoari Pere Bogalja is also portrayed as one of the mothers who never gets to tell their own story. 'Buried' alive behind the kitchen walls, treated as an unimportant object and servant who is to provide a comfortable life for her son, husband and their friends, she represents all those women who silently carry on with their lives, cooking, cleaning and providing a home for their men who are focused only on stepping up in the new communist world. Her son Pero says:

Gledam je kako se vrti oko stola za kojim Miloje i Blagoje igraju tablića, ne primećujući njen prisustvo, gledam je kako nezgrapno tabana po tepihu pokušavajući da nađe neki razlog da ostane još trenutak u sobi dok neko od njih ne počne da sipa viski - i mislim kako je daleko moje opuzensko vreme. Tankosava je za mene još samo komad mesa u kome, ponekad, otkrijem i po neku nogatu osobinu. Od nje me deli čitavo čovečanstvo, a tom rastojanju mora da se doda još ono koje nju deli od nogatog čovečanstva.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 54

The portrayal of Tankosava in Memoari Pere Bogalja is related to a delineation and disappearance of fundamental human values with the arrival of Communism. Describing throughout the novel the disrespect to which Tankosava is exposed by her son and husband, Selenić accentuates the loss of basic moral values within the family which is, no doubt, the most important pillar of every patriarchal

society. For Pero and Miloje, Tankosava is the last remnant of the world they wish to leave behind in their aspiration to become part of the new one:

Znala je Tankosava da njen fiđelovački kosmos ne može da se poredi sa našim, i da, zato što je prosta, ona oseća potrebu za nekim stvarima koje mi uopšte ne poznajemo, a da ona iz istih razloga ne shvata, uglavnom, ništa od onoga što mi govorimo i volimo. Mnogo je očekivati od mene da objasnim kako je to Tankosava znala, pošto ne mogu da objasnim ni kako slonovi znaju mesto na koje treba da odu kada hoće da umru. Međutim, ako ne umem da objasnim, znam sigurno da je Tankosava činila sve da se okruži stvarima koje se njoj dopadaju, i da je ponekad, kao i sada kada je stavljača ružu, stidljivo verovala da i nama može makar za trenutak da ulepša život ono što se njoj toliko dopadalo, a što mi nismo hteli ili mogli da primetimo.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 37

However, Tankosava is the only one who, with all the naiveté and ignorance of a woman new to an urban society and its changes, clearly sees their tragic effect within her family. Neither Pero nor his father Miloje, heartless in their ambition to integrate into the new Communist world, recognises their last chance to preserve some of the basic human values in the rose which Tankosava offers them on the coffee tray. Her last and moving attempt to make their world nicer and to preserve the world of certain values with a simple paper red rose is unkindly denied:

Tankosava gubi nadu da će početi da piju viski i da će primetiti njenu ružu. Polazi prema vratima, okreće se prema stolu blesavo se izvinjavajući zbog nečeg, bogzna zbog čega.

Miloje baca poslednju kartu iz ruke.

- Moj posledak - kaže i skuplja karte na gomilu. Odlaže taj posao za trenutak i nagnje se prema poslužavniku. Uzima led iz posrebrene kristalne

kofice. Tankosava staje kao ukopana. nastavlja da se kreće prema vratima, ali sporo, zablesena u poslužavnik i Miloja. Svoje nezgrapne noge u plitkim muškim cipelama tako vuče po tepihu. Desnoj uvek zasmeta leva, pa mora nekako nespretno da je preskoči kako bi mogla da nastavi svoje sporo napredovanje prema vratima do kojih nikako ne želi da stigne pre nego što vidi šta će Miloje učiniti kada vidi ružu.

Miloje pošto je stavio tri kocke u svoju čašu, gura koficu prema Blagoju. Blagoje odlaže karte i hoće da primi koficu od Miloja. Ali, avaj, Miloje je nespretno gurnuo ružu i ona polete prema podu. Blagoje mahinalno pokuša da je uhvati, ali ne uspe. Neodlučno se saginje da je podigne, ali pošto mu nije na dohvat ruke, otavlja je da leži na zemlji. Očigledno ju je registrovao samo kao neki neodređeni predmet. Tankosava izlazi iz sobe.

Kada bi neko sada pažljivo pogledao u mene, video bi da se tresem od bezglasnog smeha i gnušanja.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 54

On the very same day, Tankosava commits suicide. The mother who carried her son on her back for miles to the partisan hospital after he lost his legs in an air raid, the wife who continued to care for her husband despite constant humiliation, and the woman who greeted his lovers, friends and nurtured his child from another woman - eventually lost her fortitude. Just before she hangs herself in the kitchen, in her last 'inner' struggle, she asks her son, for the first and the last time, 'Šta je to Pero ?'. The question is a final and, sadly enough, unheard scream of a woman who has witnessed the disappearance of all moral values within her own family. Analysing Selenic's novel Memoari Pere Bogalja the Serbian critic Petar Džadžić suggests:

Destrukcija je komplementarna sa autodestrukcijom. Pera govori o svojim 'škorpionskim principima', svom 'pravu na samouništenje'. Perino ruženje majke ('smrdljiva Tankosava') samo je izraz te samoništalačke potrebe. Šta je skrivila Tankosava? Ona je za Peru 'moja smrdljiva geneza'. 'Kako da je volim kad me je

ona baš rodila'.²⁰⁴

Granted that Pero's '*samoništilačka potreba*' really exists, one still has to question Dadžić's belief that Pero's disrespect and mistreatment of his mother (or as Džadžić kindly says: '*ruženje*' - telling off !) is only '*izraz te samoništilačke potrebe*'. There is an intention here to suggest that Tankosava is, more than anything, Pero's constant reminder of his origins ('*geneza*' - genesis!), the remembrance of where he comes from and what he does not want to be any more. Furthermore, even if she does not talk, makes no decisions, has no influence on the plot of the novel and is always in its background, Tankosava is the conscience of the novel. She is the one who symbolises fundamental human and family values, the only one who preserves them. An unselfish, loving and caring woman, Tankosava becomes a metaphor, and her kitchen a mausoleum of altruism which, with her death, irretrievably vanishes from the Prokić family:

Nekako znam: u rodoskrvnom zagrljaju rodiće se i odmah od ljudskih razmena nrasti Antigona i Polinik, Ismena i Eteokle, da bi se jedni žrtvovali, drugi bratoubilački uništavali, treći vladali, četvrti zaljubljivali, bili lepi ili ružni, slavni ili prokleti, slepi, zagledani u mutljag sa željom da u njemu otkriju svoju večnost. Toliko mi je bilo obično što će se to dogoditi, da sam bio nepatetično iznenađen, podižući svoju mutnu glavu od kante i penjući se u kolica, što Edipova deca još nisu pomolila svoje glavice, ljubopitljivo zagledana svojim mladim, tek rođenim očima u svetli, veliki čudni svet naske kuhinje, jedan među svetovima, grobnicu među grobnicama.

Tada mi se učinili da sam se otreznio. Učinilo mi se zatim da je sve obično. Učinilo mi se da Tankosava sasvim obično visi na prozoru dok se ja sasvim obično umivam nad kuhinjskim lavaboom sa posuđem koje je Tana savesno oprala pre nego što ja zakucala kuku u zid. Nagnut nad lavabo, počeo sam da ridam, mirno uveren da je to sve što znam, i sve što sam ikada mogao.

²⁰⁴ P. Džadžić, Homo Balcanicus, Homo Heroicus, Bigz, Beograd, 1987, p 307

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 244

What Tankosava is for Pero and Miloje in Memoari Pere Bogalja, Zlata is for her husband Radiša in Pismo-Glava: a witness from the past and a constant disturbance of the present. Zlata is the one who knows and shares Radiša's life as an active participant since his father brought him to the town and left him to live with her family. She shares the memories of his fears, struggles and crises during the painful process of integration into an urban, middle-class environment. Furthermore, as Zlata is the one who tells Radiša about Maksimilijan's support for the Informbiro in the hope that he would help him, she is also a constant and painful reminder of the fact that instead of helping him, Radiša abandoned Maksimilijan and did nothing to save him after his imprisonment by the communist authorities. Unlike Tankosava who offers a red rose, Zlata offers revenge:

Ponekad pomislim da sam i onda, sluđena i savršeno bespomoćna, ipak znala da se udajem za Radišu samo zato da bih mogla da iživim svoju veliku i neslućeno upornu pakost koja je još jedina u stanju da prene, pokrene neko strasnije osjećanje u meni, natera krv da brže struji u mojim žilama. Šta sam sve radila tom Radiši! I kako je on sve to trpeo! Ponekad bih čak htela i da mi ga bude žao, ali mi ne polazi za rukom. Kada jednom počne iz mene da kulja žuč i bes, ne mogu da se zaustavim, ne mogu da nađem ni trunka saosećanja u mom glupavom zlobnom, skvrčenom srcu.

Pismo-Glava, p 238

Marrying Radiša afterwards, Zlata becomes vindictive. In her revenge she does everything to deny him life, just as he and his communist

compatriots did to Maksimiljan. The lack of love, understanding and communication in their marriage becomes a product of her antipathy and bitterness toward Radiša. Her constant maltreatment of Radiša and his feelings aim to punish him not only for her personal pain and sorrow after Maksimiljan's death, but for everything that died with him. Zlata's emotional abuse goes so far that, in order perpetually to irritate Radiša's conscience, she names their son after Maksimiljan:

Devet meseci sam razmišljala kako ču mu reći da će se moj sin, jer sin je morao biti, zvati kao ti, Maki; predviđala da li će biti uvređen ili zadovoljan, možda radosan možda razgnevљен - sve je bilo moguće po onome što sam mogla da znam - kada to bude čuo, pošto će, u to nije bilo sumnje, on samo čuti nešto što je odlučeno mnogo, mnogo ranije.

Pismo-Glava, p 232

No doubt, Zlata's revenge finds its target: Radiša becomes intimidated and Zlata's behaviour affects him deeply. He becomes a perfect example of a 'nonbeing', to use the term of David Holbrook who suggests that '*she can bring you into fulfilment by her 'being for'; but if she withdraws her love, she can condemn you to everlasting unfulfilment - that is, to annihilation or 'nonbeing'.*'²⁰⁵ Radiša is very much aware of Zlata's motives for treating him badly, but nevertheless his feelings for her are almost obsessive:

Ona šusljiva, a ja zatelebao, ne umem ništa nikad pametno i muški da odradim. Drkadžija. Drkadžija si Prokiću Radiša, veliki drkadžija ! I sad oče suze da ti udare kad se ti dana sećaš, žao ti je samog sebe, a sam si kriv što ti je trebalo toliko godina da svatiš što si od svog života uradio i u kakvom ropstvu živiš. I možda, nekad ozbiljno pomislim, poverujem čak da ništa tu Zlata nije kriva. Ne sme čovek da se pusti, ako je čovek, a kad se već pusti, onda nek ne kuka što mu

²⁰⁵ D. Holbrook, Images of Woman in Literature, NY University Press, New York, 1989, p 120

na grbaču sednu. Što više trpiš, to si za trpljenje bolji, što ti bolji, to se gore prema tebi postupa. Ima nešto što je prirodno i ima nešto što je neprirodno. Prirodno je da je muž gazda u kući i da žena sluša; neprirodno je da muž uplaskan bude i provodi život pogađajući želje ženine, jebi ga, ali to znam ja sada, a onda, godinama ja ko seronja piljim u nju i sve se bojim da nešto ne pogrešim, na sve pristajem, ne živim uopšte svoj život, ali ne vredi, nikad dosta i nikad dobar.....

....Idiot, eto šta je. Ona me ko barabu, ko prostaka, ko slugu me tretira, sunce joj jebem dimitrijevićevsko, a ja se sve bojim da će da je izgubim, da će pred njom da pogrešim, mesto da me boli plajvaz što će pogrešiti i što će je izgubiti.

Pismo-Glava, p 294-295

For her actions Zlata is also condemned by her own son. After an embarrassing scene caused by the arrival of his father's lover, Maksimilijan tries to leave the house without saying a word to his mother. Zlata remembers:

-Kuda ćeš, Maki - kažem mu kad sam shvatila da je on stigao do vrata i da svi izlaze iz ove kuće, jedno po jedno, i da u njoj ostajem samo ja, ne zbog toga što mi je tu dobro, nego zato što nemam kuda da odem. Zaustavila sam ga svojim pitanjem ali samo zakratko. Osećam kako se vrpolji na nogama, smišlja šta da kaže, i čini mi se da to veom adugo traje. Konačno čujem gde kaže glasno i razgovetno:

- To ti je, mama, što ti je - a onda žurno izlazi, treći i posljednji put zatvarajući ulazna vrata stana u kome, kao zaraza, caruje moja velike postiđenost.

Pismo-Glava, p 251

According to her husband and son, Zlata is herself to blame for her fate. Both of them judge her behaviour as bad, irrespective of the origins of Zlata's motives, but solely on account of its consequences for Radiša. However, it must not be forgotten that her revenge begins when, for the benefit of his career and political advancement, Radiša

stays a devoted communist but turns against his friend. In addition, Zlata's obsession with Maksimiljan's death is not merely a fixation with the loss of friend and love, it is also her personal struggle with the shocking discovery that circumstances surrounding his death are the beginning of the new system and undoubtedly the beginning of the destruction of the good old values at the same time. Being aware of what the 'new world' is about and what 'qualities' are developing, in her dialogue with the dead Maksimiljan Dimitrijević, she says:

Ne usuđuju se da kažu nešto otvoreno protiv, znaju da je kupanje civilizovana stvar, slip gaćice i potkošulja odeća kruga kome pripadaju, viski nešto što ima svaka bolja kuća, ali potajno vjeruju da je sve to neka velike igra i da svi koji se prave kako to ne znaju, zapravo lažu i sebe i svoju okolinu. Niti vole, niti umeju o tome da misle, da mrze - utoliko više, ukoliko je to očiglednije - sve one koji su drukčiji, mada i sami pokušavaju da budu takvi. Oni ne smeju da kažu šta zapravo vole, ali to se može ustanoviti po onome što ih ogorčuje: studenti, mada su im deca među njima; odsustvo burazerstva, mada su iz straha naučili da se ponašaju uzdržano; slike golišavih lepotica, mada ih potajno gledaju, ali u kuću ne unose; intelektualci, mada to ne smeju da kažu osim kad se nađu u političkom krdu jednomišljenika, kome je dat zadatak za napad; dugačke kose, mada im po stanu šetaju; Amerikanaci, jer govore engleski, Slovenci, zato što su vredni i skromni. Vole Ruse, koje moraju da napadaju; narodne svirače kojih se teška srca, ali ipak, u javnom glasanju na radničkog saveta odriču u korist operskih pevača ili slikarskih zamlata; kiseo kupus koji poručuju strancima na službenom ručku da i oni jadni vide šta je dobro, mada je seljacko i prosto; čvrstu ruku, jer u svoje mišljenje s razlogom nemaju poverenja; vole seljake, jer mogu da ih nipođaštavaju; kampovanje u Baškoj Vodi, jer tamo svi jedu paradajz sa slaninom i bacaju otpatke po plaži; pukli po polovini kao zrele bundeve, vole ono što smeju da preziru, i preziru ono što moraju da vole

Pismo-Glava, p 236

Just like Tankosava in her kitchen, Zlata is totally on her own. 'Sama sam. Maki, strahovito sam sama.' - 'Sama sam Maki' - she repeats these

words just a few minutes before she commits suicide. The last witness of Radiša's immorality dies by injecting herself with a dose of insulin, the precious liquid deliberately denied to the imprisoned Maksimiljan by the creators of the new, better world, which consequently resulted in his death. The fact that both of Selenić's female characters, Zlata and Tankosava, commit suicide, appears to be more than just coincidence. These two women were two Don Quixotes in a world of vanished values and the two last witnesses of the moral crimes committed within their own families in the name of the promised, better future. But, instead of the arrival of the new world, both of them had their lives shattered by the disappearance of the old one. While in her naiveté, Tankosava tries to save the ethics of the past with a red paper rose (the colour of love!), knowing that it is too late, in the name of the same ethics Zlata becomes judge and executor. Unfortunately for both women, it was a struggle without support, as everyone else had left a long time ago.

In Selenić's latest novel Ubistvo s predumišljajem, there is yet another indication that his illustration of female characters is a part of the portrayal of change within society in general. In addition, Ubistvo s predumišljajem vigorously underlines the differences between an old, middle-class society, and a new communist world in the portrayal of two female characters, the grandmother Jelena Aranđelovic versus the granddaughter Jelena Panić. Jelena Aranđelovic is a caring and compassionate yet strong individual. She is portrayed as an independent-minded young lady, ready to demonstrate her beliefs and disagreements in a firm, but well-mannered fashion. Unlike Tankosava and Zlata, she is neither saviour nor avenger of the old world. With full understanding of the social and historical changes

that took place with the arrival of communism, and without an identity crisis but in order to 'survive', Jelena decides to adapt to the new world:

I evo, Jovane, sada ču ti, dragi Jovane, najdraži Jovane, otkriti istinu o tome svetu, saznanje koje mi se učini smrtonosnim uvek kada poverujem da je konačno, istinu koju nećeš voleti, ali koju moraš da čuješ:

TO JE SVET, JOVANE, U KOJI ĆE KRSMANI UČI LAKO, A MI, ILI UZ NJIH, ILI NIKAKO.

Eto, rekoh.

Vidiš Jovane moj, mali moj, to je ono što nisam umela da ti kažem dovoljno razumljivim rečima, može biti zato sto sam se pre dolaska u Pariz potajno nadala da je zulukaferska invazija zaustavljena ispred zidina zapadnog sveta, da se antemurale civilitatis, kao i hrišćanski bedem u tursko doba, proteže duž naših granica, ali da se kroz taj bedem može proći u svet boljih običaja i negovanih navika, svet koji će makar ličiti, ako ne i isti biti sa našim, nestalim, u kome smo kako-tako, dok je još postojao, mogli živeti neizloženi najgorim poniženjima.

Nema ga. Jovane. Tog sveta. Osuđeni smo na krsmane presudom koja je konačna. Ne govorim ti ovo da bih sebe pravdala, još manje zato da bih tebi štogod prebacivala. Sve je onako kako je, sva je prilika, moralo biti. Ono što sam sa smrtnom strepnjom u srcu naslućivala - čak i onda kada sam ti se najžešće suprotstavljala u našim pijanim svađama bez početka, bez smisla i bez ishoda; čak i onda kada sam zdvojna u duši, odlučna u postupku, dozvolila Krsmanu da se približi našem zabranu kao spasilac čemernih ostataka naše negdanje nezavisnosti - sada se u oprostačenom Parizu obznanjuje u mojoj svesti kao tragična izvesnost.

Znam šta govorim Jovane.

Prošla sam kroz antemurale civilitatis i - ušla u pustotu.

Novi gospodari sveta govore ruski i američki, a mi, Jovane, moramo ili začutati, ili te jezike naučiti.

Od jednog prevodioca iz sovjetske delegacije čula sam poslovicu:

“Celovjek padljec ka vsemu privikaet”

Neka to bude prva rečenica koju sam naučila iz jezika kojim govori novi svet.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 205

In contrast, her granddaughter Jelena Panić, is an entirely different

individual. Aggressive and pushy in expressing her opinions, stubborn rather than determined in her intentions, with highly offensive language and outrageous behaviour, she exemplifies the 'harvest' of the communist system. Probably one of the most interesting segments for observation of the differences between grandmother and granddaughter is also the visible difference in the behaviour of these female characters within their sexual lives. Jelena Arandelovic is portrayed as a passionate young woman, still in control of her own feelings and desires. She develops an awareness of her own sexuality as a young girl at the age of fourteen, engaging herself in a passionate relationship with Jovan. Nevertheless, Jelena learns to control her own sexual desire in order to establish an emotional balance, but also in order to serve certain moral values and beliefs which were part of her upbringing.

U njenom prvom sloju je strah. seks medu odraslima sadrzi jedan zabranjen i kažnjiv deo. Seks među decom - jer o sebi smo još uvek tako mislili - svakako je nešto što ni po koju cenu, ni po cenu naše smrti, ne sme da bude otkriveno. Prezreo bi nas Stavra. Rođaci. Prezreli bi nas u školi.. Prezreo bi nas ceo grad, cela država, možda i cela Evropa.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 79

On the other hand, within the same context, Jelena Panić is once again portrayed as an assertive young woman whose understanding of sexual relationships is not necessarily associated with love and affection:

Moram ovde, na ovom mestu, kao pisac, nавest da mi je životni seksualni učinak mizerija. Beda bedina. Samo su me dvojica tucali. A i to je bilo - da te bog sačuva od šuge i od takve jebačine!

Prvi Gugutka .

Zamolila sam ga. kao drugara.

- Da li bi me pojebao, Gule? - pitam ga ja.

- Ma jok, bre, Bulika - tako me zovu on i debeli, kratko za bulterijer, jebo ih bulterijer u dupe pedersko - mi smo drugari.

-U redu - pristajem ja - ostacemo drugari. Ali nabij mi ga, pizda mu materina, samo jednom, da vidim kako je.

Ubistvo s predumišljajem, p 89

Jelena Aranđelovic justifies the fact that she engages in a sexual relationship with her best friend's boyfriend or with a married man, very easily and without any sense of guilt, by 'sexual need'. Nevertheless, however 'unpolished', Jelena Panić is a tragic character. Her personal fate is, in a sense, also the final chapter in an unfinished story about her grandmother. Jelena's awareness and observations about her own times and the insanity of the war between Serbia and Croatia, as well as her personal tragedy, clearly describe the final and devastating outcome of the communist system. Tragically enough, unlike her grandmother, Jelena Panić has no choice. The extent of the madness developed within society and her personal pain are beyond her comprehension, so she decides to leave her homeland. Unlike Tankosava in Memoari Pere Bogalja and Zlata in Pismo-Glava, Jelena Panić does not commit suicide, but like them, forever leaves behind a world of diminishing humanity .

As mentioned earlier, the majority of Selenić's female characters are portrayed according to the roles they have in the Serbian patriarchal society. In addition, as an English woman, who is trying to 'integrate' into the Serbian society, Elizabeth Medaković in Očevi i oci is probably one of Selenić's most interesting female characters. Being a 'foreigner', ultimately an individual with a distinct

understanding of life and relations inside a society, she is presented as Stevan's helping hand in his observations of Serbia:

Već četrdeset godina ja nisam kadar pogledati oko sebe, a da ne stavim na oči urokliivo-nepristranu dioptriju Elizabetinih naočari. Prođem pored šajkače sakata bednika na prašnjavaom pločniku i - ne bes, ne gnušanje, već duboko razočarenje me ispunи kada ga sravnim sa Nankinim živopisima Zeke Buljubaše ili junaka sa Čelopeka, velike Hoče, Petraljice, ali u tom času, moj mali lični okulista, dežuran i hitar, menja stakla, pa sakata bednika namah vidim engleskim zelenim pogledom koji nema složenost što umnogoznačava, već samo ledenu prodornost tuđe bezosećajnosti.

Očevi i oci, p 143

Nevertheless, arriving in a new and for her completely unfamiliar environment, Elizabeth brings the mores of her own culture but also readiness to 'integrate' into the new one. She is eager to learn the old Serbian customs as well as demonstrating no reluctance to participate in them. For instance, in her relationship with Stevan's father, Elizabeth reveals well-mannered consideration for the old patriarchal tradition:

U tom trenu, vidim, kako im se pogledi susreću, ruka Milutinova prestaje da se otima, rađa se neki smešak, smešak poverenja, u Elizabetinom oku, koji starac odmah prepoznaje; dva smeška nekog tajnog razumevanja vežu se u dogovor samo njima jasan, oslobođajući sporazum važeći za njih i uperen protiv sveg ostalog sveta: Elizabeta vedro, bez stida, ljubi domaćinovu ruku; Milutin, bez nelagode, poljubac prima.

Očevi i oci, p 195

Further on, she makes an impressive effort to learn the Serbian language, to 'decode' their life style in the best possible way and to bring up her son in the spirit of the Serbian culture by doing 'sve što je

bilo u njenoj moći da Mihajlo raste kao Srbin i da se za život među njima osposobljava.’(p 188) Her efforts to guide the upbringing of her son within the specificity of the Serbian culture and its tradition, reinforce an early suggestion that Selenić’s female characters play a fundamental role in the process of the transmission of a national identity:

Mummy, no one understands English there!

-Ali Majkl, ti si Srbin u Srbija i u Srbija se govori srbski. Moraš govoriti srbski ako želiš biti razumevan. To je tvoj rodni jezik.

U tom pogledu, dakle, Elizabeta je bila svesno opredjeljena. Mihajlo je Srbin u Srbiji i njegov maternji jezik, bez obzira na poreklo materino, jeste srpski.

Očevi i oci, p 189

Interestingly enough, Elizabeth’s efforts to reconcile herself to her new surroundings, not necessarily approving of every segment of it but fully respecting its frame of mind, are not always welcomed with sympathy or understanding. It was mentioned earlier that the one of the most difficult ‘obstacles’ for Elizabeth is Nanka’s constant refusal to comprehend and accept her ‘otherness’. Moreover, a closer analysis of Elizabeth’s letters, written to her cousin Arčibald’s wife Rachel, reveals the existence of yet another obstacle on her way towards her settlement into the Serbian, overwhelmingly patriarchal community. Some of Selenić’s critics, such as Igor Mandić, suggest that these letters maintain an ‘efekt izdvojenosti kojim se na pravi način uobličuje puna struktura ovog djela!’. Mandić continues by saying that

Elizabetina izdvojena pisma efektna su do humorne note zbog njenog relativno slabog vladanja srpskim. ali ne predstavljaju samo olakšavajuću pauzu u

*romanesknoj napetosti, već služe Seleniću za zanimljivo kontrastiranje dveju kultura, engleske i srpske.*²⁰⁶

There is no doubt that these letters begin as an observation and illustration of Elizabeth's life in Serbia, her struggles with language after her initial arrival and that they are indeed a very perceptive portrayal of the cultural differences between England and Serbia. Furthermore, they also reveal an assertive scrutiny to which Elizabeth is exposed from her new compatriots and they deliver probably the strongest example of her own readiness to 'integrate' as in these letters she reveals her conscious decision to bring up her son as a Serb. The letters also become a distressing record of a tragic misunderstanding between father and son, their political antagonism and an inability to establish a channel of communication among them. They also reveal how, with a full awareness of her son's needs and the collective demands imposed upon him, Elizabeth struggles to help him by trying to become 'Srbkinja' herself. Sadly enough, all her efforts end with the tragic conclusion that it is not good enough:

...jer pomoč moju on, bivši mali Majkl, sada više neće. Ranije sam mogla, bila sam dovolna. Sada ne mogu. Jer šta će muškarčini mama? Udavana i razvedena? I šta će Srbendi Engleskinja? Ja sam eto izbačena, nežnom rukom grubo odgurnuta. Ne mogu više ništa sa Mihajlom bez Stevana. Stevana koji nije Englez. Stevana koji jeste muškarac. Otac.

A ja, draga moja pokojna Rachel, ja odavno znam da ne vredi. Znam da ne vredi što se vredžam. Što bespomočna moram da gledam propadanje.

Očevi i oci, p 227, emphasis mine

At this point Elizabeth becomes painfully aware of the fact that her

²⁰⁶ I. Mandić, 'Pouzdano', Nin, Number 1824, 15/12/1985, Beograd

'otherness' and 'foreignness' are not the only obstacles within her struggle to become an equal member of her new homeland, but her 'femaleness' is too. She learns that within the patriarchal society where boys grow up learning that a 'Man' does not cry, where it is an honour to be a devoted member of the collective and to die for its beliefs and goals, the role of a woman is very limited. Accordingly, when collective expectations and requirements urge her son Mihajlo to prove his loyalty, Elizabeth is ultimately 'expelled' from his life for two reasons: because of her English origins and because she is a woman. As he enters the world of 'Serbian manhood', Mihajlo craves only the companionship of the defenders of his chosen identity. At this point Elizabeth's letters become more than just observing notes of a foreigner. They become the moving testimony of a lonely woman. Helpless and alone, behind the pages of her letters just like Tankosava behind the walls of her kitchen, Elizabeth begins to observe the destruction of her family. This is to say, while fighting a man's war outside as well as inside Medaković's house, Mihajlo and Stevan have no time or motivation to hear **her voice**. Elizabeth's existence becomes visible only in the context of her 'foreignness'. For Germans she is '*sumnjiva srpkinja engleskog porekla*' who has to report once a month to the Gestapo, for the partisans she is someone who refused to become their 'kibitzer', so ultimately she is 'not one of them', and for her own son she has to make a choice:

On, Mihajlo, ne bi njima oznašima, zamerio ni da su je uhapsili, a ne samo ispitivali! Ovo je revolucija, a ne 'four o'clock tea!' Pa ko sada ima vremena za blesave građanske pristojnosti, ko će lupati glavu šta ona govori, a šta ne govori toj špijunčini koji bi sutra doveo kralja u zemlju uz nos celom narodu! Neka gospođa bira: ili će živeti sa ovim narodom i za njega, ili neka ide među Engleze, širok joj

drum, šta čeka!

Očevi i oci, p 315

The first sign of Elizabeth's isolation from her family and people around her is evidently indicated by the fact that her last two letters are written to her friend Rachel who is already dead. In a desperate need to voice her self, to be heard and understood, Elizabeth writes a letter to a dead friend, because, as she says: '*Draga moja pokojna Rachel, Nemam kome. A moram.*' (p 280) In both letters Elizabeth's profound solitude is strongly emphasised in her acknowledgement that there is no one around her who wants to hear her or to talk to her, and that her dead friend is '*jedina koja mene uvek sluša. Moja strpljiva 'confidente'.*' (p 228) Her dead friend Rachel is the only 'person' to whom Elizabeth could say that even her relationship with Patrick Walker evolved as a result of deep solitude and a need to be heard, listened to:

Međutim, ako sebe jesam uspela prevariti u vezi sa moja privrženost za Patricka, ja sam vrlo dobro znala da ta privrženost više nije mala i nevažna u mome životu. Ja sam odjednom shvatila da to nije samo rad sa jednim uljudnim saradnikom i razgovor sa pametnim jednim, već da Patrick postaje za mene potreba, nasušna potreba. Stvarno. Kada provale, kako ih zove Stevan, Huni i Vizgoti, Kada Mihajlo bude grub, kada Stevan dođe pun priča o komunistima, kada sama budem u kujni, kada me hauzmajstorka Ruža na konferenciju goni, kada na konferenciji sedim - ja sve to mogu jer mislim da ću sutra, ili za dva dana, biti sa Patrickom. Ništa više. Samo to.

Očevi i oci, p 285, emphasis mine

'*Nisam više sama*' (p 287), shouts Elizabeth as she makes it clear that her adultery has nothing to do with passionate love or romance and that '*osećanje kataklizme je duša mog ljubavnog života u sred razrušene prirodne*

okoline.' (p 295). She underlines that '*seks je u našoj vezi nešto što je došlo uzgred. Ponekad mislim da u krevet smo otišli - smešno, ali tačno je - iz konvencionalnih razloga. Red je. Seks je tek okolišeno, dakle, potvrda za naše bliskosti i privrženosti, ne razlog što smo zajedno.'* (p 291) Elizabeth knows that there is no future for this relationship and that '*Patrick mi udjeljuje sebe jer jedini vidi volumen moje pustoši.*' (p 292, emphasis mine)

At this point it is important to emphasise that Elizabeth is not the only female character in Selenić's novels, who, completely alone and isolated, demonstrates an extensive '*volumen pustoši*' nor is she the only woman who talks to a dead friend. In Memoari Pere Bogalja, Pero describes his mother Tankosava:

Tada sam je video. Sedela je sama na hoklici pored šporeta, laktovima se oslonila o kolena svojih raskrečenih nogu. Buljila je u jednu tačku. Nije čula da dolazim, pa sam je nekoliko trenutaka posmatrao sa vrata. Tišina je umrvila sve oko nje. Čulo se samo kako se vreme, monotono tiktačući, razliva po kuhinji. Učinila mi se neverovatno sama.

Memoari Pere Bogalja, p 216

Further on, in Pismo-Glava, in the conversation with her dead friend Maksimilijan, Zlata similarly also shouts: '*.. strahovito sam sama...*'. Together with Tankosava in Memoari Pere Bogalja and Zlata in Pismo-Glava, Elizabeth reflects yet another example of how a strongly patriarchal structure defines and manipulates women's position by isolating them and silencing their individual voices. Not being allowed to use their considerable abilities and to bring their voices out of the silence that negates their existence, Selenić's women become a sad and tragic illustration of an overwhelmingly patriarchal structure that rests upon man's belief in the inferiority of women. As such a notion

leaves these female characters with no room for their subjective identities (even if they are of 'foreign origins'!), it is no surprise that those who attempt to resist defined roles are condemned to die, physically or psychologically. The suicides of Tankosava in Memoari Pere Bogalja and Zlata in Pismo-Glava, the internal withdrawal of Elizabeth Medaković in Očevi i oci or Jelena Panić's definitive departure from her homeland in Ubistvo s predumišljajem, become a clear and strong indication of the unbearable reality in which Selenić's female characters exist.

Conclusion

The present thesis does not claim to offer a definitive account, rather it seeks to recognise different significances within texts written by three major male authors of former Yugoslav contemporary literature. In doing so, it endeavours to demonstrate ways in which the autonomy of female identity has been limited by the interference of these authors as well as the misinterpretations of their critics. In conclusion, it appears important to highlight the continuous existence of two particular 'pattern elements' visibly present in the portrayal of female characters in the novels of Meša Selimović, Ivan Aralica and Slobodan Selenić discussed here. First, by consistently marginalising and limiting female characters in their interpretation, all three writers do not differ greatly in their perspectives regarding female identity. While their male characters, as analysed in the foregoing pages, are constantly portrayed as having minds of their own, as being individuals of action and achievement, the female characters are clearly chained to stereotype images of mainly 'emotional beings', to their sexual or domestic roles. By exploring women as objects of exchange, the ground of male fantasies, 'good' and 'bad' categories, neglecting their voice, impulses and actions,

these male authors clearly foreground their subordinated status.

The second 'pattern element' present in the portrayal of the female characters in the work of all of these authors, is the continuous condemnation of 'women rebels'. That is to say, even though such rebellions are portrayed mainly within the context of their sexuality, in spite of social pressure imposed upon them or religious sanctions awaiting them, several of the female characters in the novels discussed clearly demonstrate the urge and courage to break the chain of patriarchal conventions and step 'outside' them. The presence of these women, and their wish to free themselves, ultimately indicate the author's awareness of the existence of such aspirations and desires. Nevertheless, none of them is responsive to these particular yearnings. Or, to be more precise, they do respond by condemning them and highlighting them as disturbing and unacceptable 'elements'.

In the light of these observations and an understanding of the concern of literary critics as an attempt to investigate the truth of human experience elaborated within the framework of literature, it becomes clear why it is important to attend to the process of finding new modes for reassessing its complex issues. Specifically, as it is through literature that dominant images of women and their experience are most widely introduced to any society, it appears of great importance to determine ways in which such deeply-rooted issues as attitudes concerning women are discussed. In addition, the present thesis aspires to contribute to the process of a re-evaluation of the literature of the former Yugoslavia and the portrayal of its female characters, particularly in the work of its male authors.

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