

branimir donat

postwar croatian novel

THE AIR had not yet calmed down from the reverberations of the last explosions when Miroslav Krleža put his characteristically symptomatic question:

»How shall we express in literature all we have just experienced?«

The greater part of modern Croatian literature has been created in the light of this question, particularly prose. It is difficult to answer it unequivocally, so as to bind writers and literature once and for all, and simultaneously to satisfy the reading public and ideologists. From the creative and, even more, social authority of Miroslav Krleža the contemporaries expected and desired an answer, something like a recipe for social realism, or a legitimate variant of the so-called inter-war »left literature«. But instead, this poet only enumerated something of the bloody inventory of every war and drew the coordinates of the reality in which our country had found itself.

»The indescribability of everything we have experienced is evident. We saw death mowing, and while on one side conscience, cold as a dog's snout, dragged itself on scaffolds, in his attitude to other men could not be pettier, on the other side men had gone to gallows singing.«

In this grotesque antithesis of desperate naturalism devoid of all illusions about man and the sublime romantic confidence in the Idea, the greatest living Croatian writer has asked himself:

»Can this three-and-a-half-centuries-old clownish rhetoric console us today? With the sublimity of their literary fashions, many are already consoling themselves over the murdered muses, and for more than three thousand years literature, has been oscillating on the verge of madness and death as a lamp without which even Dante would not have descended into hell.«

Under the load of the terrible facts of life and history, sometimes intimately convinced, and very often publicly solicited to express their impressions through the evidence of the events before, during, and after the war, Croatian prose writers of the first postwar years very often wrote war diaries, documentary or considerably fictionalized memoirs.

Rhetoric which divests words of their original meanings, the patina of pathos which knew no limits conceals the truth, convincing, natural, and a certain obedience to the desired ideological equalization of human fate, did not promise much in the field of art.

Other writers were first of all interested in how to evoke all experiences and events. The facts of life were dramatic enough for them, general enough by their broad tragedy, so that they automatically, by analogy, also seemed to become artistically valuable.

Inside this perimeter, determined by artistic and political desirability, postwar Croatian prose was born.

However, the lovers of paradox should be told at once that the public life of this two-track prose production, the fruit of two different conceptions of the function of writer and literature had already begun in the thirties. In other words, soon as it was felt that the modernistic impetus of the literature of the twenties had slowed down and when literary experimentation was increasingly becoming an esoteric laboratory experiment unaccustomed to, and incapable of, practical answers to the increasingly more acute social problems of policy, answers that in those years of world crisis the public expected and imperatively demanded of literature.

The emphatically social function of the literature of the thirties, and of the first postwar years, seems to have developed in left writers the consciousness of returning to as rudimentary prose forms as possible, to the structures in which the ambivalence of the message was inconceivable. Hence the so frequent structure in which the pathos of everyday struggle and the struggle for social rights, stood in the foreground of the writer's interest, and thus, indirectly but affectively dictated the writer's relation to everything that might have been considered only as an useless play of imagination.

Similarly to Emile Zola, who at the end of the last century had cried out pathetically that imagination was absolutely unnecessary, the first postwar works of Croatian prose writers did not depend on imagination as the chief source of perception, but habitually kept to the facts of life, strengthened and proved by experience. And again, similarly to the realism of the seventies of the last century, the first postwar books, jotted down in the war is the short intervals between fighting very often used the character sketch (Ivan Dončević), or a grotesque parabola (Joža Horvat), with the subject matter of a possibly authentic event.

In the first postwar years the writers of the thirties entered the orbit of literary life with their literary opinions already formed, with individual style with their creative preoccupations more ambitious than to serve faithfully the political doctrine of a party. It is not surprising that, with certain oscillations, they remained faithful to their path azimuth chosen already between the two wars.

Although during the war itself a humble literary activity existed, all the works that came into existence in those years carry the stamp of specific possibilities; namely, their shortness and schmatization was not exclusively the fruit of extraliterary ideology, but of objective possibilities, or rather the impossibility to produce anything larger amidst the fighting; also by the nature of Partizan publications which acknowledged only ideological unequivocalness and epigrammatic narratives.

Not only did the war make normal literary life impossible, but many writers were also killed. Especially amongst the leftist prose writers the war swallowed many talented authors whose promise was greater than they had succeeded in realizing in the course of their short lives. The most representative names among them were August Cesarec, Ivan Goran Kovačić, Hasan Kikić, as well as Ivo Kozarčanin, who was killed in the last days before the war. Almost all these writers were linked by a certain poetic verism of social provenience, as well as by their leftist view, though not necessarily dictated by the party. Their appearance on the scene of interwar Croatian literature did not, it is true, represent also a penetration into some still unconquered regions of Croatian and Yugoslav social reality, since in front of all them loomed the formed, fully grown, and ramified literary work of Miroslav Krleža.

The individuality of narrative procedures and the autonomy of the worlds of Novak Simić and Ivan Dončević also found themselves in front of the postwar reality which increasingly required from them, as writers, to orient themselves towards a socially purposeful conception of writing. This latent purposefulness found in many works published by literary ideologists and followers of the doctrine of socialist realism, affected the general climate, and the first echoes of these requests were audible in almost all the literary works that appeared up to 1950.

The ideologist of the time, Radovan Zogović, in his programmatic paper at the first congress of Yugoslav writers, *About Our Literature, Its Position and Its Tasks Today*, after a detailed enumeration of literary achievements emphasized also the negative side of postwar Yugoslav, and thus also Croatian, literature. »We are a nation which has had numerous successes and there is no need to brag about it, least of all to brag more than we deserve. And therefore we say: Our literature lags behind our modern reality. It lags behind in the sense of time and quantity, and in the quality, of its variety and pathos. It lags: it has not deteriorated or stagnated; rather it has not progressed and it is not progressing, it has not expanded as quickly and as richly as life. It lags behind the other activities of our nation, behind the cultural needs and requests of the masses...

But the ties with interwar Croatian prose were too strong, concrete and vital, to allow an orderly written list of literary priority themes, to be substituted for the cultural-historic continuity. The novels, *The Children of God* and *The Lonely* by Petar Segedin, are the most conspicuous witnesses of the non-pragmatic orientation of Croatian prose. Mainly misunderstood and adversely criticised as examples of individualistic, decadent bourgeois literature, these works, just like the two novels by Ivo Andrić, clearly show how good writers understood the propagandistic misuse of the term of »engagement«, in order to search of the authentic forms of human destiny.

Miroslav Krleža, again has commented on the problem: »The moment we get artists, who with their talent, their knowledge, and their taste, are able to reflect the objective motives of our left reality — subjectively, will be the moment of the birth of our own Art. If a socialist cultural medium develops here, aware of its rich past and of its cultural mission in today's European space and time, then our Art will surely appear.«

However, at the same period an extraordinarily subtle writer, Vjekoslav Kaleb, broke the natural trend outlined by the two books of stories he had published on the eve of the war, and tried to put his talent at the disposal of social literature. His attempt was an artistic failure.

In the first years after the war several older generations were still active in Croatian literature. Some of the authors who for years had been outside the main current, event outside the stream of literary events, appeared with works which deserve much more attention than the critics and the public had paid them at the moment of their publication. This holds especially for the novelized chronicle by Viktor Car Emin (1870—1963), *Danuncijada*, a work which merges documents and imaginative literature, memoirs and literary prose. A short novel by Vladimir Nazor (1876—1949), *Kurir Loda*, also belongs here, his diary *S partizanima* (With the Partizans) as well as *Sablasi u dvorcu* (Ghosts in the Castle) by Milan Begović (1876—1948), and the feuilleton-novel by Vjekoslav Majer (1900), *U utrobi Zagrebačke gore* (In the Bowels of Zagreb Mountain), written on the eve of the war, but published afterwards.

There were also numerous authors emerging in the period between the two wars, and authors who appeared immediately after the end of the war and even in the midst of it.

Function

function

As with the 1914—1918 war, the Second World War deeply shook not only European, but also national, cultural traditions. Amidst revolutions and wars of conquest literature could not remain wrapped up in the cloak of its own exclusiveness, though on the other hand it did not find sufficient reasons to accept any extraliterary criteria. It seems to me that the dignity of its existence had become more important than the right to condemn or defend which was offered to it. Literature felt that its meaning was in engagement, in its right, its aim, and its need to begin to examine its ambience.

Segedin's novels bear best witness to this, Krleža's essays and papers and perhaps the not too numerous works which did not adhere to patterns and recommended themes. Today all this appears as unusual, but then it was part of everyday practice.

Only in the fifties, after the Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union in Ljubljana, in 1952, did many writers begin to return to their own field, to the field of literature, slowly abandoning their ivory towers or walls of silence.

I do not think I am wrong in saying that postwar Croatian prose, and in particular the novel, had its origins even before the war. This statement is corroborated by the appearance of a whole series of writers who established themselves in this period. Moreover, numerous authors who had already reached their creative zenith between the two wars found themselves again in the literary field as unexpectedly as the writers who grew up on the fiery soil of revolution.

No matter how much we trust or are guided by bibliographies, today no matter how many names we mention, names of the first postwar years, found as signatures in newspapers, periodicals, or appearing on the dust jackets of newly published books, the postwar period, in its esthetically valuable essence, is still a continuation of the literary work of Miroslav Krleža (1893). Although he did not publish fiction in the first years, his papers and essays, articles and memoirs, as well as his living presence as an arbiter, still gave Croatian literature, even in those art-starved years, the necessary dignity as a champion of the truth about man's position in a world oppressed by politics.

In his socially engaged political satires, including the novels *Narubu pameti* (On the Edge of Reason, 1938) and *Banquet at Blitva* (Banquet at Blitva, 1st and 2nd parts in 1938-39, 3rd part in 1962), Krleža presented his satiric vision of a dehumanized society.

In the postwar period, this writer, whose works defined the tragic Croatian reality from the times of Pacta Conventa (1102) to the present day, tried to penetrate new areas of imaginative literature. His book of memoirs *Davni dani* (Days of Long Ago), contains elements of both a social chronicle and a psychological analysis of the world of an intellectual who dares to step into the hustle and bustle of everyday public life. If we use the first sentence of the exceptionally fine lyrical prose of *Djetinjstvo u Agramu 1902-3* (Childhood in Agram 1902-3), «At the very beginning, many images» as a motto for Krleža's total postwar fictional work, we shall, perhaps, succeed in emphasizing its most evident characteristic. His own experience provided the plot, his own fate became a sufficiently rich scene in which the social drama of the whole epoch could develop.

The long, still unfinished, novel *Zastave* (Flags), which began to appear in 1963, has become the focus of the different aspects that cha-

racterize the prose of the writer. At the centre of this great novel, it is not hard to notice the elements which, for instance, dominated in Krleža's antiwar stories; the lyricism which permeates *Povratak Filipa Latinovicza* (The Return of Filip Latinovicz) is also present; the analysis of human obfuseness and limitation; as well as the quixotism of the lost intellectual poisoned by meditation, from the novel *On the Edge of Reason* and the *Banquet at Blitva*; the picturesqueness of the autobiographical *Childhood in Agram*; the clear political reasoning of *Days of Long Ago*; the encyclopaedic quality of his war essays and articles.

This novel, in fact, is a requiem for the Croatian bourgeois past. It is baroque, rich, variegated, heterogeneous, nevertheless, it always focuses on the most urgent questions of the fate of a man subject to politics. Almost as symbolically as an emblem, it expresses the writer's desire to show that political time has not been lost: it may be found, reached, and constructed with the subtlest nuances.

It is difficult today to say something about the structure of this richly organized social novel, because it is still growing: following a genetic law of its own its «cells» seem to be capable of division and multiplication. In the work, it seems, one may discern a novelistic procedure similar to that of André Malraux. After a direct fight against political fate and lyrical sickness, there appears a work directed against fate itself.

Let us return to Petar Segedin (1909), who under the pseudonym of Petar Kružić made his debut in Krleža's prewar periodical *Pečat*. Had we followed a rigid rigorous chronological order, we would have been required to speak first about the writers who appeared in Croatian literature much earlier, who in the first postwar years were still better known than Segedin. However, Petar Segedin, in his novels *Djeca božja* (Children of God) and *Osamljenici* (The Lonely) created the first postwar artistic novels which have retained a high place on the scale of value of Croatian literature. The problem of psychological analysis predominates in both works: the existence of a man who is on the very edge of being a normal, conventional social being. Segedin has broken almost completely with the tradition of the interwar Croatian novel. He does not appear in the form of an omniscient narrator, but rather as a closely involved analyst of the life that flows in front of him, indefinite and hard-to-recognize. Segedin's individualists, who like little Stakan, are trying to save themselves from hell of their own existence, which is presented in terms of a bizarre insular childhood, are troubled by questions they cannot answer. In their illusory endeavour to reach the imaginary perfection of saintliness and purity, they live through existential martyrdom. In a conversation Segedin stated: «It was my intention to write *The Children of God* in the same way as the old Romanesque masters made their sculptural illustrations. I was clumsy on purpose, in order to bring my expression closer to those Romanesque masters who themselves are close to a naturalistic expression. This unfortunately has been ignored, although the theme itself is distinctly Romanesque.»

The agony of existence, which is so apparent and present on every page of the novel *The Lonely*, did not fit in with the declared views of official criticism which stressed the propagandistic function of literature, its didactic, mobilizing role. No matter how unusual it may seem, Petar Segedin, the writer of a very introvert prose, almost became a

rebel. At any rate, a rebel could only be a writer who did not want to satisfy the demands to make literature actual by a superficial social rebellion against class and political contradictions. The ideal of Croatian prose of the fifties was a social novel with a hypothetical public man, a public problem in its centre. The publicity of every gesture of the hypothetical hero's introduced an oversimplified polarization into Croatian literature — the positive and the negative, not a hero in a dilemma. In neither of Segedin's novels do we find such an oversimplification, not even in its rudimentary form, an oversimplification which in works by less talented, less individual writers, began to appear as a possibility to comprehend reality. The heroes of Segedin's novels are encased in the frail shells of their own existences. The revolutionary quality of this essentially intimate, introvert fiction is not to be sought in an ambitious depiction of great social movement. Not for a single moment has Segedin tried to become a monumental sculptor. This is easy to understand if we say that he has not desired to give a fictional account of space and social events, but rather, to present an analysis of the personality, a picture of human existence. This has led him down the dangerous path of man's self-analysis in a world of reduced phenomena and loosened social causality. The revolutionary quality of these novels is to be sought in this primeval loyalty to experience and the problem of man and life, in which we also participate. The analysis of the trembling conscience of a boy troubled by fears, his thirst for deep, fascinating perceptions, uncertainty that leads him even to flagellation, the chaos of perceptions whose proper meaning his small sensitive spirit cannot discover — all these elements permeate *The Children of God*. The meditativeness of Segedin's narrative procedure, closely connected with the analytical character of his novels, distinguishes him radically from the majority of other modern Croatian writers of fiction, in whom digressive narrative procedures generally predominate. The simplicity of the style of his, now intellectual, now almost irrational, approach to problems, the philosophical quality of the questions that trouble both him and his characters have distanced him from those narrowly realistic writers that preceded him under the sign of regional writers of from the writers who entered literature only in the fifties, under the powerful impression of the American empirical novel. A moralist, in fixing the theses, on which his novels, stories and travelogues, are based, shying away from technical flourishes much more fascinating in detail than comprehensible as a whole, more an essayist than a story-teller, more an analyst than a visionary, Petar Segedin has, the first after the war, tried by actual works to save the shaken dignity of literature. His novels fascinate not by the richness of events they describe but rather by the analytical consistence of trying to place every detail of human existence into the very focus of exploration. Instead of the traditional narrative defined by time and space, Segedin, makes the first radical attempt to introduce into the Croatian novel elements of an essayistic-problematic prose.

Already in these novelistic works we discern very clearly the attitude which will become a principle with some later novelists. Namely, in his creative opposition to the uninventive and dead, schematized and dogmatic pattern of the works of social realism, we can distinguish two essential parts: an interest in the simultaneous permeation of the ima-

ginary and mimetic experience of the world, and a narrative comment which has an essayistic quality.

However, the exceptional nature of Petar Segedin's achievement cannot change the view that first postwar years showed few valuable attempts at novel writing.

Only after the Ljubljana Congress of the Yugoslav Writers' Union (1952), where Miroslav Krleža and Petar Segedin in their papers made a significant contribution in the struggle against dogmatism, did a climate favourable to the creation of ambitious and more authentic works began to emerge.

At the same time, a younger generation of writers began to appear, centred around the literary periodical *Krugovi* (1952), including several prose writers.

As with the writers of the preceding generation, they did not want categorical answers to the question quoted at the beginning of our essay. At time they even showed a seeming lack of interest in all the so-called actual and urgent themes. The limits of space and the scope of questions their narrative analysis explored seem to have been conditioned by their natural reaction to the great and ambitious demands they were exposed to.

The young however did not take over the literary relay baton of the fifties take over. For several years it remained in the hands of the writers who had begun their literary activity in the period between the two wars.

I believe I am not mistaken or guilty of outrageous schematizations if I place Ivan Goran Kovačić and Hasan Kikić among the still living and still active writers, like Ivan Dončević and Novak Simić. Although this division comprises writers killed in the war, as well as those who are still «completing their works», as Goethe put it, the living and the dead are much more firmly connected than one would assume by the seeming or real differences, which are quite natural in the case of mature creative personalities.

Croatian literature has never abounded in homogeneous literary schools and movements. However, in the period between the two wars, or more precisely in the few years before the outbreak of the war, a new, popular sense of collectivism began to dominate Croatian prose a sense that was coloured by leftist sympathies but was artistically independent. It was precisely these characteristics that appeared in vague outline in the work of the interwar writers mentioned above. Regardless of whether it is the matter of writers who survived the war and wrote their best works in the fifties, or of those who tragically perished in the war without having reached the peak of maturity, all of them are linked by some dominant characteristics and intentions. This link is not only external and declarative, and it is not only manifested in the writers' connection with the doctrine of «left literature», even though this aspect is also visible. In their imaginative quest these writers show little inclination to serve utilitarian political aims. The similarity of their stylistic procedure is even more remarkable. They are conspicuous by their objective manner which on the other hand has nothing to do with ideological liberalism, the besetting sin of the bourgeois literature of the thirties and the forties. All of them are connected by the similar, perhaps even common belief that every phenomenon of a psycholo-

gical or social nature may be explained by social determinism. And their second conspicuous characteristic is their emphasis on the connection of man, as a social being, with nature. The roots of this philosophical view lie partly among the causes of other literary conventions — in the need of keeping socially abreast. But we believe that the causes of their objective manner of writing should be also sought in the structure of their creative imagination or even in the structure of their social origins.

Within the context of all these conditions, models, intentions, and on the basis of some details, we may even consider them the legitimate continuators of the psychological realism with an emphatically social note; and thus we shall err much less than if we tried to find a direct link with the modernistic tendencies of the Croatian prose of the twenties.

In the prose works of this group of writers, lyricism becomes the essential characteristic of their experience of the world sometimes even an essential category of their creative autonomy. This is generally an unpolished poetry full of contrast and therefore mostly sentimental, irrational. The lyrical objective dichotomy characteristic of the stories by Ivan Goran Kovačić and of the prose by Hasan Kikić, is also very important for the creation of dramatic tension in the novels by Novak Simić and Ivan Dončević.

Critics had already noticed Novak Simić (1906) on the eve of the war as a writer with a great deal original talent who manifested more or less equal creative powers in his work on folklor or regional problems and in his endeavours to deal with life in town, its inhabitants and problems. This was apparent already in his novel *Voćnjak* (Orchard), published in 1938, rewritten in 1964. In his shorter novel *Druga obala* (The Second Shore), Novak Simić tried to offer an analysis of the fate of an indecisive intellectual. However, in the spirit of the time, he allowed schematic rather than imaginative solutions to dominate the structure of his novel. In his novel *Brothers and Idols* this excellent and original writer of irrepressible erotic interests achieved, in places, the quality of his best anthological stories, broadening at the same time the thematic horizons not only of his own opus, but also of contemporary Croatian fiction in general. Having learned from the examples of novelistic simultaneity and social determinism of the American Dos Passos and from the social practice of Sinclair Lewis, he also made use of the interior monologue so characteristic of modern works, and boldly combined objective narration and subjective participation in events. On the pages of this essentially social novel which is crossed with the poetry of fantasy and dream, Novak Simić has attempted to offer a sociological cross-section of two «typical» cases relevant to the creation of capitalist plutocracy. Seen from the point of view of present day tendencies the Croatian novel, this novel of Novak Simić has been much more of a shock to the traditional framework of the Croatian fiction of the fifties than as a fully homogeneous fictional work. As a whole, his work has remained too hybrid to satisfy completely contemporary criteria. However, by counterpointing several levels of meaning inside two stories told according to the principle of a fugue, Simić has introduced many technical innovations into his narrative. The focus of attention centres on the propitious fates of the Tomašević brothers, as well as on the rise of the second pair, the Tkač brothers, who in the

Czech town of Zlin, the capital of the shoe king, also climb towards their always smiling Fortune. By counterpointing two milieus and two pairs of different yet essentially similar, heroes, the author has succeeded in creating a very dynamic novel. The mythic basis of this fictional construction is skillfully exploited. The skilful contrapuntal interplay of two parallel actions developing over a wide area, a bold cocktail of the lyrical and the fantastic, with the historical and the social, as well as of the irrational and with what has become a common place in political economics, give the work a broad spectrum of meanings related to a variety of aspects of the social and individual life of a whole generation.

Beginning as a critic of social events on the eve of the war, Ivan Dončević (1909) wrote and published three novels at that period. The novels *Horvatova kći* (Horvat's Daughter), which in 1948 was rewritten as *Zivotopis bez svršetka* (Biography Without an Ending), *Propast* (Ruin) and *Biser i svinje* (Pearl and Swine) are of unequal value, but in every one of them we meet the author's characteristic need for an unequivocally engaged reaction to the social reality of the life in the North Croatian countryside between the two wars. Interested in representing facts, and making little use of rhetoric, in love with the description of what is everyday and trivial, of what, by some romantic logic, shines like a curious star in the mud, Dončević has produced novels luff of powerful social engagement and of a distinctly moral energy. Resting on the firm and sufficiently established practice of postrealistic prose in all its variants, from the urban and cosmopolitan to the regional and rural aspects of it, Ivan Dončević has already revealed in his war sketches of the cycle *Bezimeni* (The Nameless), a sense for lyric detail, which taken out of the epic space and time of war-time events and emotionally magnified, assumes the function of a symbol.

Without the artistic and formal doubts characteristic of the movements in Croatian fiction, but with a firm sense for the compositional requirements for a realistic and grotesque, social and psychological story of people and events in a small North Croatian provincial town, Dončević in his novel *Mirotvorci* (Peacemakers) established a balance between the generally known political facts about the time and the specific, individual characteristics of the protagonists of the political drama. The microcosm in which his heroes move is similar to a closed area inhabited by beetles and governed by a supreme intelligence. In the novel, the fate of the of the political and dehumanized man is in the centre of the author's attention. Dončević is a master of description, which he combines and enriches with short dramatic insertions. This was especially evident in *The Nameless*, but similar narrative procedures are also noticeable in his other novels.

While in his *Brothers and Idols* Novak Simić has made a serious attempt at creating modern neorealistic fiction preoccupied with social and individual problems, Dončević has tried to give a social synthesis, but has destroyed the formal ties of the objective fiction of the realistic type. In fact, here one may speak of a peculiar, belated though artistically still actual, form of expressionism which has retained a close connection with constructivism, without, however lacking a lyrical quality. In *The Peacemakers*, however, the author's interest in the details of the objective world confirms his readiness to retain a balance between the manifestations of social trivialities, invisible at the first glance, which

of the inhabitants of a small town, and his character of all the people. Novak Simić does not deal with the aspects of individual psychology, as well as in the novel *Brothers*, and therefore his novel *Brothers* and *Decemakers* on the other hand does not deal with the perception of diversity and incongruity, and not on the elaboration of preconceptual truth.

Kaleb's (1905) is quite specific. The very fact that it was published relatively late, much later than his contemporaries, immediately successfully and to the rank of the almost invisible, but nevertheless dramatic problems, Kaleb's narrative art, after his book *Brigada*, and by the short novel *Streets*, experienced a full revival in his novel *Theory of Dust*.

The two lost Partizans, who wander about from the point of view of its content, is somewhat poor from the point of view of its dramatic quality of this story devoid of any interior rhythm and simplicity, and yet has attracted the attention of the first generation of the story, which is in many respects more than one could have guessed at the first. The energy which drives Dječak (Boy) and Kaleb's story, although used for distinctly different purposes, has remained purely sambolical. In Kaleb's narrative the most direct expression of the country's human heart. Although the work shows almost that the story's didactic element (it is meant to be a novel for children and youth) has become an organic part of the work, with great restraint, and almost classical rationality, it leaves a monumental effect. The modified and tailored war theme, has become an integral part of the literature.

The novel *White Stone* (White Stone) takes place in the rocky wastes of the Italian occupation forces. The author gives his view of the world through the hero, the peasant Strana. He finds his artistic shaping of stone: he believes that stone should serve as witness for other times. The symbolism which Vjekoslav Kaleb has embraced is perhaps old-fashioned. Nevertheless, on the basis of this story, this, to a certain extent, old fashioned conception of the shape of an authentic acceptance of ancient and modern truths. Kaleb's views of the world, define him as

something of a classicist. He is inclined to asceticism in his narratives, discards decorativeness, although his sentences sometimes abound in metaphor. This deviation from the dominant currents in modern Croatian fiction makes Kaleb an event more distinct figure.

Intention and an active relationship toward formal problems are the first characteristics of the modern novel. We do not encounter the characteristics in Kaleb too often. However, the wealth of his narrative, observed already in his first prewar stories, has lost nothing of its fascinating power. The novel has only slightly lost that characteristic simplicity of his narrative objectifications in which his stories abound.

Let us stress that Kaleb's novels have not introduced any thematic innovations into contemporary Croatian fiction. With regard to their subject matter they stand mainly within the realms of convention but the originality of his robust talent, which ignores the ease and elegance of the nonchalant phrase, has imposed itself on younger prose writers in particular who have acclaimed Kaleb's novels, although the young are well-known to dislike to praise the conventional. By his narrative restraint Kaleb has realized much more than some writers who have tried to apprehend reality by a diluted kind of expressionism and lyrical simultaneity.

The fiction of Vladan Desnica (1905—1967) began to be known only after the war, in the fifties. Formed in the realistic tradition of Simo Matavulj, and the Italians Verga and Pirandello, this very talented writer suddenly appeared, in his mature years, with the novel *Zimsko ljetovanje* (Winter Vacations). Using an objective story-telling method, the writer represents two worlds brought into conflict during the war: one world of town-dwellers and the other of peasants, in an exceptional situation, when townspeople were looking for shelter in villages around Zadar during Allied bombings. The following sentences contain one of the essential characteristics of the clash of these so close, and yet mutually so ignorant worlds: »This... for the majority of the Zadar refugees was the first encounter with the country. They had lived their whole lives in its immediate vicinity, buying its produce each day and selling their services and discarded junk. Still they seemed to have been separated from it by the Chinese wall, or by a belt of waste, thousands of kilometres away! Their arrival at the village therefore, had to some extent the charm of a journey to a far-off, exotic region.« This is a matter-of-fact picture, yet some of the seemingly cursory details give it a stamp of liveliness and authenticity.

His next novel, *Proljeća Ivana Galeba* (The Springs of Ivan Galeb) represents one of the best achievements in the postwar Croatian novel. This novel, an essayistic analysis of man's position in the world, a bleak sonata on the theme of art and death, restrained and wise in the manner of Thomas Mann, technically beyond reproach intellectual and refined, takes us back to the kind of novel represented by Krleža's *The Return of Filip Latinovicz*. The work indicates a certain cyclical connection existing in the Croatian literature of the last fifty years, continually modified but also defined by some constant coordinates.

Ranko Marinković (1913) began to build the structure of his novel *Kiklop* (Cyclops) on the already established tradition of modern European and Croatian fiction. Viewed from that angle, this novel appears a successful hybrid between the domestic Krležian tradition (for instance, *Cvrčak pod vodopadom* — Cricket under the Waterfall — *The*

Return of Filip Latinović) and Joyce's *Ulysses*. In his attempt to create a modern epic, a paraphrase of the myth though not necessarily in epic form, he myth which, because of the ambiguity of its context has become unstable and polyvalent. Marinković has simultaneously fixed historical events of a tempestuous and neurotic time, the geography of a town (Zagreb), and the spiritual climate of a whole generation. In order to express all this, Marinković experiments. He tries to speak with a new language, convinced that new sensibilities, new social structures, new psychic states can be expressed only in a new language. This novel supports our contention that Ranko Marinković belongs to the growing family of intellectual writers (poeta doctus) and that *Cyclops* represents the latest instance of this remarkable and fruitful line in the Croatian novel, which derives perhaps from such novels as *Janko Borišavić* by Ksaver Šandor Đalski, *Bijeg* (Escape) by Milutin Cihlar Nehajev, *The Return of Filip Latinović* by Miroslav Krleža, *The Lonely* by Petar Segedin.

By saying that the *Cyclops*, from the point of view of its structure, is an essentially modern novel, I mean that the basic difference between the traditional and modern novel lies mainly in the almost always present, easily noticeable distinction that exists between *narration* as an *enumeration* of events in their temporal, psychological, and spatial causality, and *ironic contemplation*, which is to say in the sense of a conceptual or intentional *selection* of observations of outer events and their underlying intentional meanings.

While the traditional novel only assessed things, the modern novel as the *Cyclops* by Ranko Marinković, multiplies, intensifies, integrates. The *Cyclops* convinces us of this in different, always more or less peculiar ways. The arguments may be very different, and sometimes even contradictory, but they are always well rooted in the structure of the novel and so complex that they deserve as much attention as do the ideas which the novel implies.

Ivanka Vujčić-Laszowski (1907) has published three novels *Vranjara*, *Cahure* (Cocoons) and *Sjene* (Shadows). The novel *Vranjara* has introduced into Croatian literature the strange world of Slavonian gypsies and rich peasants using a somewhat sentimental folk manner which has nevertheless been impressive. The second novel, *The Cocoons*, is calmer in its composition, more limited from the point of view of the spectrum of social interests, more intimate in its structure. It presents a model of good realistic psychological fiction. Her third novel *The Shadows*, represents a logical sequence to the earlier trend. The writer's interest in outside events is more and more subdued she focuses her attention, more and more intensively, on the examination of human experience.

The above novels symbolize by their structure and their formal maturity not only the author's approach to her favourite theme — the psychological analysis of characters — but also an unequivocal acceptance of the psychological novel as the most adequate means for this purpose.

Ivanka Vujčić-Laszowski does not show especially powerful or conspicuous, nor even particularly essential, structures of thought. Unlike Petar Segedin's fiction for instance, this author's fiction is not philosophical: she is faithful to the experienced thing and therefore concen-

trates on objectifying what exists as an intimation as the embryo of a symbol. This and the economy of effect, the narrowness of her horizons and her interpretation of the visible, give to her works an autonomous place on the list of the works and authors of contemporary Croatian fiction.

Mirko Božić (1919) is the author of two noted novels, of which the first, *Kurlani donji i gornji* (Lower and Upper Kurlani) was a real literary surprise in 1952. Using the old theme about the rise of two families as the basic pattern, Božić succeeded in creating a fictional structure of extraordinary richness, full of linguistic innovations. Božić is one of the rare original writers in the conventional meaning of the word. As a writer he is carried away by the rich resources of popular speech. This novel, as well as its sequence, *Neisplakani* (The Unmourned), is entirely composed of lively parts, for which reason the narrative line is not straight forward but broken up. More moralist than a sociologist, Božić has created a great gallery of characters in these novels. Some of them are depicted in detail in, one can almost say, a *trompe l'oeil* technique; others are only sketched in two or three words, and their entire appearance is recorded only in a few gesture. Božić is a writer with an extraordinarily expressive language, a verist, whose quality is particular obvious great, collective scenes.

The novel *Svilene papuče* (Silk Slippers) deals with the problems of life in a town. Quite naturally, there is no rustic energy in it, characteristic of Božić's first novels, but the author continues to play the role of an omniscient being. He holds the threads of past and future events in his hands. Also moral problems continue to be in the very centre of his attention.

Even in much greater literatures there exist writers who follow the middle line. Regardless of current literary trends or the dominant influences of any genuinely modern literary school, they create works which are both more or less equally traditional and new, obsolete or modern. The number of writers who belong to this group is, in fact, much greater than their contemporaries usually suppose. All these authors are characterized among other things, by a reluctance to engage in formal experiments and a tendency to operate within the limits of an accepted sensibility. The manner of their presentation is not genetic, but traditional, does not represent growth but is imitative. But their very concreteness the readability of their conceptions and of their ideological positions makes their presence strongly felt and a powerful influence in the current literary situation. They represent the articulate mass without which a national literature would resemble a group of soloists, and not a full symphony orchestra. Take, for instance, the French writer Mauriac, an extraordinary literary personality, who even at the peak of his creative powers was more turned towards the nineteenth century than could have been expected from a writer of his calibre and in a literature like the French. Nevertheless, the urgency of the dilemmas that drove his imagination to action has made him a writer who in spite of his years, can still be felt as living and contemporary.

In modern Croatian literature there are a number of writers who can be defined in the above terms, although some of their works have also signified attempts to tackle more contemporary problems. Augustin Stipčević (1912), the author of the novel — chronicles *Glad na ledini*

(Hunger on the Lawn), *Cesta nema granica* (Road Has no Boundaries), and *Vruće ljeto* (Hot Summer), has tried, in the form of fictionalized chronicles whose chief hero is Ludar Kikero, to give the picture of people and events in Zadar and its surroundings during the Italian occupation. At the moment when the writer's attention has increasingly been preoccupied with the pure data of consciousness or the phenomenological description of the world of objects, Augustin Stipčević tries to offer a psychological and social analysis, through the action of individual heroes, as well as to present the moral problem characteristic of the world and the time in which the chronicles take place.

Jure Franičević Pločar (1918) has published four novels so far: *Gluha zvona* (Deaf Bells), *Raspukline* (Crevasses), *Zvoni na nebo* (It Rings for Heaven), and *Lanac* (Chain). Unlike Stipčević and Nikola Disopra, who has also remained restricted by the chronicle technique in his only published novel, *Koraknuti* (To Step forward), Franičević Pločar is a writer of much subtler imagination, trying to justify his narrative theses through concrete situations. His interest moves in the areas of what is visible and experienced, though still sufficiently metaphorical. This is why, all of Pločar's work impress one as a mosaic: a multitude of episodic events connected with the lives of a number of individuals — it all provides us with a vision of history which is at the same history of individual heroes, of a small insular world, but also a moment in the general history of society. Pločar is an uneven writer, without the right feeling for a convincing fictional »whole«; but he is a master in finding the heart of a detail. In a slight sign or premonition he tends to discover the roots of an important event which will be decisive for the general course of the novel.

Although not of the same Mediterranean origins Josip Barković (1918) and Joža Horvat (1915) manifest similarities with the writers we have just discussed. So far Barković has written several novels of unequal value. However, since the publication of *Sinovi slobode* (Sons of Liberty) the chronicle *Dolina djetinjstva I i II* (Valley of Childhood I and II), *Podimo časak umrijeti* (Let Us Go and Die for a Moment), and *Alma* one discerns the author's progress from a declarative manner to a more complex psychological and social treatment of the problems of human life and behaviour. Barković began to write in the manner of social realism, though he has abandoned it since, however certain extraliterary elements can still be encountered in his works. It seems he has been more convincing in his short stories, Nusret Idrizović is also the author of several novels, *Ne zaboravi svirati, bačo* (Don't Forget the Pipe, Brother), *Smrt nije kraj* (Death is Not the End), *Divin*, in which he has tried to combine the elements of a chronicle with the romantic conception of engagement with an essentially sentimental or poetic thesis. The self-taught Mate Beretin, the author of several prose works, and the novels *Posljednji marš* (Last March), *Li-stopad* (October), *Kuća na uglu* (House on the Corner) has not succeeded in rising above the reality of unimportant, trivial facts and a somewhat romantic sense of engagement; nevertheless in his works we discover many details which confirm his original narrative talent. We meet all this also in the works of Rasim Filipović, the author of the novel *Ničija* (Nobody's), the story of the fate of a prostitute, and in *Doviđenja, smrti* (So Long, Death) and ambitious chronicle about the fight of man against death.

We have already mentioned Joža Horvat, a writer who was among the first after the war to enter the literary scene. Although some of his works show a tendency towards social criticism, he is best known as a writer of novels such as the humorous novel *Mačak pod šljemom* (Tomcat Under the Helmet), a rustic Zagorje variant of the good soldier Svejk, and *Ni san ni java* (Neither Dream nor Reality) a tale of hunting life.

After this rare example of a contemporary writer who was bold enough to write a humorous novel, without spoiling the overall effect of his narrative, we might as well mention the work of Stjepan Mihalić (1901), *Teleći odresci* (Veal Steaks). In this work the author succeeded in combining several heterogeneous elements into a firm whole. This good writer, who first appeared in literature between the two wars, has managed to amalgamate the elements of the social, psychological, and humorous novels. The action of the novel is no longer chronological; the author operates with several temporal sequences which characterize the fate of the hero Zimka; his formation is not defined by realistic narration, but by numerous illustrative episodes. His hero is an odd fish who like a magic lantern, projects the reflections of his being on the events and the milieu that surrounds him. In comparison with Horvats' humorous novel, *The Veal Steaks* is a more complex, perhaps less funny, but therefore more truly humorous novel. Mihalić's novel *Elegija* has a very peculiar structure. In the novel the present is the past, the plot takes place on a January day at the end of the first decade of our century; but the events resemble a film shot in a relatively distant future: they will one day become part of the fate of the heroes. The novel is much more interesting and valuable than the critics and the reading public have been prepared to admit.

Dušanka Popović Dorofejeva (1910) has written only one novel *Noćne ptice* (Night Birds), which deals with the everyday life of café musicians. This work, based on facts from real life, has fascinated some critics by its sentimental neorealism. This novel resembles the novel, *Crni snijeg* (Black Snow) by another woman writer, Višnja Stahuljak. The latter work, however, contains more data on the bizarre imagination of the author and on her endeavour to create a grotesque bizarre fictional world, rather than to make truly authentic social observations.

Zivko Jeličić (1920) has published four novels: almost two thousand pages of dense novelistic prose. Unfortunately, his novels are not popular, even though the critics have generally been favourable. Jeličić has a mimetic gift. Almost like a spy, he gives the closest attention to each expression on a face, and creates them exclusively through speech, the only area of their fictional existence. As a phenomenologist of the elements of speech, wholly devoted to the phenomenal facts of the world, which cannot be understood and cannot exist unless successfully embodied in speech, Zivko Jeličić has relentlessly and without a backward glance on the secure footholds offered by the traditional realistic narrative methods, plunged into the amorphous world of perceptions, voices, images, evidence of individual experience of his characters who are real, living embodiments of speech. This very preoccupation with triviality, this caustic and bitter dictatorship of an analytical and objective intellect, gives his fiction of a sense of impersonality and a sense of disunity. Thus in the novel *Ljetnih večeri* (In Summer Evenings) we are not warned of the presence of the old grandmother, for instance,

through visual and descriptive means; her character exists only as the evidence of an individual speech which we know is hers. The mimetic recording of her speech idiom is the only way by which the writer, in fact, the observer, or let us even call him, the objective ear, leads us to the world of our perceptions. This neglect of the objective world, this idiosyncrasy of Jeličić's narrative art speaks about the writer's unconventional approach to the problems and materials of modern fiction. Although he has not yet found his critic, I firmly believe that Živko Jeličić, in spite of the originality of his talent, which is not really narrative in the classical sense, belongs to the great family of modern writers who are much more often, and with a much greater enthusiasm, read by critics and literary connoisseurs than by the ordinary reading public. Here is a writer who, in the creation of a new form, has gone farthest towards those regions which have been outside the interest of most contemporary Croatian writers.

Vojin Jelić (1921) has attracted attention with his novel *Anđeli lijepo pjevaju* (Angels Sing Beautifully). In this novel he has skillfully succeeded in linking the elements of a war chronicle with the nightmarish details of his heroes' sensitive consciousness. Through pictures of war confusion Jelić has succeeded in cheating his specific lyric style. A similar problem is also worked out in the novel *Nebo nema obala* (Sky Has No Shores), while the novel *Trči mali život* (Little Life Is Running) is, in fact, the chronicle of a childhood on the stony ground of Dalmatinska Zagora. *Trka slijepih konja* (Race of Blind Horses) is an attempt to create a satirical novel about the life of snobs who pretend to be film experts.

Ivan Raos (1921) is also a writer born in the rocky region of Dalmatinska Zagora, and has been one of the most productive writers in postwar Croatian literature. He has also been known as a story-teller and as a playwright. But his greatest achievement has been the novelistic trilogy *Vječno žalosni smijeh* (Eternely Sad Laughter). This voluminous work reminds one of classical realistic novels. It is a successful attempt of a contemporary writer to follow the tradition of a Đalski; the teleological and naive naturalism of a, I should almost say, boulevard writer; the lucid disorder of a Kovačić; Begović's somewhat bourgeois sentimental social analysis; Kozarac's romanticism and spleen; the social criticism of the leftist literature between the two wars, as well as his own rich experience of life. This is a work, which within the framework of an individualistic type of social criticism, represents one of the rare, and noteworthy attempts to revive interest in social novel. How successful Raos has been is hard to answer. But we are sure that the novel is one of those hybrid works which are rare in Croatian literature, it represent the middle ground between dramatic, though conventional kind of narrative about interesting, event thrilling, events, relating to imaginary, possible, or real heroes, and the projection of their fates through the prism of an ironic and cynical writer, who has attempted to pose from a social standpoint some essential questions about man's fate and his position in the world, a world in which the achievement of pure saintliness and moral purity is impossible. Writing this autobiographical chronicle, Ivan Raos has dealt with a period of about twenty years, the years which were tucked away between the two wars. The plot develops in the relatively confined region of Dalmatinska Zagora, among boarders of the Split Catholic Seminary,

and in the old sections of Split among merchants, prostitutes, rascals, failed or ruined people. But the novelist's interest in phenomena and people overcomes all these narrow, geographical limitations. At times moments it even becomes a powerful artistic and social document of a time, the history of the maturation and »life apprenticeship« of an interesting personality.

We have to do here with an *apocryphal autobiography*, with an attempt to write a novel based on facts of life and on imaginative freedom, a biography and an autobiography at the same time with a history and a story. In short, we deal here with an autobiographical novel which has for curious structural reasons, outgrown itself, and thus transcended all the privacies of an autobiography. All these demands are neither negligible, nor easy to achieve. In the past one could let the chief character roam around the world, supplying him for his Odyssey only with imagination, and as many adversities and surprises as possible. This procedure gave rise to the traditional picaresque hero; Raos's hero in the trilogy is his distant relative.

By their distinctly linear presentation of events, Raos's novels have sometimes and old-fashioned effect. A character's fate is at their centre. The enumeration of events in which the hero participates has no definite intention, which means that the narrator is mainly interested in objectifying exterior relations and in offering a heap of anecdotal matter and episodes. Nevertheless, Raos — who is a story-teller, and not a constructor of fictional structures, — possesses the magic wand of Prospero. His secret is simple: by altering some of the inherent characteristics of objects he makes them sometimes speak with the language of poetry. This wand is in a skilful, talented hand, which on different occasions knows how to write in corresponding styles: today, when uniform styles dominate modern prose, some may call this very special skill; but we prefer to interpret it as a happy assimilation of the experience of different traditions.

Ivan Katušić (1923), in his novel *Kontinenti se sastaju* (Continents Meet) has fused into a small fictional whole, the peculiar small world of a little Dalmatian town, with all its characteristic intrigues, ridicule, sentimental intermezzos. In his narrative manner he resembles the technique of Raos's prose works.

The progressive liberalization in the field of imaginative literature is accompanied by the growing tendency of writers began to contribute their fiction to literary periodicals. This is a period of rich, and very lively literary activity, characterized by formal experiments, bold by opposing the tradition which had mainly rested on social determinism. Some of the story-tellers have remained faithful to the smaller narrative genres. The flowering of the short story has again been followed by the novel. In short, almost all, particularly the most remarkable representative writers of fiction have been greatly interested in the problems of expression. Yesterday's language of art cannot deal with today's problems. What they tried to create first of all was a new narrative syntax.

Slobodan Novak (1924) is one of the most talented, most interesting writers of an informal group which is, yet quite distinct from other writers. Although he has not yet published a novel in the true sense of the word, — only two long short stories, (his first novel has only

been appearing in fragments in our periodicals), we may already acclaim him as a writer in whose work insight into life and modern sensibility have fused to an extraordinary degree. *Izgubljeni zavičaj* (Lost Home) is still connected with the interwar fictional techniques. It does, however, very successfully manage to outgrow the sharp confines of realistic narration, and diffuses into sounds, smells, and images of past time, arrested and recreated through the lively memories of a perceptive boy and the sentimental evocations of an adult. In the manner of Tonio Kröger, *The Lost Home* is the view of a home swallowed up by the five of oblivion. This fully rendered dream of an insular childhood, overflowing with local colour and mells of the sea, vineyards, old wardrobes and chests, full of the deities of a peculiar local mythology, in which the intoxicated imagination of the boy and disappointments of the old skeptic mix together, possesses many elements which are characteristic of a fine moralist. Composed of five parts, this lyric fugue on the theme of time tells about the spring, summer, autumn, and winter of a childhood that has forever gone. It does not describe: it speaks, but it does not chatter, it draws conclusions, but does not indulge in banalities.

His shorter novel, *Dolutali metak* (Stray Bullet) is a stream of consciousness, a torrent of painful thoughts and pictures which, like meteorites, revolve in the welter of narrative master. Unconnected, dispersed, these elements fuse throughout the narrative into wholes and link themselves with events. However, the novel on which the writer is working at present (judging from the fragments we have seen in literary periodicals), reveals Novak under a new light. Not unlike his stories which are always focused on some seemingly bizarre idea or perspective, this growing fictional work assembles the data of everyday life, not in order to imitate it, but, to transcend it. Slobodan Novak is a first-class satirical writer of the trivial, automatized, stereotyped life.

Some writers, such as Branko Belan, Bogdan Stopar, Krsto Špoljar, Ćedo Prica, Ivan Kušan, although very different from the point of view of their preoccupations, are nevertheless characterized by their common interest in the analyses of the psychoses from which their characters suffer.

Branko Belan (1912), in his novel *Kutija od ebanovine* (Box Made of Ebony), writes the biography of a man who is unable to participate in the flux of ordinary, everyday life. In fact, his only authentic experience belongs to a phantasmagorical heraldic world of obsessive symbols. This novel is full of apparently unrelated data, since the principal hero, Karlo, experiences life on two tracks, even though his memories remain the only real life for him. In his novels, *Dnevnik utopljenice* (Diary of a Drowned Woman) and *Obrasci mržnje* (Patterns of Hate) Belan has not managed to free himself from the willingly accepted limits of the deductive detective novel. Consequently his achievement has remained exclusively within the realm of light literature.

Bogdan Stopar (1921) in his novel *Piloti vlastitih snova* (Pilots of Their Own Dreams), has tried to give a psychological analyses of the postwar transformations of a bourgeois family.

Krsto Špoljar (1930) is the author of novels of uneven value: *Brod čeka do sutra* (Ship is Wating Until Tomorrow), *Mirno podneblje*

(Quite Climate), and *Gvožđe i lovor* (Iron and Laurel). In the first two, Špoljar has attempted to write a novel of action dealing with urban life. The writer is especially interested in ruined people and exceptional situations, which provide good opportunities for action plots. However, he does not always succeed in overcoming the prosaic facts which determine the world of his heroes. The novel *Iron and Laurel* is the writer's most valuable piece of fiction. In this work Špoljar skilfully weaves pictures of an objective reality with visions of wartime experienced in a small provincial town. The author's aim to write a novel which would be both a social document and a free, almost unrestrained play of imagination, has been skilfully achieved.

Ivan Kušan (1933), much better known as an excellent writer for children, has also published two serious novels. In *Razapet između* (Crucified Between) and *Zidom zazidani* (The Walled In), he offers a subtle analysis of a bourgeois family during the war and afterwards. Focusing his attention on the analysis of obsessive psychological states in which his characters live, Kušan has accepted the techniques of the modern psychological novel and has applied the extreme methods of introvert prose construction which shows a considerable fictional talent.

Ćedo Prica (1931) has tried to give his contribution to the engaged novel, mainly in the form of chronicle. He has simultaneously manifested his affinity with lyricism, and his sense for the constructivism of the fiction dealing moral dilemmas. He has published the following novels: *Nekoga moraš voljeti* (You Must Love Somebody), *Svijet viđen na kraju* (World Seen at the End), *Izlaz na ista vrata* (Exit Through the Same Door), and *Dnevnik sumraka* (Diary of Twilight). The author of all these novels is much more convincing when he enumerates the memoirs from his childhood than when he assumes the role of a prompter, and speaks instead of his heroes. This writer too focuses his attention on wartime and its consequences, and the traumatic affects these had on the consciousness of the protagonists.

Antun Soljan (1932) belongs to those few contemporary Croatian novelists in whose novels we discern emphatic ideological structures. His novels, *Izdajice* (Traitors) and *Kratki izlet* (Short Trip), although written in the lively idiom of an eloquent and objective narrator are, in fact, fictional emblems of a philosophical view of the world and man's position in it. These have obviously grown on the fertile marginal soil of existentialism. However, it is equally obvious that they do not serve as platforms from which the boredom and futility of existence are propagated; they are rather signs of the narrator's discovery of structures which confirm the existence of such a tired world. The sense of both Soljan's novels is visible in each gesture, in each single, mosaically constructed relation of characters and situations. In these novels Soljan has tried to express his heroes' »adventure of existence«. In a very impressive manner they attempt to give a fictional view of the essential situations in which the modern man is tested, with all his dilemmas, illusions, and bold unconventional solutions. From the philosophical point of view *The Short Trip* is a novel of existential adventure, the chronicle of a vain quest for an authentic form of existence. In his novels Antun Soljan has not satisfied himself with the attractive cynical role of the traditional novelist to act as the secretary of a club and in this or that manner participate in events. *The Short Trip*, as well as

chrystals of meaning are formed as if around an emotional chrystalline axle.

The literature of realism particularly fiction, always speaks in the language of pictures. The rhetoric of these pictures, however, is dependent on the literal meaning of the presented, in other words on the pattern of nature outside literature. The writer's intention directed towards phenomena and problems outside language and literature is in advance subordinated to political, religious, or hardly visible simple and broad humanistic ideas.

This literature is satisfied with reading and comparing the common qualities of the various phenomena, people and things. It contents itself with recognizing. What is phenomenal is seen as the only existing and possible reality. Facts, as well as experiences, are simply added up or subtracted from the model of the reality. Verism manifests itself through the similarity and mutuality of what it indicates and by what it is indicated. The image, even the poetic one, corresponds to the reflection in a looking glass — under the hypothesis that we have seen a similar picture in life and that we know what a looking glass is.

The terror of analogy and the dictatorship of the visible and of the provable, the confidence in only one reality — in the reality of the seen and the experienced, the denotative language of the prose which exhausts the reason for its own existence by referring to the identical facts of social provenience — these are the most conspicuous characteristics of the verism, based on analysis.

However, from the need to imitate the world seen in all its spatial and temporal details: from the landscape, the representation of a person, from the relationship between phenomena and events in a given society, from all these the modern story-teller's and novelist's interests have evolved, from the seen to the visible world. Instead of referring to analogy, these writers begin to create a visible world which has grown in the dark chamber of their imagination. This visible world is no longer limited by its connection to the conventional forms which rely on usage and well-known meanings, as was the case with realistic fiction. Today a writer introduces his intention into a constructed world in which the visible, i. e. something related to vision, is transformed into an *imago*, into the space in which new superempirical meanings are born.

And thus, instead of a string of pictures, only for the sake of creating the illusion of a panorama which would comprise time and space and man in mutual social relationship between the existing with the possible, we get fictional works in which intentional meanings of a powerful intellectual impression predominate and a precise direction towards problems which do not exist as measurable and visible facts, but exclusively as an aleatory possibility of a still insufficiently articulated and objectified world of an uncertain ideology and powerful emotional arguments.

The artist invents or constructs his objects, relations and situations. He distributes them among the spaces of his fiction. All these writers, by referring to images, try to transcend *nothing*, they all try to express the full volume of emptiness, the whole surface of the loneliness of man and time in question.

Every plot and every relation become problematic, because all is in question. The meaning is born only out of the relations of our perception, the author's alibi has passed into the hands of others, he has tried to experience the world more deeply, so that others might understand it better.

Translated by Branko Brusar