

croatian rhapsody

MIROSLAV KRLEŽA

»Magyar állam vasutak.« Passenger train No. 5309. A third class coach. The entire train rolls on one of the many lines of the great »M. A. V.« mechanism, the network of rails also entangling some of our South Slav parts. The time: the third year of the international battle. May 1917. About noon. A lyrical day. The sun playing with clouds.

At the last station a crowd of people has boarded the train, and the yellow wooden box women. And with old men and children. And odds and ends.

The sun has clutched the coach with its fiery claws. Intolerable sultriness. In the smoke, soot, and horror all the creatures are swimming like phantoms; at times all this seems a dream. A delirious fantasy. But momentarily it becomes again terribly clear that this is no hallucination. This is no vision at all, no stage, no dream: all this is. All this exists indeed.

A woman is crying softly in one group; consumption has been sapping her strength. But it will not for much longer. She is not old yet,

but this dying has crushed her. The nearest are listening to her lament.

The Woman, crying: Well, folks! This is it! This is what I regret about and about nothing else: that now I'm starving alone at home, like a beast.

The horrible beast, Consumption, is clenching her throat with its burning talons. She is choking with a cough. Some gruesome, demoniacal presence suggests itself while the woman coughs. She chokes with the cough. Like a devilish refrain, the cough echoes through the whole coach. Many women and ashy children and shriveled old men cough. The entire coach whoops, writhes with pain, spits blood. Dies.

The Woman: I know. I'm going to die. Never mind. Others also die. God grants life — God takes it away. But I'm sorry I've got nobody to light me a candle when I drop dead. But I'll ... without a candle.

The cough again disturbs her, bends her double. Between her small, childlike, sickness-worn knees she is holding a beehive. Woven of osier twigs and coated with cow dung. She keeps spitting out heavy, condensed masses of bloody saliva. And swarms of flies swoop down gluttonously on the red pools, bathing in the bloody liquid. So many people spit out blood that it flows, streams on the floor of the coach. An old man has found some room beside the woman. A white-haired patriarchal giant. Colossus. Goliath. His bear's paws clasping a big, naked, glittering axe. The axe is lost in those huge hands hardened with blood, dirt, and sweat. He is chewing black tobacco, listening to the sick, wailing woman. He stoops to her apparently with a wish to comfort her.

The Giant: What is it you're sorry for? You wretch! You know yourself that you've got no more than two or three weeks left. Why are you gadding about then?

The Woman, fretting. His rough tone has offended her: Why I'm gadding about? Gadding about? Is it your concern at all, you impish mischief?

A Woman's Wheezing Voice out of the cloud of smoke: Wherever are you bound, my dear mother?

The Woman: Me? Nowhere in particular! *The cough attacks her again: she spits out blood.* If I must croak anyhow, at least I'll be near my own. No doubt, it'll be easier. *She squeals plaintively like a wounded dog.* I've remained alone in our house, and I'm going to die at my daughter's. It's surely easier to die at one's child's.

A Voice: Where's that daughter of yours?

The Woman: Well, she's married, two or three stations farther. And I'm taking this beehive to her.

The Old Bear, the Giant, mumbles something and spits, puffing clouds of stinking smoke. Alone! Goddam it! Alone in the house! Ha! Ha! Why, then, haven't you born more children? You wouldn't have remained alone then. I've born them—thanks to God!—sixteen. Three times twins. Twins! And also buried them—thanks to God. Sixteen. And I've burned. And my old woman's died. I've buried her too. And I've remained alone. And now, as you see, I roam felling woods. God himself knows where. Anyhow, it's O. K. As long as one's well. But you, my dear—by God—you won't devour bread for long.

As if he wished to stroke and comfort her, the barbarian claps her with his paw. A savage, rude contentedness surges from each of his gestures, a creature's who has gone through much, who has seen slaves disfigured by life dying, but is nevertheless defiant. And enjoys his defiance whenever life pulls something down and destroys it.

Somebody's Pitiful Voice: Well, it's really O. K. so! That it won't last long. The sooner, the better. In any case, one only suffers. Like cattle! Just like cattle!

The Woman, crying sickly, as if she wanted to dissipate the doubt that she is barren: Though I haven't always been alone. I've born six. Two died in their childhood already. One girl got married and a son died in battle somewhere on the Drina River. Another has gone

against Italy and still another 'is fighting Russia. This one isn't writing at all.

Voices: But where's your man?

The Woman: Well, standing guard somewhere in Zagreb. He should come home about Easter. And afterwards, he said, he'd move to the front, or whatever ...

In between vernal showers—a girl's planting flowers ... *somebody laughs while in a corner of the coach a song arises, fine and fluttering like red silk on the bosoms of white-dressed girls baring their pearly teeth and drinking brandy. The richness of Eastern, luxurious life overflows the coach. In the cloud of smoke, in the sunny heat, in the bloody pores, some mad Slav god dances, celebrates a wedding, and glorifies famous Slav life.*

A Hard-Faced Peasant, slim and needly, jaundiced and miserable, barges into the conversation. He has racked his brains long to say something: You've put it right, friend. We suffer like cattle. I live. I watch. And I think: Whyever do cattle suffer? Cats don't suffer. Neither do pigs. Only cattle, and then we—people!

A Wise Voice: Ha! People suffer because they're dogs. Therefore they suffer. But even man, if he's a pig, doesn't suffer. But how come they haven't thrust you into uniform?

The Hard-Faced Peasant: They did enlist me. But what could they do with me? I acquired a rupture during last Whitsuntide, and my bowels broke out, but in spite of this they earmarked me for the guard. However, an order came for them to release us.

A Boy, who bursts out laughing roguishly: Isn't it you yourself who've drawn your bowels out? With stones! They do it where I live—yes, by God. And afterwards the bowels climb up again by themselves—and then one takes part in round-dancing again.

Everybody roars with laughter. Outside in the fields, birds and animals, frightened by this human laughter, dart frantically over and across furrows, crops, and copses. The song of iron is clanging, the burning soot showe-

ring: hell itself thundering and rattling and shrieking. The M. A. V. gliding across our country...

The Boy raps out against an old man on the opposite bench, a Bosnian. A Turk with a fez. Cowering in the Turkish manner, tucking his feet under his buttocks, silent, watching.

The Boy: Whatever's your destination, Abdul? Do you belong to a Bosnian-Herzegovinan one? Zwei or Drei?

The Muslim is staring in front of himself like petrified. Puffing smoke. Musing about something, staring. Mechanically, he nods his head. He does not belong to any Bosnian-Herzegovinan one. Neither Zwei nor Drei. With his tiny green eyes he is drinking in the broad-shouldered young man sitting opposite him: a sailor. A youth. The golden letters on his cap say: »Kaiserliche und Königliche Flugstation.« He is cutting bread. Holding a ham in his hand. In the hot sun the fat from the ham is melting and dripping. The fatty juice crawling on his fleshy hands swollen from the heat. He has probably been on leave, and his mother has stuffed him with food. Cakes, meat, wine. Like a young beast of prey, he bites into the red meat, cartilages crackling. And the Muslim, yellow, hungry, scantily dressed—sunk into the linen jacket of his uniform, tightened around his neck like a sack, is devouring him with his eyes. In his mind he is following the sailor's movements. Hunger has eaten up the color of his face, depressed the hollows under his eyes—his body is dried up like a corpse beginning to stink on a pole. A huge bald skull, Mongolian, intersected with scars, dirty, like a scarecrow's head in a wheat field. Each time a crumb falls down from the sailor; a crumb of white wheat bread, on the floor all bespattered with spittle, muddy, bloody, soiled with cigarette stumps, greasy and black from carbolic oil and tar, then the Muslim bends after each crumb and pecks it with the blind voracity of a hungry fish.

A civilian is watching this biblical scene. He is, it is true, still a civilian only for this day. The following day, however, he will no longer

be a civilian. He is going to »sign up« now. The following day he will join his company. The following day he will no longer be a civilian. Hardly more than two weeks ago already, at the small provincial town where he, at the royal office of finances, copied all day long for ninety crowns a month, did appear those ghastly white placards with the mystical black title: »Draft Notice.« The civilian stared long at the placard, in rain, and a strange feeling pervaded him. There! Such a common white piece of paper dropped into his life and ruined everything! Annihilated the whole structure of his life. From the God-forsaken inn, where Tyrolean landscapes hung from the walls, where the higher and the superior played preference, and from the God-forsaken office and the walks along the mulberry-tree-bordered lane or the railroad, he plunged into this disintegration, into this infamy! He has spent a sleepless night in the train—horror, vexation, debts, tribulation. His nerves are so irritated that the sailor's brutality offends him no end. The barbarity smarts, and he—a small, humble low-clerk figure—speaks out belligerently: Hey, you! Pig! Don't you see the wretch is swallowing your crumbs? Aren't you ashamed?

His own tone startles him. But now everything is too late. The charge has exploded.

The Sailor: Shut up! This is no concern of yours!

The Civilian: But you're a pig! The word seems effective to him. This is swinish!

The Sailor: You say just one word more—and I'll hang you on that red ribbon around your throat!

The Civilian: You beast! The poor man in hungering, starving, and you're bursting from

....
The Sailor: What! Beast? Ha! Here! This is your beast, you goddamn civilian!

He jumps up, seizes his coat, and pushes him with all his might down onto the floor, and then begins to belabor him with his fists. The civilian scratches hysterically with his clerk's long nails. Blood trickles from his nose. Commotion. The people bustle and separate

them. The sailor resumes his eating in cold blood. The civilian tries to stop the blood with his handkerchief. The train crossing bridges. The Muslim is watching it all, astonished.

The Sailor: By God! And such a grasshopper! Give! Give! Only give! And who'll give to me when I have no more? When I swallow up this smidgen of mine, I'll starve myself. I'd be happy myself if I could pick up somebody's crumbs! But the deuce! At our Flugstation there are only rocks and water—no crumbs! But such a civilian!

Blood is trickling from a scratch on his hand. He sucks blood and eats alternately. The pale woman, whom the Muslim's misery has evidently touched, takes corn bread out of her bag and gives it to him. A small girl is lying on her bag, all in crusts, insufficiently bandaged. Pus is gripping out of her wounds, many flies are on the little girl's face. She is crying, scratching herself and howling. The Muslim is bolting it down. Eating, he has brightened up:

The Muslim: I've not had a bit for three days. Been only smoking. I'm returning from Macedonia. Was an Arbeiter there. Now I'm joining the regulars. And then to the front. Well, it's better on the front, one doesn't hunger there.

Several front men, who are on leave, begin to grin maliciously. Their laughter is not sardonic. It is inexorable to the degree that it is destroying every illusion the Muslim indulges in concerning the front. An Arbeiter who dreams of front roasts. Ha! Ha!

The First Front Man: But do you think, you B-H-Drei clod, that the front is a fair? Or a church feast, where mead is served?

The Second Front Man: What do you, wretch, think? What's the front? Eh? You, fool, do you know what cholera is?

The Muslim, with his mouth full, shakes his head. He does not know what cholera is.

The Second Front Man: Cholera, well, it's a terrible disease. It eats up your bowels, and you croak in two days. As to me, I was infected with cholera. They say small animals like rats devour your bowels. And they were devouring me, those animals. I sensed them in-

deed chasing one another in my bowels. Like small rats. But never mind! They are all laughing. But believe me, at my wedding itself did I not dance for joy so as I did when I was afflicted with cholera. For joy, Abdul! I left the front for hospital. I was certain I'd go to hospital. I got cholera at a front lottery, brute!

Other Front Men, as if their personal merit were involved: Aha! My Abdul!

An Invalid, without his left arm, with a medal from 1866: Well, by God! In 66, when under Radetzky we fought the Italians . . .

The Front Men, young people, ridicule the old one, in the same way that old men deride a child: Ha! Ha! Radetzky, my dear! Those were imperial manoeuvres. You played at war then! Today, if you saw it, when it bumps and blows up a church.

The little scabby girl is weeping. A whole cloud of hideous black flies has settled down on her wounds full of blood. Her mother is driving the flies away, silencing the little one: Shut up! You sow! I'll throw you out through the window if you don't cease. Shut up!

Voices: What's the matter with that child?

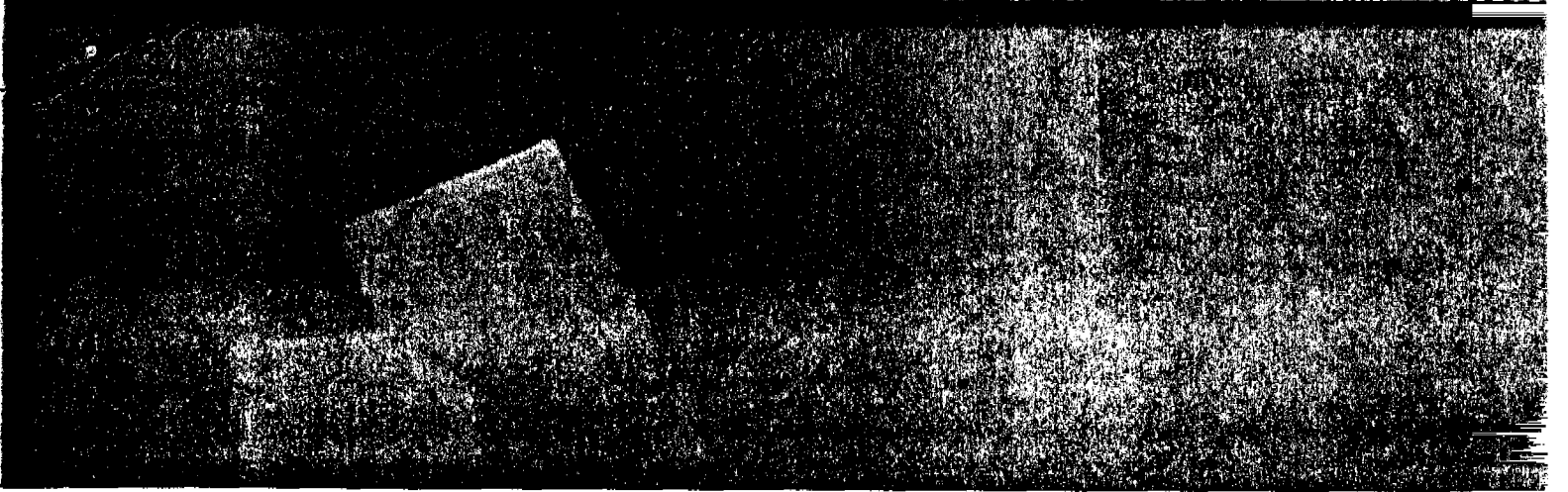
Mother: Well, she's contracted this plague, and nobody can help her. Neither old women nor herbs, charms, salves, nothing helps. And it becomes such, like a florin, and bursts. We're going to town, to the doctor's . . .

Another Mother: To which doctor's? I'm going myself to a doctor's with this my little one. But I don't even know where to stay overnight . . .

Her child is a goitrous idiot. Under the weight of his body his legs have bent, like melted tallow candles. His head is swollen like a melon, his eyes bulge out. He bawls, howls, roars, bites cigarette stumps from the floor. When he stoops, gaunt vertebrae show through his shirt. An imbecile. An animal.

An Old Woman: Eh, by Christ, my dear, the Lord had better take pity on this son of yours.

The Second Mother: If you only knew with what I've not tried to kill him. But an animal is sturdy, sturdier than any of us. He sleeps through a whole frosty night outside in the



yard, and nothing. Even a dog freezes outside on its chain, its teeth chattering, howling, but nothing ...

A Woman: And what if you lighted up a candle? God would kill him! God is good. Willing to take pity!

The Second Mother: Well, I have, I have, I've lighted up a candle, the devil take it! Whatever have I not done! And nothing. And look! This bone has now protruded, only troubles ...

A Front Man: You should put him into a sack, and throw him into water, like a cat. But let's straighten him up a bit, so that he can also go to the front!

Roars of laughter. A sheaf of those callous, rough hands catch the child, start straightening has backbone; the little one is howling, and the people laugh, pull, giggle. And spit blood and choke in the clouds of yellow smoke and sultriness. In this sick flood, in this stench, in the infectious exhalations, heaps of bags, sacks, baggage, in the chaos of these sick outgrowths of life, the ghosts of all-destroying tuberculosis, war, and plague are causing havoc. Like invisible demons they crumble the people's sick brains between their fingers, and the people shout and laugh from pain, die and travel, flee somewhere to the last black station—and onwards ...

In a corner, near the open window, two shabby, poor, anemic students are sitting, sipping the hot, scorching May air, which sometimes waves from the marshes and peat bogs over which the M. A. V. train is rolling. With sickly eagerness they have launched into a discussion. They talk about the Croatian idea. About the Yugoslav problem. About how our youngest talents languish abroad. In Barcelona, Paris, Rome. How they fall. How they die. How many have died! Starved. Shamefully. Gruesomely. Oh, how many are roaming about the globe, looking for a homeland! And look: this is the homeland, right here. This coach, this is home. And in prisons, cafés, editorial offices, so many talents are suffering. Suffering because of their love for life. And life, their

life travels in such a third class. And one of the youths is belligerent, the other resigned.

The Belligerent One: But, please! All our people are withered plants. In order to live through a débâcle, one should be strong. But these people of ours are flexibility itself. I read their poems. Look at what they paint on cloth. Oh, how all this is empty, bloodless, shallow. How foolish all this is! Their Germanic *Stilleben* and *Stubenglück* disposition, how awfully silly all this is! Which Croatian generation has suffered so much as We do? And where's but a single reflection of the suffering? About expression itself I won't even speak ...

The Silent, Resigned One: Well, you shouldn't get excited, my dear. We're all victims of our European, devilish fate. Our profession is Suffering. Pain and suffering. And that Genius, the bright, good Croatian genius, That Savior of ours, who's surely coming, and who'll find the Word and the Form of the Expression, that Messiah who'll heal us from the sickness that is graining us, He is coming. And, I say, I believe He's coming. And if I had only a moment's doubt about his coming, believe me, by God, I'd leap down, under these M. A. V. wheels! I believe: He's coming! He must come! He'll heal us. He'll accomplish the Deed, and the Deed will be the remedy for our pains. It's only sad that he cannot issue from our own generation. He'll have a look at the chaos from a wider perspective.

The Belligerent One: Nonsense! These are banal histories, this invocation of the Genius! We shan't wait. What one waits for may not come. But We want the Deed! Today! And the Remedy! And Easter. Today! Though we've got our Easter. Heroic, sound, wild Easter. The Easter of sculpture and painting and verse and music, today ...

The Resigned One is smiling. His smile, no, it is not defiant. This is not the smile of a man who does not believe: a sad kind of life comes into existence in one who looks at the Savior hanging with his knees broken, dead on the cross. And when that somebody knows what it means to hang on the cross, with pierced ribs and broken shinbones, because he himself

has experienced Golgotha umpsteen times, and when he knows that for him, for him personally, there is no Heaven. This is the smile of the people whom all the gods have forsaken. And it is thus only for a moment. Since a moment later such a brain itself creates its God, whom it will invoke at the top of its voice.

The Resigned One: You're speaking of a sound Easter! Please, would you be so kind as to look around this coach? Oh, this coach won't see the Genius . . .

The Belligerent One: All this is ephemeral. These people will get out! Healthy travelers will get in. And the train will surely head for Cosmopolis . . .

The Resigned One: No doubt: the train is bound for Cosmopolis. But while we travel, such sad and sick people will always travel with us. Barbarians and slaves.

The Belligerent One: But this is a damned thing, this resignation of ours. How can you be so femininely slovenly? How can you be so unintelligent?

The Belligerent One, striking his bosom: I myself, to a hundred devils with it, have been put on the rack several times in my life already! Listen where I've roved. I've been a fireman abroad. And traveled throughout Europe by foot. And been imprisoned, and fought in the Balkans in 1913, but all the same, I'm still strong, I don't give in . . .

The Resigned One: All this is, it's true, a matter of temperament and nerve. I myself have gaddled about anywhere. I myself have endured pain. But the last pain has broken my heart. It morally killed me that time that I went to fight together with a Croatian company. And I can't really say that I doubt. But I'm sick. I think the One whom I invoke doesn't hear me. I say, that afternoon when together with the Croats I went to the fight, then the Sense of our tribulations became clear to me. We suffer for the Expression of the Genius, but we shan't see him. Yes, it was clear to me! We shan't see him. Only the purified and the communicated may see him. And we, look how dirty we are . . .

The Belligerent One, shouting: But it's just we that see Him!

The Resigned One: This is a lie. You don't see Him. This is your own lie, like the lie of those lyrical wretches who sing about *Stilleben* and *Stubenglück*. Their sonnets and still lifes, glasses, tablecloths, apples, flies, and your verbal heroism, this is the same. A dream! The false dream of a pseudocivilization! And oh, it smarts terribly, for it to mean that it's the false dream of a pseudocivilization!

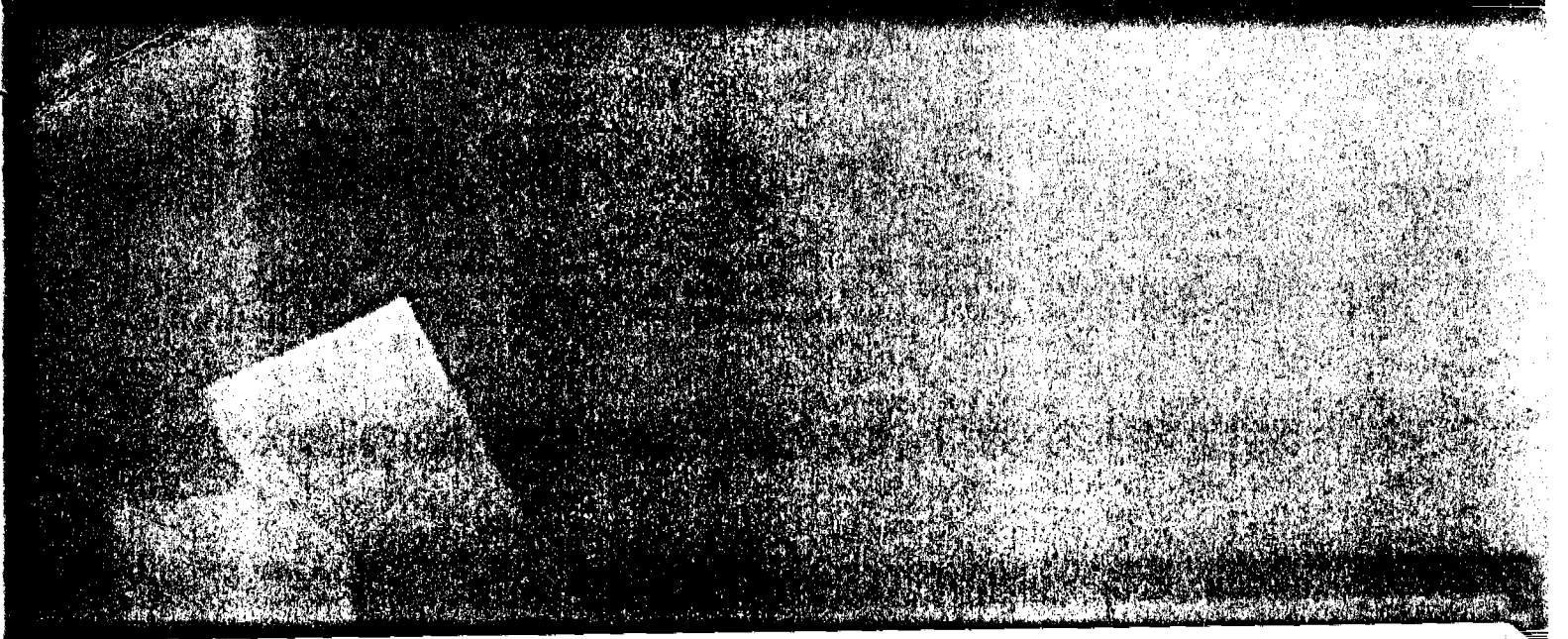
The Belligerent One: Feminine nonsense! Hysteria! I'm also occasionally seized with resignation, but I don't give in!

The Resigned One: No! It's no hysteria! With your leave. It was all clear to me, then. It was noon. Decorated with tricolor badges and flowers, you go to war, oh, how terribly clear . . . he catches his head, closes his eyes, staring unnervedly and foolishly:

The crowd is rolling. Drums beating, trumpets, music, and he, drunk with brandy, wine, as in a drowse, stunned, shaking, with a bag on his back, the straps cutting into his flesh, alcohol evaporating in the column, lead in cartridge pouches pulling down towards the asphalt, the Mannlicher rifle, knife, weapons, red faces, all fluttering, and all singing. Oh, all singing . . .

And the tricolors with the Sacred Heart of Jesus are waving, the drunken men cheering, the caps flinging up, they are smoking, drinking from canteens, laughing, skipping, ululating. The band intones round dance. The whole columns, with banners streaming in the mid-day sun, are dancing. And not only one column—numberless, endless numbers of columns, all raising their banners, are round-dancing. Thus all are dancing, all is rolling, all going. All going somewhere. Into smoke, into fire, into blood, into madness. And drums are beating, trumpets blaring, brass cymbals clacking, people yelling, roses smelling sweet, handkerchiefs fluttering, as well as banners, holy banners, Croatian banners . . .

And Ilica Street is dancing, and Korzo, and town, and necklaces and furs and perfumes and silk and jewels of those Ilica bazaars, and



the glossy European lies of the odious, sooty, antipathetic grey street, and the silk dresses of town ladies, and the cabs, roofs, streetcars, palaces, and Grič and Kaptol, and All is dancing. And the columns, and the numberless columns, and the people, the whole people is dancing...

Blood surges into his head. Trembling, his blood seething, with some bitterness in his heart, he begins to cry with the voice of a confused, silly, helpless child. And the other one is riveting the eyes on him, shaking fanatically, neurasthenically, he sees and sympathizes with everything, some morbid moisture breaking out of his sweaty hands, and then he begins to cry with him, helplessly, childishly, miserably, lyrically...

The Resigned One is stroking the Belligerent One's hair. Tearful, sobbing: Yes! How should one express it? It isn't possible. Expression means recuperation. And we're sick, and all that is only a Jerk. A pathetic, Hellenic jerk, sadness, dream, but not Expression! This today is fever, delirium!

This boyish, simple-minded lyricism is drowning in the high tide of various forms: men, women, children, uproar, songs, in the rattling of the wheels of the M. A. V. train, which is gasping and leaping over bridges and roads, and meadows and fields, and all that hullabaloo, those houses, woods, fields, hamlets, churches, hills, all this is pouring into something madly rhythmical, feverish, into the chaos of vapor, smoke, illness, horror, suffering, and frenzy.

Left and right of the railroad, as far as the eye reaches, silvery waters have overflowed. There, under the silver, crops and meadows are rotting under the sky. Sad black birds are flying over the rotten dead waters, and willows are sticking out of the flood like black floating balls. And everything is mere water and water and water and flood and fens and sumps and mud.

Somebody's Voice: Why on earth is all this under water?

Peasants: Why? Because nobody cares. Our gentlemen care the deuce if we go to rack and

ruin. They look at their own reflection in the floor that they walk upon, as we look at ours in mirrors. They do live in clover. We don't so even for Christmas. We? We're drowning here, we're rotting in this mud, lapping up these mosquitoes, feeding mosquitoes with our flesh.

A Voice: It would surely be good land if drained. Only if it weren't under water, it would be fine soil.

Another Voice: They throw away thousands for follies. And here's water laying waste the whole country...

The Third Voice: This stinking water is, however, better than the gentlemen. Wherever they alight, it's as if the plague itself swooped upon it. They've eaten up all the woods here; they saw and fell them; they transport them—everything's barren. And we freeze near saw-mills in winter, where whole freight cars of wood are stacked.

Voices: Priests are also skinning us. And gendarmes beating us. And plundering. Wrestling our land and corn and oxen from us...

An Old Man: Though it hasn't always been this way. While the Emperor ruled the Border, it was better. One had to go against the Italians then, but there was bread and grub then. And order. And granaries full. And stables replete with livestock. And fields cultivated, and now all's void. There are no people, no family communities, no horses, no oxen, there's nothing. And look here, people, I'm old, and when I so listen to bees buzzing, believe me, they themselves buzz sadly, much more sadly than before, in the old times...

Voices: Oh, those blessed old times! There was peace and God's blessing. And now everything's in vain, religious processions themselves don't help, neither do vows nor tallow candles nor litanies, nothing! Everything's damned now.

Women, lamenting: Well, there was vine and there were cakes and honey and milk and everything. We used to laugh and sin, and didn't know what it meant when peace reigned on earth...

Then grievous lamentation begins to circulate from lip to lip among these sick trave-

lers-for peace, for blessing, for land... This land is in their blood, their brains, their words, their curses, their blessings. This land is their first and their last value, and it seems they are a part of the poor Croatian earth... which is rotting there under water. And they weep over it, and invoke somebody who could help, who would plow the land again, for it to bear fruit, to spread sweet smell, to laugh.

An Older, Grey Reservist pointing to a patch of plowland: Can you see? A woman has plowed there!

Another Reservist: As if a child had scratched it. How in the world could a woman plow?...

A Woman: Eh, by God! You're always blaming women! Whatever would you eat then, if there weren't us, women? By God, you'd croak of hunger there out in your trenches if we had not plowed and sowed the land. You've wrested even horses from us, to fight, and we must pull the plow ourselves.

The Grey Reservist: What are you twaddling there, woman? We'd rather croak of hunger in trenches than thus to... he swallows up what he wants to say.

Then their words become ghastly... Through the window can be seen rows and rows of black women plowing. Breaking the land. Sowing. Mere black women plowing. And in hills and woods have crowded grey ghosts of Hunger, extending their talons and devouring villages. While villages are screaming. Funeral processions are marching. Bells tolling, the train meandering, climbing the hills, bending on fallow fields, angrily showering sparks. The fallow land is catching fire, smoking, burning up.

A boy betted a girl... the drunken young red women at the bottom of the car begin to sing. Adorned silk shawls, expensive braided leather coats, little glass pieces, laces, embroidered roses, all this is overflowing the misery like a fragrant luxurious contrast. Alcohol has roused feminine nerves, and their unrepressed song has bloomed up like sensuous fleshy flowers with gorgeous petals, smelling sweet in the repulsive coach.

The Old Man, embittered: Just look at the hussies how they're howling...*

The Young Red Women, defiantly: You'd too, old man, only if you were young...

An Old Woman: Oh, God'll punish you, women, at this time...

The Young Red Women: One lives only once, you wretch. To God what's God's; to us what's ours. Why should we cry? When that moonlight brightens, well, how hay smells sweet then, and one lives and lives like never. Now even more beautifully than ever.


A Soldier: But where have you been, young women?

The Young Women: We've sold oxen, and we've got money. Heh! Heh! A lot of money.

They are taking money out of their shawls. Bank notes. Bundles of bank notes. But a draft blew up, and scattered the bank notes throughout the car. The whole coach bustles madly. All crying: Bank notes! Bank notes! And they push and hit one another in order to catch some red or blue bank note. Laughter, merry-making, song, kissing, smoke, vapor, coughing, curses, prayers, lamentation, everything seething ever more madly, foaming more furiously.

Outside, little houses already begin to follow one another. It seems the train is approaching a small town. Sad inns, with melancholic jades in front, and fences, gardens, fruit trees, a lane of poplars, tam-tim-tim, leaping over switches, and a grey desolate station with a restaurant and migration of people. The train has hardly stopped when a crowd of women, peasants, gendarmes, wounded men, invalids, Bosnians, children, gentlemen, porters storm the cars. A crowd's furious, headlong storm. Thousands of hands reaching for steps, baggage falling, people shouting, a mad confusion seizing the crowd, devouring it like fever.

A trunk falls on a man's leg and breaks it. He is howling with pain. They are carrying him away. One engine catches a child and crushes it. Hubbub, blasphemies. They are throwing parcels out of the mail car in frenzy. Clerks with gold-embroidered red ribbons, sleepy, with bloodshot eyes, are walking and



swimming as in a dream. And yelling. Everybody is yelling. Bawling. One thirsty little bitch in pup is lapping it up from waiting-room spittoons with relish. Engines are gasping, somewhere they are trumpeting to a military transport. A train with red crosses is pulling in. The wounded. Oxen are lowing plaintively somewhere. People are hitting themselves against the train. Women are carrying boxes and crying, babies are falling out onto the dust. The train has overgorged itself. It can gulp no more.

A procession has squeezed itself into a large coach, a gendarme too, escorting a man from Syrmium, with some Gypsies who are playing for the Syrmian. Women in tears, several soldiers with black trunks. A legless invalid, on prostheses, has climbed up, and they are still climbing and shouting, numberless whistles whistling, hands waiving, and the train already starting, moving, puffing smoke. The wheels are rolling, gliding, the engine steaming, moving, everything is moving...

Good-bye, Anda! God guard you! a young man in uniform is shouting, still embracing a beautiful healthy young woman. But he must release her, the train has torn them apart. He is returning to the front. And the woman is screaming, she can restrain herself no more, she is running beside the train, weeping, the man himself weeping. The woman trips and falls, and a soldier who wants to catch the train trips over her. One of the two small bags of flour that he has just carried on his back opens and the flour spills. But he still manages to jerk himself up and reach the steps, and only then, on the train, he realizes what has happened. He has spilled a bag of flour. And this elderly man, already bald, begins to sob bitterly on the steps.

The young man, with his tearful eyes still pinned on the station, now tears them away to look at his companion and to get rid of his grief: But, by God, why are you so sorry for this bit of flour?

The Bald Soldier: I'm more sorry for the flour than you are for your wife. He is crying. Listen, I've been wounded twice, and have

stood out there for two years, and I haven't wept. And now I could die with anguish. My heart might break...

Others, comforting him: But you'll come across some flour, by God!

The Bald Soldier: Yes, but it's not me who'll come across it! Tomorrow I'm leaving for the front. And I'm not from here. I'm from the highlands. And there's nothing there. My wife has died. And the four chicks have remained alone. I've come home and sold the cow to buy bread for them. And I've traveled down here, spent my whole leave traveling, and now I've spilled... Grief seizes him, and he blasphemes, blasphemes fearfully.

The conductor. A good mixer. A fatty. Somewhere from Kiskunfélegyháza. Kicking those hanging on the steps: Hence, you bastards! Hence! You fall down and get crushed! Only bloody mash remains from you! God grant you fall and break your neck! Only not while I'm responsible! D'you think I care for you? I care for you the deuce! I care for myself. And then they haul me into court and rap me. You know, those gentlemen! Oho! Those gentlemen! How they rap you! He pushes them into the cage and closes the door carefully: Tickets! Please Tickets! To a better clothed rake: My eyes are bloodshot! I've not slept for forty hours. I've run with these cattle incessantly for three years. They're not people! They're cattle. They keep falling off coaches. Like calves! One was crushed only yesterday! Head and legs. And women whimpered. Heh! Heh! Tickets. Please! Tickets! He is pushing on, hitting, cursing, striking, sweating, and shouting. He is doing his duty. The drunken in the car intone roguishly:

She gave him, she did, blackcoat Joca's girl... on their fiddles the Gypsies picking a fine melody of herds of horses, plains, fountains, and willow groves, and a chorus answering from the other side:

Emperor Karl and Empress Zita,
Why fight when there's no wheat, ha?

The Syrmian, rollicking: Halo, by God, so-aker, strike that one of mine, and I'll paste you with fivers all over . . . he yells and kisses the first fiddler. The fiddler strikes some Pest Orphic motif, plaintive and shallow. The Syrmian sings after him, and the rest with them: »Rágyujtottam a pipára . . .«

The Syrmian, throwing fivers: Ho! Ho! Let them know when a gentleman »handles« it az Istennét . . .

Voices: But how are you handling the gendarme?

The Syrmian: Ha! Ha! The gendarme! This is no gendarme! This is the Force! The Force is handling me. But never mind, nonsense! I went for a walk. You know. Only so. A little. And this isn't allowed. The *Reglement* doesn't allow it. And the Force caught me. And goes with me to embellish it. Ha! Ha! Isn't it so, Force? He embraces the gendarme. The Gypsies. The car. Breaks windows with bottles.

The Gendarme, laughing: That's it, my brother! Force! Honor and homage to the Force! That's it! Everything's O. K. Everything's been O. K.! And everything'll be O. K. I tell you, everything'll be O. K. A bullet into the head, and everything'll be O. K.

They drink. The Gypsies fiddle. They embrace.

The women have returned from a procession. They have prayed for peace. Have pilgrimaged for peace, pilgrimaged with the cross of the parish church, to some nearby miraculous Virgin. And they have taken the bulky, heavy wooden cross of their parish church into the car. They are doing penance, praying a litany aloud.

The Women:

Tower of David!
Tower of Ivory!
Morning Star!
Refuge of Sinners!
Pray for us!
Pray for us!
Pray for us!

The refrain flows over the sick, subaudible voice that prays the litany, and droops into the smoky, mad whirlpool like withered petals of an invisible, shriveling flower. And many people in the coach join the sad lamentation, and the exasperate evocation of superior powers fights with the primordial, broad, drunken, intoxicated element.

The black wailing of a Poor Widow writhing in pain pierces the coach:

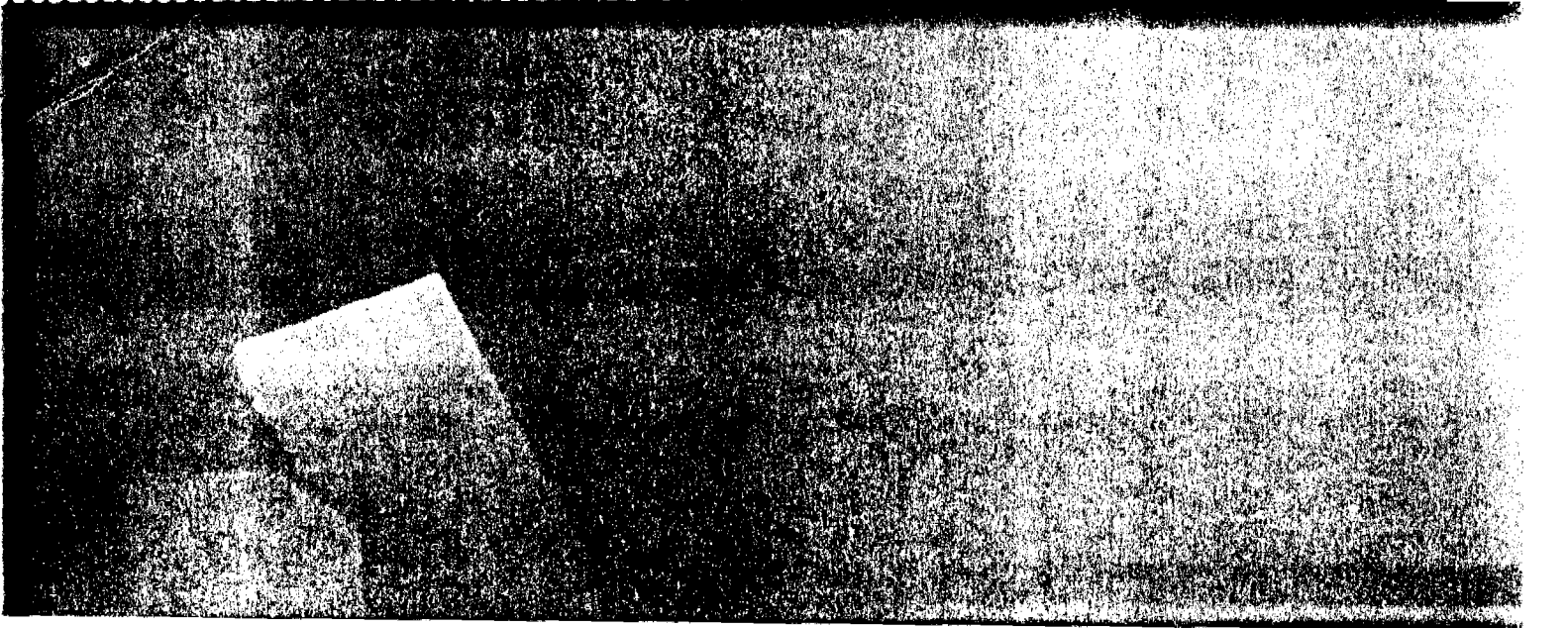
Oh! Woe! Oh! Woe! Nevermore will my eyes see him again! Never, never, nevermore! What a sad woman I am! What wrong have I done to God that he's so afflicted me! That he's so battered me! But he's no more! Where's he, my good and dear one? Oh! Woe! Oh! Woooooc!

Voices: What's the matter with you, woman?

The Widow: What is the matter? This is the matter. She takes a telegram out of her bosom. A demon's rage seizes her, and she tears the telegram to pieces and spits on it. Here! Phew! Phew! This is it! My man has died. It's written on this paper that he's died. At hospital. And they're calling me to attend the funeral. And only a week ago he wrote he was well. Oh! Woe! Woe to me, poor woman! Oh! Woe! He's, the poor man, all right now! Oh! Woe! She plucks her hair, scratches her face with her nails. Tears her clothes. She is in a fit.

People, soothing her: Do calm down! Be sensible, woman! So many have died anyhow. It can't be helped! Such is the time, people are dying . . .

The Widow, jerking and lamenting: I don't care about others. Now that he's died, may the whole world go to the devil! And if at least he were buried at home, in our churchyard! If I, at least, knew where he lies. Saw his cross, showed it to my children. But nothing! Nothing! Somewhere there in the damned town, I myself don't know where. Oh! Woe! Oh! Woe! Her lament is choking her. And her sorrow affects other women like an infection, and that wave of the prayer of penance rises . . .



Oh, you Refuge of Sinners! Pray for us!

All the women, mothers, and sisters, widows and lovers, all lament in spirit with the black woman... Oh, at numberless funerals they walk behind coffins covered with the black-and-yellow cloth, while on the black velvet the hammer strikes those lugubrious chords of Funeral Marches. And all those women walk at an endless funeral, burying, praying desperately: Mary, Refuge of Sinners, take pity on us! Mary! Morning Star! Pray for us! Pray for us!

Sweets! Eggs! Wine!

Some red, unusually ugly, scrofulous, misshapen women with baskets rush into the car, and begin to shout at the pitch of their breath: Eggs! Cheese! Wine!

And men catch their breasts, knees, skirts, giggling and laughing. The woman with her face eaten by smallpox, without her nose, laughs most foolishly:

Heh! Heh! Boys, wine! Love! Cheese! Everything!

A young, healthy, drunken giant pulls her to himself and embraces her. He laughs. A pale, sunken man looks at him and warns him:

Go ahead only, go! You'll get it like myself! I also thrust my head into the slops! And here it is: they've poisoned all my blood!

The Giant: What shall I get? One woman's like another. With her nose or without it! And what's the matter if I even get it? Can I get it worse than outside in the ditch? What shall I do with my nose without my head?

The Pale Man: If you only knew it feels being neither alive nor dead! And what if you have no legs? It's nothing. You're still well. But thus! My dear! When you crawl among people, and aren't a man. Everything bites you. Your blood curdles. They'd better have cut your head off: thus you've gone through more. *The woman tries to arouse him. He pushes her away. Hence, witch! If I had it, I'd thrust a red-hot wedge under your belly! You hag! He strikes her. They burn you and cut and sprinkle, torment and scorch, but you're still poisoned and poisoned.*

The Invalid on prostheses: Well, by God, they've cut me too. And burned and scorched. And hard, but I didn't sleep with a woman.

Voices: But where have you lost them? Both?

The Invalid: Both! Both, by God! In Galicia. I was riding through a wood, when a grenade crashed, and nothing.

Voices: Did it ache much?

The Invalid: Well, yes, but not too much.

One Voice: Well, I saw a poor devil, a Rumanian. He wept like a kid, but they cut both his legs at the hip, and all his bones protruded as in a ham.

The Invalid: They also cut mine here below the hips!

The Same Voice: But there were many there. Two whole rows in a shed. All drying under white tulle. To protect bloody flesh from flies. Like hams. *They laugh and touch prostheses.*

The Invalid, standing up and showing the solidity of the prostheses: Well, this is a fine thing. Got another pair at home. Spare ones.

Voices: Wherever have you got them?

The Invalid: In Russia. I was taken prisoner in that condition. Yes, yes, in Russia!

Voices: So you've been in Russia? And they gave you the prostheses? And at which town exactly?

The Invalid: Well, there were many, and I don't remember all I've been at. The last, I know, was Moscow, Baurnaul and then Moscow.

People: But is it a big town, that Moscow?

The Invalid: Big! Very big! We used to go for a ride. There are many churches. No end of churches. And streetcars as in Zagreb. And some water flows through the middle of the town...

The Women again, in plaintive voices: Mary, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us!

Drunken Soldiers: Shut up, women! Why on earth are you giggling? If you'd seen what we did, you wouldn't twaddle! Gypsies! Strike it! People! Let's drink! Let's sing! People!

Thus wine flows, and brandy, hoarse throats bawl with unbearable voices, and the drun-

ken song trembles in the smoky, heated coaches. All the contours have already disappeared, nothing can be discerned, all this is one mass, formless, red-hot, and mad.

The Old Reservist wakes up the young boy who dreams of his young wife left at home: Why for Heaven's sake are you cowering there like a cat? Be a man! At any rate, what does it matter if you bite the dust! There's still somebody left to pet your wife!

The Young Man, apathetically: It doesn't matter indeed. Are you also returning from leave?

The Old One: From leave to the front. And, moreover, two sons, both have already been under fire. But here you are, wet your whistle a little, refresh yourself, to forget...

People drink and refresh and intoxicate themselves in order to forget.

All drink in order to forget. To forget that they are returning to those bleak, whitewashed, cruelly empty barracks, where, at the bottom of the corridor, hurricane lamps burn so sadly. Where the sky is always cloudy, and rain can be heard pattering in the eaves; where, in naked yards, kettles smoke, where there are fleas and bugs and itches and abscesses and consumption and sweat and blood.

All drink to forget that they are returning to trenches, where wire sticks out and black uncertainty yawns, where mines and legs flutter, and limbs and hunger and grenades, and where blood reeks. Red, human blood. People swill brandy in fear of human blood.

Ha! Ha! Bohemian! Look at the Bohemian! He has blood sausages! I've smelled sausages, only haven't known from where, but they're at the Bohemian's!

A Soldier begins to bustle and robs the unsightly tiny man of the blood sausages that he has hidden into a red cloth.

The Little Man, defending himself: This is robbery! I'm taking them to my wife, from the fair! Theft! You robber! But boys seize him and begin to eat his blood sausages, laughing. Look, look at the Bohemian! And the Bohemian has an accordion. Strike it, pane zahraj!

The Little Man is shaking convulsively, his mouth foaming with rage.

The Syrmian can hardly stand on his legs: What? The Bohemian has an accordion? You, Bohemian, if you play up, you'll get a fiver. Two fivers!

All shout excitedly: Bohemian! Three fivers!

The Little Man wavers. Then takes up his accordion and plays nevertheless: »Nigdy se ne vsati...«

The bleating playing is spilling through the coaches. The drunken men are out-roaring one another. The Gypsies are tweedling and screeching and laughing on their fiddles, young women cheering, and along with the vehement rhythm, the prayer of the widows and pilgrims is weeping:

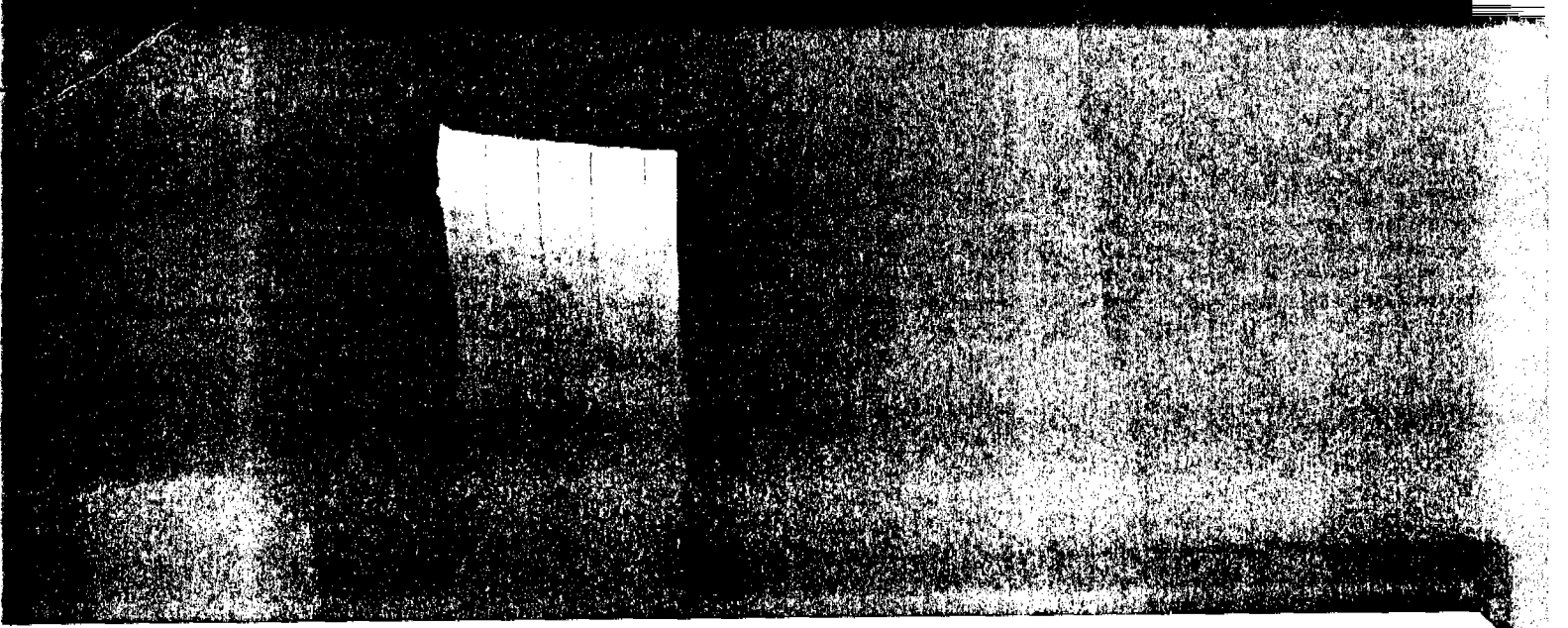
Mary, Refuge of Sinners! Pray for us!

Bottles crashing against telegraph poles, singing and flying the maddened flight along the smooth, shiny tracks. The train is puffing angrily, thus rushing with this crowd of crazy, drunken, wild, dying people across fields and hills, leaving behind huge whirls of dense black smoke.

A few coaches farther, in a grey car, on which the notice is nailed: »36 ember (Mann), 6 16 (Pferde)«, two railroaders are sitting on black trunks. Their service has sucked the last bit of consciousness out of them. With their red signal flags and extinguished lamps, half-dead, they have crawled into the grey car, where, among the blacks trunks, there is still some room for them to stretch and sleep for a little while. They are sitting in the dusk and talking.

The The Old, Gap-Toothed, Grey Railroader: Well, by God, we're all going to croak like jades. Man totes it, totes, and then pops off. I'll not for long. You tuck in nothing, and are awake whole months, then what kind of damned life is this?

The Second Railroader: And, moreover, the rising prices. My wife is always carrying on. Just tell me how I'll clothe my eight brats? Eighty crowns for a single pair of shoes.



The Old One: But why don't you take the government ones?

The Younger One: But I have already, I've taken whatever belongs to me. They've worn out everything. This is terrible. And it occurs to one to cut all the eight throats of the poor ones. Why should they suffer pain? Why should they cheep for bread all day long? Do I have bread myself?

The Old One: Well, I'm so-so. I somehow make both ends meet. My son sends me money. Only if I didn't have the job. Just before the war I intended to retire. But how can you retire? To croak of hunger with those ten florins? And so my son...

The Younger One: A good boy indeed!

The Old One: A fine boy. And intelligent. It's true, a bit of a socialist. But never mind.

The Younger One: Where is he driving now?

The Old One: Vienna-Budapest. A fast train! Eighty-seven kilometers an hour. Well, those are wonderful engines. Your heart leaps with joy when you see it blow and fly. And how my son only runs those engines!

His eyes are glaring. The eyes of the dulled screw, the battered beast, are glaring. The noble instinct of a gentleman is stirring up in him, of a Bright Man, who always follows his own path-onwards. And the old railroader is warming himself, in misery and starvation, on European emotions. And so they grumble in conversation, and the rhythm of the wheels accompanies them, like a strange, now merry, now sad, melody, while the dusk in the car and May sultriness make one sleepy. They droop on the black trunks and fall asleep. And the black trunks in the darkness of the car appear ghastly. And one does not know whether they are coffins or trunks and what their destination is. They must have been here for a long time, and nobody has cared about them, because cobwebs have entwined their corners and dust has settled on their labels, and one cannot see what articles they enclose. But in these black trunks, carefully buried in its age-long sleep, lies entire Croatian tradition. The princes of the Dubrovnik Republic in their precious vestments, grim kings with banners,

emblems, helmets, in armor, on charters as pillows, and the foolish bogumils, and heroes, scholastics and fanatics, all are sleeping with their arms crossed, waxen, dumb, in the black trunks in the grey freight car. And in the trunk on which the old railroader is snoring, His Majesty the Croatian Genius is slumbering.

He only seems to sleep. In fact, he is awake. He is awake as the bright Feeling of the Awareness of all the forms of life from Triglav to Salonika and from the Carpathians to the Sea. And he bleeds with all the forms, and enjoys them, and lies in the black trunk, and waits. And the old railroader, overwhelmed by sleep, rolls down from the trunk when the train thunders over a bridge, and His Majesty the Croatian Genius gets up from the trunk. Already the conversation of the two anemic talents, forward there, in the third class, has stirred him up to rise again and travel through the country. He is standing in the car.

He does not look heroic. In the twilight of the freight car his shape does not show clearly. The Croatian Genius is famished, spoiled, and wrecked, broken by those black gusts that have stormed over his head. Over this head, shriveled to a mummy, which in the last one thousand and a half years they have cut off several times as a terribly dangerous head. And his body is bruised by the blows of many battles, when he still fought as a corsair on the Adriatic, in the Apennines for the Anjous, on the Drava River for the Arpads, in the Balkans and Europe for the Habsburgs, oh, throughout the globe with his bloody sword. How many times he has languished in American mines, as a sailor, as a porter, a damned pariah, but illustrious over documents. Mere wounds, coagulated blood, humiliations, damnation. He wears a hard-labor prisoner's clothes. Since he was condemned at some political prosecution. He has his number, and in the coarse grey bag he looks like a resurrected skeleton. His eyes still shoot out burning arrows, a diamond star still glimmers in his hair, brilliant and unextinguished. And he hears that drunken uproar and mad howling from the coaches, and as a Spirit passes un-

hindered, invisible, throughout the train, forward into the smoky, intoxicated, wantonly exultant third class, and sits down, unobserved, into a corner.

And in the coach the sad are crying, the sick moaning, the drunken laughing, the sinful praying; the People is living in the coach. But all this national guzzling, and songs and laments kisses and curses, hunger and merriment, all this is a powerful, unconscious evocation of the One who must come. And the train hurries on, leaves houses behind, vineyards, brooks, stations, and the people are shouting, rushing onwards, and living. The Genius is watching attentively.

A mystical company has swarmed into the coach. One does not know whether they are magi, comedians, or acrobats. Whether this is a circus or a Divine Service. One knows nothing. A crowd of criers has come with them. Common fair criers, in diplomatic, gold-embroidered dress-coats, to look smarter. One does not even know whether they are fellow travelers journeying with the comedians to a fair, or whether they are flying Spirits. Both songs and prayers, and everything has fallen silent in the car. The people are afraid.

The Criers, in their diplomatic dress-coats, in chorus: People! You're afraid of false gods! But with us, with us are people to whom our National God has appeared! The red-white-blue National God! He dances in our company! And only in our company! In our company a Divine Miracle has been revealed! Look! Admire and pray!

A magician steps out, a naked magician wrapped up in an antique toga, about to display his skill. In a jiffy, with his hocus-pocus wand he produces, out of nothing, a whole menagerie of trained animals. Gold-winged birds flutter in all directions in the coach, bears mumble, Centaurs neigh, immensely big crickets harnassed to small carts prance through the coach, gaudy dithyrambs sit in the carts and clatter. Women scream out of

fright, nightingales sing, the gendarme and the drunken Syrmian kiss the woman-Centaur and intoxicate her.

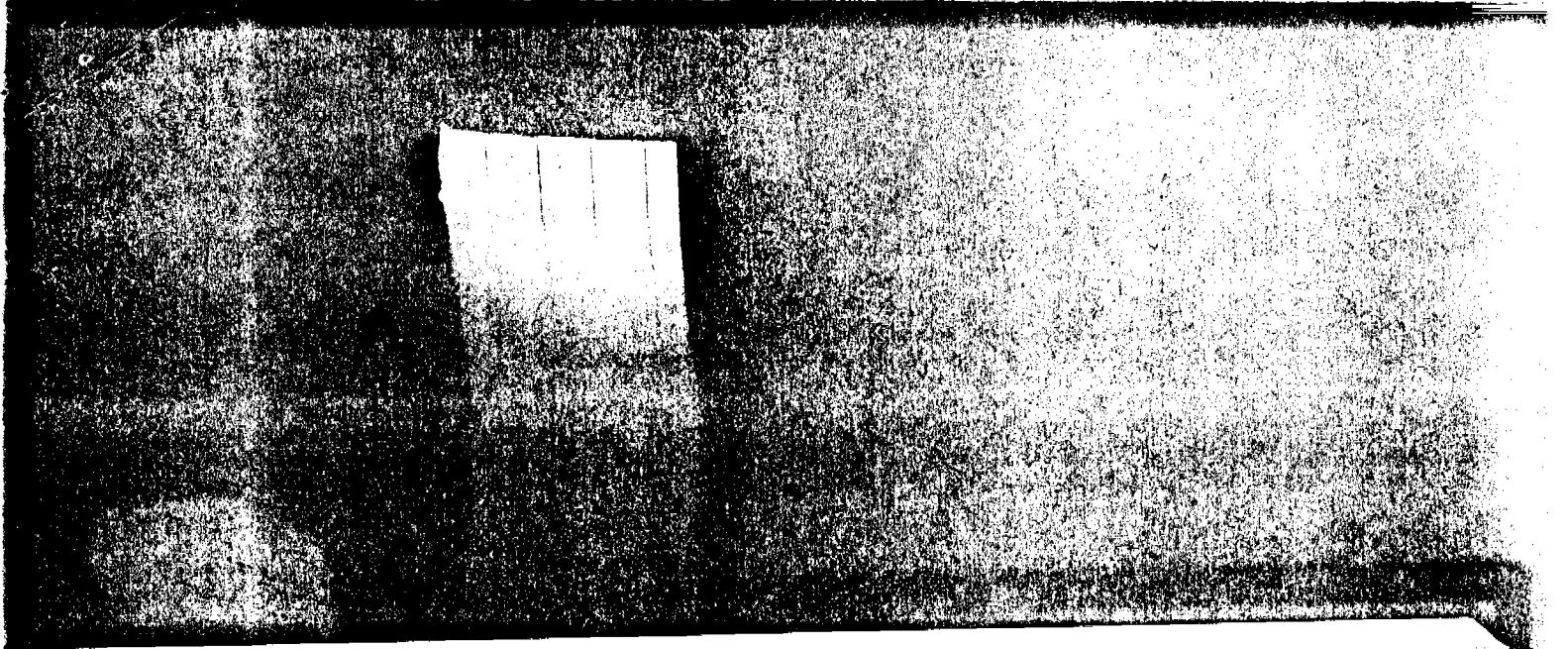
Ha! Ha! People! This is still nothing! Now a European attraction follows!

A chorus of black seminarians perform, singing Our Father in a lyrical vein. Small yellow apes plas Catholic melodies on their clarinets. The performance agrees with the pilgrim women and widows and invalids. They sing with them. That antique Centaur-tamer is smacking his whip, the seminarians are singing, the people howling. A mandarin stylizes the forms. He throws up stars like square crosses of pastry rosaries, square flowers, leaves like beetless with many legs, the seminarians throw up sonnets and juggle with them, the bruin mumbles and dances, the young women feed him with honey cakes; a bedlam. And the Criers in their diplomatic dress-coats yell:

All this, all this is a trifle. But what now follows is the apex of all sensations, London, the Congo, Rome, Mecca, Paris, all have fallen on their knees in front of this and prayed. Five continents have kindled lights in front of the revelation. The great Napoleon has turned in his grave. Hosanna! Hosanna!

A stout fellow in a red cassock steps out. He presses his hands together like a shell and begins to whistle like an outlaw. A terrible, ghastly whistle. All the people in the coach draw into themselves. A pause. Another whistle.

Like a far-off peal of thunder a muffled rumble echoes from a distance. And the whistle of the man in the red cassock is increasing, the rumble is dinning and coming nearer. The whistle howls like a mad whirlwind, and somewhere far off lightning strikes. The sky is streaked with lightning, darkened with huge black clouds, the sun extinguished. The pilgrim women, light up their candles, the consecrated tallow candles, men are pale, waiting. And in the gale, in the thunder, whirlwind, and storm, an enormous, defiant, black phantom rises above the mountains.



This is the phantom of Marko's, the hero's, Rage! The Criers in diplomatic dress-coats shout.

And the phantom, the medieval phantom is growing infinitely. Bolts of lightning, Darkness, Terror. The mystical phantom breaks rocks, begins to throw them into the valley, where the train meanders. The train has started hissing like a frightened snake, and rocks are tumbling and breaking, crashing, the specter is ever more furious thunder rattling, whirlwind, horror.

The man in the red cassock himself whistles ever more powerfully, thus stirring up the enormous phantom. Rocks are showering after the train, which is hissing like a wounded snake.

Pray! Pray! the Criers in diplomatic dress-coats shout. To spare us! Not to crush us! To take pity on us! Great Marko.

And the whole coach prostrates itself at the feet of the man in the red cassock. They light up candles to him, kiss his tails, pray and lament: You are a prophet! You are God! You are a Spirit! Take pity on us! Spare us!

But the man in the red cassock just keeps whistling ever more powerfully, and the specter disappears, evaporizes, and the sun breaks through from somewhere and gilts the coach. The people are lying on the floor, as if mown down, dripping with deathly sweat. They are jerking, awakening. And the masked grey skeptics, who have fallen into the coach like grasshoppers, shout:

People! How gullible you are! These are comedians! They go from fair to fair! And you're bleeding! You're suffering! You're dying! One should pray you! They should prostrate themselves in front of you! Never you in front of them! People! Wake up!

The Front Men: So it is! They're right! We are bleeding. Who gives us anything for that? Such foolishness! Let's throw them out! Out!

The Masked Skeptics: Out with them! Out with them! We don't want them! Oh, you people! You saint! You martyr! Why do you travel in the third class? And why do you travel at all? Stop the train! Turn it round, to take

you wherever you want. And not where it wants. Turn it away from the tracks. Let it take you to happiness! Why do you suffer and smart?

The Front Men: So it is! Why do we travel! There's no sense in it! The train must be stopped.

The Masked Skeptics: The train may be stopped only if so many of you jump among the wheels as to choke the axles. Jump, People, from the train! Or throw out the comedians!

Some jump from the train and kill themselves. The train just emits an angry puff, but still thunders and rushes on. It has crushed several heads. A trifle. Others, in raging fury, attack the comedians, with a view to throw them out of the train. They engage in bloody battle. The pilgrim women strike with their huge wooden cross, the front men shoot with their rifles and pistols, windows break, crash, and rattle, the train thunders, everything whirls, and all the masked skeptics laugh.

The Genius, pale, gets up and watches.

Beaten up, wounded all over, grievous, worn out, hungry, pierced, hacked, spat on, despised, in his hard-labor clothes, he stands like a pillar amidst the fight, his star scintillating on his head.

And he sees: legions of dead warriors are marching and yelling. And graves have disintegrated, and the dead have risen, bells are tolling a requiem, endless funerals are dragging in rain, and women are weeping. The decorated companies are cheering and plunging headlong into battle, the wounded are moaning, towns burning, and cannon are roaring deafeningly throughout the country. And processions are lamenting and praying, candles are being lighted up, people are traveling, chasing one another on tracks, yelling, seeking. Banners are fluttering, cannon booming, blood flowing. Oh, the pulse of the people beats in the bloody fever. The people is sick. Blood is circulating powerfully, madly in its red veins, its heart is going to break. The Red Heart of the People! It is burning in fever, flaring, glowing, and drowning in the fire of the burning disease.

Oh, where's that Sunny Health?

Where's that azure daybreak, when from the cliff above the sea I set the eyes on the South for the first time? Oh, where's that azure daybreak?

When I brought the healthy, brave tribe to this glorious Land? When the white priests intoned the hymn to the Sun, and when the people under lindens worshiped the sunny god?

Oh, where's that azure daybreak?

It's got stifled in this coach, where people are dying, where the dying grieve, suffer, and pain. And won't reach the Sun?

But why, then, have they come to the South? To the Sun? To the Sun!

And the gigantic impulse to reach the sun propels the Genius on towards the engine. He throws the engineer under the wheels and he himself seizes the handles and brakes and valves. And as if electricity magnetized the whole train, the people shudder and stop fighting. The rhythm catches fire, the tempo accelerates. The axles kindle with the fire, the telegraph posts all merge into one black sheet. The train does not glide any more, it does not hurry, and does not plunge, it flies. Hamlets, mountains, rivers, meadows, plowland, all these become a garish blotted blur, on which the black, furious beast rushes showering red, fiery sheaves of vapor from its nostrils.

And the people notice the ever greater speed of the whole M. A. V. train, and shout.

And the beast is turning everything over. Coaches, tenders, iron, chains, all these are clanging uncannily, and the rails behind the train remain a torn, plowed, black, burning track. The people in the bowels of the black beast begin to strike their chests, to pray, to curse, to leap from the train. From time to time a flaming cloud puffs from the engine and scorches hair, eyes, blinds and singes. And the train flies, flies, it shoot like burning lightning past a small station. The clerks have run out writhing their arms and looking at the horizon, where woods burn and where the train has disappeared. Morse signs are typed along the whole line: »Train No. 5309 gone mad. Stop it.«

And somewhere farther, at a station, this M. A. V. phantom crashes into another train with gasoline, crushes it, and a huge fire breaks out. Storerooms catch fire, the train tears the station down and dashes on. Outside, on the line, it collides with a transport. It strikes it down, annihilates it, hundreds of the dead roll down the dam — and it shoots on like a red-hot bullet, like lightning, like light itself.

The Sun! The Sun!

The Genius exclaims and on the keyboard of brakes and valves plays a melody of phantastic speed. And it no more flies on rails. It winds across fields, plowland, demolishes hamlets, kindless conflagrations, and everything is burning. In towns banners flutter, hospitals tremble, graves reopen and the dead sing psalms, and the train booms over them and tears them down and annihilates. Like mad it crashes into steeples, buildings, structures, demolishes them, crushes, and leaves behind a red trace of flames and blood. Like an earthquake it swoops on provinces and shakes and destroys cathedrals, theaters, academies, barracks, palaces, residences, publishing houses, ateliers, offices, churches, assembly halls, chapels, lies luxurious Croatia lies — this is no more a train, this is a brilliant, glowing comet, which with its big brilliant purple tail burns and destroys whatever it reaches. This is a rage, this is a conflagration, this is a cry for the Sun.

Translated by B. S. Brusar