

BOOK REVIEWS

Meša Selimović. *The Fortress*. Trans. E. D. Goy and Jasna Levinger. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1999, 406 pages.

Reviewed by *Michele Levy*

Following *Derviš i smrt* (1968), Selimović's *Tvrđava* (The Fortress, 1970) further explores the core of the human being. Newly returned from a brutal Russo-Turkish skirmish that immersed him in the heart of darkness, Ahmet Šabo has survived the game of the Empire to find his family dead and his Bosnian Muslim village indifferent to his plight. Alienated from self and world, the young former teacher meets Tijana, a Christian orphan whose father had run afoul of local Ottoman authorities. Telling her his story, he comes to terms with his experience. Emotional scars begin to heal. Ahmet and Tijana wed, their existential vision informing a love that celebrates Spirit in the flesh. As their humble flat protects them from the power-stained incursions of the outer realm, so material and spiritual layers in the text intersect in the metaphor of the fortress: containment for those defying authority; defense for those in power; a psychic closet for insights that might censure self-serving actions; and, finally, a haven for the essential self from the worldly power lusts that seek to crush it.

The powerful first-person narrative vividly renders not only the sights, sounds, and smells of Ahmet's village, but also his responses when reality dissolves to reveal the abyss, and his fight for humanity in a world that would make him a pawn. The plot traces forces that are generated when Ahmet, lulled into a fleeting sense of fraternity at a social gathering of local leaders, questions what he has witnessed, whether war or local pettifogging and bureaucracy. Cruelly punished for assaulting their carefully constructed and perpetuated fortress with his truths, Ahmet suffers a radical estrangement from his community that mirrors his existential isolation from the material domain.

Resisting closure, Selimović affords Ahmet no answers. But his odyssey, from margin to center of the district power-structure and from Bosnia to Venice, sharpens his vision. It helps him to fortify his own fortress, his life with the pregnant Tijana, erected on honesty and faith in an elemental uni-

verse beyond the shell of the “real.” Finally, as he watches dissidents forcibly marched off to fight the Empire’s latest battle, Ahmet reflects: “I looked at them in sadness. . . . No matter what their names, their fate was the same. No matter whether they were sad or falsely cheerful, they’d not return . . . And would my children tread the same miserable path when they grew up? Would they live as stupidly as their fathers did? In all probability they would, but I refused to believe it. I refused to believe it, but I couldn’t free myself from comprehension” (40).

Approaching fatherhood, Ahmet finally comes to understand Johnson’s truth that men live on in “Hope and Fear.” Given the break-up of Yugoslavia, the Bosnian War, and the Kosovo conflict last spring, these words from a Bosnian Muslim who declared himself a Serb, placed in the mind of an eighteenth-century character, ring eerily true today. For history has once again taught us a lesson we thought we had learned: craving power, the few transform the many into tools who trade self for security.

Xavier University of Louisiana

Milisav Savić, ed. *Najlepše srpske priče*. Belgrade: Raška škola, 1999, 418 pages.

Reviewed by *Vasa D. Mihailovich*

This is one of the most comprehensive anthologies of the Serbian short story, not so much by its volume, as for the innovative approach used by the selector, a leading short-story writer himself, Milisav Savić. Unlike many other compilers, Savić is extending the short-story genre to include such pieces as notes and inscriptions (anonymous and Gavriilo Stefanović Venclović), fables (Dositej Obradović), memoir and documentary literature (Vuk Karadžić, Mateja Nenadović), travelogues (Ljubomir Nenadović), and even commentary on a poem (Miloš Crnjanski). The purists object to such a wide-encompassing approach, but one has to remember that the Serbian short story had very tentative beginnings prior to the nineteenth century and the stories were “told” in whatever manner was available.

The bulk of the selection goes along well-established lines. It is not surprising that the mainstays are included: Stefan Mitrov Ljubiša, Janko Veselinović, Stevan Sremac, Milovan Glišić, Laza Lazarević, Radoje Domanović, Simo Matavulj, Petar Kočić, Borisav Stanković, Svetozar Ćorović, Ivo Ćipiko, Veljko Petrović, and Ivo Andrić. What is refreshing is the inclusion of writers who have been neglected for a long time (Grigorije Božović, Milica Janković, and Dušan Radić), as well as writers lesser-known

as short-story tellers than as creators in other genres, such as Bogoboj Atanacković, Jakov Ignjatović, Marko Miljanov, Milutin Uskoković, Rastko Petrović, Dragiša Vasić, Branislav Nušić, Momčilo Nastasijević, Branimir Ćosić, and Miloš Crnjanski. What is even more commendable is the inclusion of writers almost totally forgotten today, such as Nićifor Ninković, Pera Todorović, Dimitrije Mita Petrović, Milorad P. Šapčanin, Ilija Ognjanović, Ilija I. Vukičević, Dragutin J. Ilić, and Vojislav Ilić Mlađi. It is to the editor's credit that he has resurrected these writers for the pleasure of even the connoisseurs of Serbian literature. Moreover, Savić has not shied away from including writers such as Dragiša Vasić, Grigorije Božović, Stanislav Krakov, and Anđelko M. Krstić, who is adamantly claimed by the Macedonians. These authors were at one time proscribed and considered "politically incorrect."

If the choice of storytellers is by and large irreproachable, it is the story selection that has provided a bone of contention. Thus, Janko Veselinović is represented by "*Siročići*" instead of the more popular "*Kumova kletva*." And Laza Lazarević's "*Prvi put s ocem na jutrenje*" is by far the preferable choice over the included "*Sve će to narod pozlatiti*." Simo Matavulj's "*Povareta*" is preferred by most over "*U pomrčini*," and so forth. Here, again, the editor must be defended, because the term "most beautiful" is always subjective and there is often more than one candidate for "most beautiful." Rather than repeating what other compilers have done, Savić has boldly ventured into new territories and selections. As a result, the panorama of the Serbian short story is widened and many unjustly neglected authors and stories have been resurrected to the readers' delight.

The anthology is provided with a brief but enlightening foreword and useful introductions to each writer. Altogether, this is a delightful collection of short stories, attesting to the high quality of this genre in Serbian literature. It is also a testimonial to the right of individual selection that enriches the experience for all concerned.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Miloslav Šutić, ed. *An Anthology of Modern Serbian Lyrical Poetry (1920–1995)*. Belgrade: Serbian Literary Magazine, 1999, 237 pages.

Reviewed by *Vasa D. Mihailovich*

There have been several anthologies of Serbian poetry in English in the last few decades, but this anthology, selected and edited by a leading literary scholar and critic, Miloslav Šutić, is perhaps the most ambitious. Šutić has collected Serbian poems of the last three-quarters of the century that are explicitly lyrical. He has ignored many poets and poems found in other anthologies that do not correspond to his esthetic standards. It would be too complicated here to discuss his theoretical and esthetic criteria as to what constitutes a lyrical poem; instead we should be satisfied with this endeavor—a skillful compilation of Serbian modern lyrical poetry that the outside world will enjoy.

There are seventy-two poets represented here, mostly with three to five poems. The highest number of poems is provided, not surprisingly, by Momčilo Nastasijević (9) and Branko Miljković (8). There are several poets with only one poem, because, according to Šutić, that is all of the lyrical poems he could find in their opuses. As with all anthologies, the selection is inescapably subjective, but the editor's acumen as a literary connoisseur should not be questioned. Poets from all literary schools and movements are represented as long as they satisfy the editor's main criterium. There are famous ones such as Miloš Crnjanski, Rastko Petrović, Momčilo Nastasijević, Jovan Dučić, Desanka Maksimović, Dušan Matić, Marko Ristić. Oskar Davičo, Vasko Popa, Stevan Raičković, Miodrag Pavlović, Ivan V. Lalić, and Branko Miljković. There are also others not as prominent, but who nevertheless constitute a robust body of significant poetry. The most surprising are much lesser known poets such as Dragan Aleksić, Nenad Mitrov, Siniša Kordić, Mirko Banjević, and Bogdan Čiplić. However, when viewed together, they all contribute to the Serbian poetry of the last century. The editor provides an extensive, knowledgeable, and informative introduction and unfortunately brief notes about the poets.

It is difficult to discern the method of ordering the poets, because the editor does not explain it. It seems that the order is chronological, although without consistency. Thus, Jovan Dučić, the oldest poet in the book, is listed in the twenty-second spot. Translations are by and large smoothly and skillfully done, with greater and lesser success. It is surprising, though, that some of the best translators abroad, such as Charles Simic, Anne Pennington, and Francis R. Jones, are ignored; they would have undoubtedly enhanced the quality of the anthology. I do not know the circumstances and the rationale under which

the book was produced, but under all circumstances such myopia is detrimental. It is especially so in this case since the anthology is aimed primarily at readers abroad, where the above-mentioned translators are well-known.

These objections aside, this is a project that is well conceived and carried out. The editor and the publisher, *Serbian Literary Magazine* (also known as *Relations*) deserve our gratitude and all the kudos they can get, especially in these troubling times for the Serbian nation, when every aspect of its life, including literature, is suffering consequences of deeds not of their own making.

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Slobodan M. Stefanović. *Stepenice koje nikuda ne vode: Beogradske priče*. Belgrade: GEA, 1998, 222 pages.

Reviewed by *Nadežda Obradović*

The collection of short stories *Stepenice koje nikuda ne vode* (The Stairs Leading Nowhere) by Slobodan M. Stefanović (b. 1948) consists of three parts entitled “Little Men,” “Lovers,” and “Funny Men.” The common denominator of these stories is their locale—Belgrade. In fact, the stage is set in the very heart of the city after World War II. All the stories are told in the first person singular.

Seventeen stories compose “Little Men.” They deal with childhood events: childish mischief, classroom companionship, the budding interest in the opposite sex and its appeal, teachers and the jokes played on them. War, poverty, and scarcity of food are hardly mentioned because the little protagonists are unaware of their parents’ hardships. Family celebrations, or *slava*, Christmas, and Easter are described as seen with the eyes of the “little men.”

The second part, “Lovers,” consists of ten stories depicting the first real discovery of love, interest in the attractive attributes of girls and seduction of them, the first drinking binge and jazz session, and the first disappointment in love and friendship. There are also encounters with older, experienced women and the characters realize the meaning of being used.

The third part, “Funny Men,” has sixteen stories that deal with everyday ridiculous occurrences in the family, which consists of the protagonist, his wife, and their daughter; with his attempts at writing as he decides to take up writing as a career; and with his reminiscences of his late professor, who had great hopes for him. These stories abound with irony and subtle satire.

It is obvious that Stefanovic knows the inner city life well; he was born in Belgrade and he feels every breath of his beloved city. He graduated there in the history of art and works as a designer. He has previously published two books: a book of aphorisms, *Žali se Marksu* (Complain to Marx, 1988), and another of stories, *In vino veritas* (1992). His stories were awarded prizes in various literary periodicals and they often figure on the pages of leading literary journals and magazines.

University of Belgrade

Miroslav Josić Višnjić. *Novi godovi*. Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1998, 214 pages.

Reviewed by *Nadežda Obradović*

The nineteen stories contained in *Novi godovi* (The New Rings) were written, according to the author, in the last two years, which makes them truly contemporary; it is no wonder then that the political situation and the war in Yugoslavia are prevalent topics, though this is not a war book. All entries are entitled "The Story of..." and the stories are marshaled alphabetically according to the initial of the second word. Irrespective of the topics, the stories are permeated with a subtle humor. The hilarious mood is especially salient in "The Story of the Abode," where the author mentions, in the space of one page each, thirteen rented rooms and various occurrences that made him move. "The Story of a Party" has for a protagonist a young man who was hiding for two months from the military draft board. He accepts a girl's invitation to a party in a luxurious cottage, full of beautiful sexy girls, valuable furniture, and good food and drinks. He is caught there and sent to the front-line. The next time the girl invites him to a party, he is in a wheelchair, both legs amputated. "The Story about a Publisher" is probably autobiographical, as the author himself had many feuds with his publishers that ended up in courts. The story is not linearly written; various characters in the courts give their own viewpoints of the situation. The main character of "The Story of the Blackbird and the Awl" (code names) is a high police officer whose wife was kidnapped, raped, and killed in Kosovo. As the police failed to trace the criminals, he himself is trying to find the killers, but he falls into a clever set-up and is shot.

The longest story of the collection and the most touching, though not pathetic, is "The Story about a Comb." The protagonist is a young woman imprisoned in the politically turbulent year of 1948, when pro-Russian men

and women were sent to the notorious island Goli Otok. She becomes one of the hundreds of women prisoners on that rocky island, which is also without any vegetation, where the prisoners were daily exposed to mental and physical hardship. For example, breaking stones and carrying them up the hill and down again, under the scorching sun and amid the deafening noise of the sea waves is just one of the drudgeries. After work, a watery soup awaited the sick and hurting women, without any medical care and medicaments. On top of that, there was humiliation and forced denunciations of their own suffering mates, punishments in the form of solitary confinement, beatings, and scarcity of food. During her four years of imprisonment, her husband left her. Once free, she returns to her home and family in a northern Yugoslav town. She is afraid to tell anybody about her detention and her golgotha, the existence of that political penal camp being unknown to the public at large, even to the minor political activists.

Miroslav Josić Višnjić (b. 1946) is a prolific author, with several editions of each book and with many literary prizes to his credit (among them, the prestigious Andrić Award). His short-story collections are *Beautiful Helen* (1969), *Twelve Rings* (1977), and *Quartet* (1994). He has also written several novels: *The Novel About an Art Gallery's Death* (1970), *The Czech School* (1971), *Access to the Light* (1975), *Defense and the Fall of the Town of Bodrog During Seven Turbulent Seasons* (1990), *Access to a Drop and Semen* (1992), and *The Secular Triptych* (1996). Višnjić's collected works were published in seven volumes in 1995. His stories are translated into several languages and are frequently anthologized.

University of Belgrade

Mihajlo Pantić, ed. *Srpske priče: Čitanje vode*. Belgrade: Stubovi kulture, 1998, 211 pages.

Reviewed by *Nadežda Obradović*

Fishing has been an ubiquitous topic in world literature, but Ernest Hemingway's short novel *The Old Man and the Sea* gave this theme a prominence it has retained ever since. The collection of short fiction, *Srpske priče: Čitanje vode* (Serbian Stories about Fishing: Reading the Water), contains twenty stories by as many Serbian authors of different generations, the oldest being born in 1893 and the youngest in 1955. Some authors included are famous poets and writers, but there are also lesser-known ones. Their common denominator is their deep love and passion for fishing. Most of the

stories are written in the first person. The reader is taken by a group of fishermen to various rivers in Serbia—the Danube, the Sava, and small mountain brooks teeming with trout, bream, carp, pike, sheatfish, perch, barbel, chub, etc. The excitement of the preparations for the forthcoming fishing, the preparation of baits, fishing rods, and lines; the search for a suitable place; the casting of the rod into deep or shallow water; and finally, the anxiety of waiting for a possible strike, anticipating and hoping for a big fish, are presented knowingly.

These sportsmen are very sensitive to nature around them. Beautiful descriptions of landscapes, lakes, a variety of trees, and riverbank birds and flowers permeate all the pages. The joy of a good catch and the enthusiasm of an angler are commonplace in the stories. The protagonists are usually young boys or old men. At the riverbank strange creatures are to be encountered: those who adore the river and those who seek solitude and who are running away from the city noise and haste. The fulfillment they feel, the peace of mind they find, the therapeutic and palliative effect of fishing are to be found throughout this collection. Nothing can stop these lovers of fishing, not the scorching sun, the downpour, the drizzle, or the darkness. At midnight, in an annoying drizzle two fishermen row upstream in the turbulent water of the river Danube to a hidden place to fish. For several days they repeat their exploit, which is awarded with an abundant catch (“One Fall at Lavač,” by Stevan Raičković). Feuds are also common among fishermen. There are those who do not hesitate to deal with egoistic, unsociable and cruel fishermen fishing with nets, in this ruining the pleasure of other people.

At the end of the book there is an “Appendix,” containing four texts by famous men of letters who are no longer living—Isidora Sekulić, Mihailo Petrović Alas, Miloš Crnjanski and Rastko Petrović. An extremely interesting story is “Sa okeanskim ribarima udičarima” (With Oceanic Fishermen Baiters). The author joined a French oceanic boat fishing codfish in American waters. Individual journeys, lasting two to five weeks, depending on the weather, are full of risks. Men spend six months on the boat working twenty hours a day, throwing lines five kilometers long, with baits at each half-meter of the line. They bring the fish into the boat several times a day and in the evening, they help clean and salt the fish. Their life is full of hardship. Turbulent sea, frequent dense fogs caused by the collision of the warm Gulf and the cold Labrador currents, and inevitable accidents cause many men to lose their lives in the impenetrable depths of the ocean or remain maimed.

Mihajlo Pantić (b. 1957), a short story writer, literary critic, and university professor, is an industrious literary worker. His collections of stories are *Hronika sobe* (The Chronicle of a Room, 1984), *Vonder u Berlinu* (Wonder in Berlin, 1987), *Pesnici, pisci i ostala menažerija* (Poets, Writers and Other

Menagerie, 1992), *Novobeogradske priče* (The New-Belgrade Stories, 1994), and *Ne mogu da se setim jedne rečenice* (I Can't Remember One Sentence, 1996). Pantić's stories are often anthologized. His story "The Day After" is included in the collection of contemporary Serbian stories, *The Prince of Fire*, edited by Radmila Gorup and Nadežda Obradović and published by Pittsburgh University Press in 1998.

University of Belgrade

Lazar Dašić. *Bogonosno Kosovo*. Belgrade: Knjigoteka, 1999, 204 pages.

Reviewed by *Nadežda Obradović*

Contemporary Serbian poetry in the Diaspora has dozens of outstanding poets, whose works are continuously published in their native country and abroad. They constitute an integral part of the national culture and literature. Their creativity is rich and varied, contributing to the affirmation and popularization of the Serbian written word throughout the world.

One of the most significant Serbian poets, who for thirty years has lived and worked in Germany, undoubtedly is Lazar Dašić (b. 1949). He publishes poems in many Yugoslav and German journals in both languages. He has published four books of poetry: *Časna reč* (Word of Honor, 1987), *Kosovske elegije* (Kosovo Elegies, 1990), *Kosovski venac* (The Kosovo Wreath, 1993), and *Azbučni tipik* (Alphabet Typicon, 1997). He is a recipient of the prestigious literary award "Lazar Vučković" (Priština, 1991). He lives in Griesheim and works in Darmstadt. He is the secretary of the Association of Writers 7 in Frankfurt am Mein. He was born near Plav in Montenegro, but he spent his childhood and youth in Dranik by Klina, Kosovo, and for that reason he is viscerally connected to his native country and the mythic Kosovo.

In the series Yugoslav Writers in the Diaspora and under the aegis of the monks of Hilandar, a book of Dašić's selected and new poetry was published recently under the symbolic title *Bogonosno Kosovo* (God-Bearing Kosovo). This book represents a selection of his poetry and at the same time it rounds up his lyric-epic trilogy of Kosovo as an inexhaustible inspiration of the Serbian spiritual and oral heritage. *Bogonosno Kosovo* consists of seven varying but artistically unified ideational entities, which follow the traditional and patriotic line of poetry. Dašić is truly attached to his language and homeland, and he powerfully and inspirationally sings of Serbian history, monasteries, saints, customs, and actual socio-political events.

Even though he is preoccupied with the burning questions of Kosovo, now in the center of world attention, Dašić writes poetry in a controlled and engaged manner, with humanistic justification and imagination. He writes sincerely and warmly about the life of all people, regardless of religion or nationality. In his poems there are tones and images of sorrow and melancholy but not of retribution, national intolerance, and hatred. Therein one can see, among other things, his moral and intellectual greatness. That is why Dašić writes about the life of two peoples, about their *kumstvo* and weddings, funerals and friendships, of which unfortunately there has been less and less lately.

The book opens with a programmatic and lyrical poem, “Pevaj, narode moj” (Sing, My People), which in a general sense reveals the artistic and semantic characteristics of Dašić’s poetry. The cycle *Nebeski dragulji* (Heavenly Jewels) contains many poems about famous Serbian cultural and historical monuments and churches, such as Visoki Dečani, Hilandar, Studenica, St. Sava Cathedral, Mileševa, the Patriarchate of Peć, Kalenić, and others. The cycle *Likovi svetitelja* (Images of the Saints) illuminates the life and work of many saints: John the Baptist, George the Dragon Slayer, Peter of Korinth, Basil of Ostrog, Yefimija, etc. The cycle *Kosovski venac* presents a poem of Kosovo as the Serbian cradle and hearth, whereas *Azbučni tipik* offers linguistic puns and experiments. The cycles *Kosovske rukoveti* (Kosovo Handfuls) and *Strašan sud* (Judgment Day) also contain many patriotic, descriptive, pensive, and engaged poems, written with similar intonation. The last part, *Put života* (Life’s Path), comprises an unpublished poem of ten numbered entities. The book is illustrated beautifully by the drawings of Branislav Živković and by copies of frescoes from medieval monasteries.

At the end of the book there is an inspirational and concise afterward entitled *Zdravo klasje* by the poet Laza Lazić, who points out the powerful patriotism of Dašić’s poetry. He underscores the striking line and declarativeness of the modernistic method, which in spiritual, ethical, and artistic sense impresses with its variegation. Among numerous poetic books published in the Diaspora lately, *Bogonosno Kosovo* stands out with its layers, artistic compactness, linguistic riches, symbolic connotations, and patriotic contents.

Of many accomplished poems several stand out: “Povratak veri,” “Samodreža,” “Bogorodica Trojeručica,” “Moj brate, oprosti,” “Radanje slo-bode,” “Kuća na prodaju,” “Tuđina,” “Skriveni u senci,” “Kome zvona da zvone,” “Setva žita,” etc. Lazar Dašić was given a special award for this book by the publisher Knjigoteka for the advancement and affirmation of our literature in the Diaspora. The book was well received by readers and critics alike.

University of Belgrade

Dušan Miklja. *Put u Adis Abebu*. Belgrade: Prosveta, 1997.

Reviewed by *Nadežda Obradović*

The plot of Dušan Miklja's novel, *Put u Adis Abebu* (Journey to Addis Ababa), centers on the capital of Ethiopia at the time of the fall of their tsar. The "creeping revolution," as it was called, initiated by antigovernment forces following a carefully planned schedule, slowly eradicated all the tsar's most important institutions and supporters. The political situation in the country was extremely bad. Two thousand five hundred people, it was rumored, had died of hunger in the interior of the country. The struggle between some political factions was in full force. The streets of Addis Ababa were lined with people, alleged enemies of the new forces, restricted by barbed wire and left standing against the walls of the buildings. Foreigners, professionals, especially physicians, had flown out of the country.

Against this backdrop evolves another human drama. A young woman, who came to Addis Ababa, a city renowned for its medical staff, tries to save her prematurely born son. Two approaches to medicine are manifested in full—Western medicine is pitted against the traditional African manner of curing. But neither helped the baby, whose destiny is mysteriously related to the fate of the tsar in the nightmares of the boy's mother. Both of them died; the baby amid many apparatuses in an almost deserted hospital, the tsar strangled by barbed wire in a prison.

Dušan Miklja (b. 1934), a journalist, short story writer, and novelist, spent several years in Africa and witnessed many of the events described in this novel and in his previous collections of short stories: *Ethiopia from Empire to the Revolution* (1977), *The War for Africa* (1978), *The Third Road of Italian Communists* (1982), *Berlinger* (1984), *The Black Sisyphus* (1985), *The Womb of the World* (1989), *The Chronicle of Peculiarities* (1990), *The Sultan of Zanzibar and Other Stories* (1993), and *The Skinning of Beavers* (1995). Miklja lives and works in Belgrade.

University of Belgrade

Tihomir Vučković, ed. *A Millennium of Serbian Literature, An Anthology of Serbian Literature from Its Beginnings*. Belgrade: Center of Emigrants from Serbia, 1999, 471 pages.

Reviewed by *Biljana D. Obradović*

This voluminous anthology is chronologically organized and includes Serbian poetry, short stories, essays, and nonfiction, as well as specimens of oral literature, from over 126 well- and lesser-known authors. The selections were translated into English by some eighty foreign and Serbian translators. There is no specific reason for the fact that certain authors are represented by more works than others. The content is divided into three sections: 1) Early Literature, 2) Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, and 3) Twentieth Century. What is unusual is the spectrum of voices throughout the numerous centuries and the variety of styles and themes found in this anthology. Fortunately, personal histories of the writers are included in the back of the book and many of the authors represented are from the Serbian Diaspora, from America in particular. At last these writers have been given a place in Serbian literature with this volume.

The first section, Early Literature, offers up some twenty-one authors, including several traditional oral pieces, from the twelfth through the seventeenth century. The authors in this section are mostly copyists in monasteries, monks, princes, wives and sisters of Serbian princes, and princesses. Also represented is St. Sava, the Serbian Orthodox saint who founded Hilandar Monastery on Mount Athos, which has been the center of Serbian spiritual life ever since. In these fifty pages history intermingles with God, as in the oral epic poem of "The Kosovo Girl," where the title character goes to the battlefield following the battle of 1389, giving communion, bread and red wine, to the wounded soldiers dying on the field:

She turns the heroes over in their blood,
and every hero she finds alive
she washes the hero in cold water,
she gives the sacrament of red wine,
she gives him white bread to eat.

In the course of the ninety pages of the second section, Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, we come across the great educators Dositej Obradović and Vuk Stefanović Karadžić. Also included are the great poets Petar Petrović II, or Njegoš, the author of the *Mountain Wreath* and considered by some the greatest Serbian poet of all time; Branko Radičević; Đura Jakšić, poet and painter; Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, best known for his children's literature; Laza

Kostić and others. However, especially noted are numerous poems by Jovan Dučić, who is buried in Chicago, and Đorđe Sagić (George Fisher), who first defended Belgrade from the Turks, then emigrated to the U.S. and became a customs collector in Mexico and an administrator for the land commission in California. Michael Pupin (Mihajlo Idvorski), the inventor of X-ray radiation, short exposure photography, and high-inductive wave conductors, is also represented here with the very moving, creative non-fiction piece “Immigrant to Inventor,” which is about his return home to Serbia after eleven years in the U.S. In this work we can see typical Serbian behavior: “I saw the gate of my mother’s yard wide open, a sign that she expected a welcome guest,” and visiting his father’s grave, “When we reached it I kissed the cross,” and “kissing the hand of the old people of Idvor.” All too often these kinds of essays are not included in Serbian literary anthologies and hopefully they will be from now on.

In the final and longest section, some three hundred pages in length, many of the expected authors are included with some of their best work: Borislav Stanković, the famous playwright and fiction writer of the early realist era is represented here with his *Tainted Blood*, which unfortunately sounds much better in its original Serbian dialect, the sound of which is inevitably lost in the translation. Then there are lesser-known authors like the poet Milan Ćurčin, who it says “used free verse” but is unfortunately represented here with a rhyming poem, and the well-known Sima Pandurović, the founder of Serbian Modernism, who is represented with a sonnet. Ivo Andrić, the only Serbian and Yugoslavian writer who has received the Nobel Prize for Literature with his *The Bridge on the Drina*, is represented with a part of chapter three from the novel and with two other pieces, although one would not know that these are just sections from larger works, as this is not clearly noted. On the other hand, the part of the chapter that is included from the great novel is a very powerful one; it describes the scene in which Radislav is pierced with a stake by the Turks: “He struck a few more times until the point of the stake reached level with the right ear. The man was impaled on the stake as a lamb on the spit, only that the tip did not come through the mouth but in the back and had not seriously damaged the intestines, the heart or the lungs.”

Miloš Crnjanski is represented here by his best-known prose piece, *Migrations*, a historical novel, written in three volumes, about the life of Serbs in Austria-Hungary as immigrants from the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth century. Here he is also represented with poems and two other prose pieces which are not clearly marked; hence, the reader does not know if they are short stories or again parts of longer works. Desanka Maksimović, the greatest female poet and one of the greatest Serbian poets of all time, is

represented here with a strong selection of poems, such as “I Have No More Time” and “A Winter in the Homeland”:

A huge hospital all around the homeland,
 All the wounded beings, and dreams, and things
 Lie bundled in white bandages,
 Some invisible nurses
 Walk on their toes and pass out silence.

But then Vučković also includes experimental works, such as an iconographic poem by Ljubiša Jocić that is in the shape of an eye with the word “eye” (*oko*) repeated to form the border of the image. Also included are Vlada Stojiljković’s “Pandora’s Box,” written in the shape of a box with letters coming out of it, and Miroljub Todorović’s “A Visual Poem,” patterned as triangle and square crossword puzzles, little people standing on top of the shapes. It would have been interesting to know when these unusual poems were published. Also included is a poem by the rock star Bora Đorđević, a Jim Morrison or Bob Dylan of Serbian pop music.

Vučković includes serious fiction writers, like Dobrica Ćosić, with letters from Serbian prisoners of war in Austro-Hungarian camps in 1915; Milorad Pavić with an excerpt from his famous postmodernist novel *The Dictionary of the Khazars*; Dragoslav Mihailović; Svetlana Velmar-Janković, an outstanding realist writer; Danilo Kiš with an excerpt from *Garden, Ashes*; and David Albahari. Also included is a piece by the famous U.S. publisher who is also a novelist, William Jovanovich (of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich). Vučković also includes numerous important poets, like Vasko Popa, “considered to be one of the leading world poets of today,” as in “The Craftsmen of the Little Box”:

Don’t open the little box
 Heaven’s hat will fall out of her
 Don’t close her for any reason
 She’ll bite the trouser-leg of eternity

This anthology also offers us the wonderful Stevan Raičković, Branko Miljković, and the Americans George Vid Tomashevich and Pulitzer Prize winner Charles Simic with his “Watermelons”: “Green Buddhas / On the fruit stand. / We eat the smile / And spit out teeth.” The works of leading contemporary Serbian poets like Rakitić, Puslojić, Dimić, Bogdanović-Ci, Brajković, and Livada are also featured.

However, the anthology lacks an explanation for the inconsistency of the scholarly apparatus, and perhaps in the second edition the editor can work on

eliminating the inconsistencies in the dates of birth and/or death for the featured writers and a lack of uniformity throughout the anthology concerning biographical information. This information is sometimes not even offered for certain authors, and the order in which it is presented often does not correspond with that found in the anthology. Also it is very important to designate next to the titles of pieces that they are excerpts from novels or short stories. Similarly, plays do not receive any treatment. Nevertheless we have to praise this ambitious anthology in which the editor has tried to combine in translation the work of Serbian writers in Diaspora, contemporary mainstream Serbian authors, and experimental Serbian writers. Laudably, the editor strives to represent numerous genres and subgenres, including prose, poems, visual poems, and critical and nonfiction essays.

Xavier University of Louisiana

Moma Dimić, ed. *Kletva. Srbija, proleće 1999. Pesme. Belgrade: Udruženje književnika Srbije, 1999, 378 pages.*

Reviewed by *George Vid Tomashevich*

Triggered, much more than inspired, by the seventy-eight days and nights of NATO's illegal, immoral, cowardly, and hypocritical aggression against Serbia and Montenegro, which started on 24 March 1999, and lasted till 9 June, this collection of poems, the most heart-rending and depressing I have ever read, consists of 330 pages of poetry, some thirty eight pages of prose texts (instead of an epilogue), and about five pages of Contents. An otherwise well-produced and rather hefty paperback, the book opens with a wise but brief, informative, and stirringly eloquent word from the editor who, not without reason, refers to its poems as "Target Poetry." He tells us that most of the Serbian bards, and quite a few of their brothers and sisters in sleeplessness from all parts of the world, spoke up with all the intensity and power of their defiance and outcry. "Their pain, bitterness and revolt we, of course, accept as medicine and protection against the Great Evil." By this he means the New World Disorder of almost completely anomic normlessness, violated International Law, The Charter of the United Nations, National Sovereignty, Equity, Even-Handedness, Impartiality, Intellectual Honesty, and Common Decency. He assures us that the word *kletva*, the work's very title, "uttered itself," that it is the cursed overflow of the great Serbian tragedy at Kosovo in 1389, whose fateful consequences are still reverberating, and reminds us all,

including the world's mighty and powerful, that God does not remain indebted to anyone.

According to my count, the collection includes more than 170 poets (some with more than one poem), men and women of letters, mostly from Serbia, but also from many foreign countries ranging from Scandinavia to Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern Europe, and from Russia, the Near East, Spain and Portugal, to Latin and Anglo-America, Australia, China and Japan. Most of these poems were poured out in Serbian, but some are identified as translations from a variety of tongues without the provision, alas, of the original texts.

While all of them are as deadly serious as the horrendous and murderous destruction they decry, the poems vary quite considerably in length, form, structure, polish, and quality. This, of course, is to be expected, because equal pain and anger do not automatically guarantee an equally poetic response even from equally hurt, revolted, and honestly indignant authors. This is why some of the poems partake of the dignity and pathos of the most poetic passages in the Bible, while others are closer to damnations, anathemas, curses, and cusses. In view of the enormity of the unmerited suffering endured by the innocent (Serbian, Albanian, and other) victims of the ostensible pursuit of the indicted and allegedly guilty, the above noted unevenness in the overall literary quality of the included pieces should not be taken as a heartless reproach to the understandably outraged authors exposed to mortal danger and, quite rightly, much more preoccupied with the cathartic content of their outcries than with their form. It would be almost obscene to criticize someone's grief-stricken sobbing as insufficiently musical or someone else's descriptions of the killed and maimed amidst the devastation around him or her as excessively vivid and brutal. This is particularly true if the critic is writing in the comfort and safety of a warm study lined with bookshelves and works of art, and in the loving company of faithful and affectionate cats and dogs.

For one must not forget that this is poetry born *in extremis* and not under the normally variable circumstances of everyday life. Nevertheless, most of it is of surprisingly high and enduring quality and will probably pass the test of time. Only in a few instances does the poet's rage come dangerously close to compromising the integrity and dignity of poetry as a form of literary expression. In one or two cases, the poet, driven almost literally out of his or her mind, blames a certain highly placed and powerful lady directly and personally for the murder of the three-year-old Milica Rakić and, in another instance, the angry bard repeatedly makes a negative point of the morally neutral and irrelevant ethno-religious identity and affiliation of some of President Clinton's prominent and influential aides and advisers. In my opinion, this shift from the essential to the non-essential weakens the otherwise strong

moral case which the poet presents against powerful transgressors who get away with their transgressions while accusing and indicting their weaker opponents of war crimes.

Some of the included authors are leading names in contemporary Serbian poetry, such as Stevan Raičković, Miodrag Pavlović, Tanasije Mladenović, Alek Vukadinović, Slobodan Rakitić, Rajko Petrov Nogo, Matija Bečković, and many others. Among the prominent poets from the Serbian Diaspora are Vasa D. Mihailovich, Katarina Kostić and quite a number of others from the North-American continent, Australia, and Europe. Special recognition and thanks are due to a large number of non-Serbian poets, worthy men and women who cannot be identified by name because it is, unfortunately, provided only in the Serbian Cyrillic transliteration and not in the original spelling. The same recognition applies to a considerable number of world-renown authors—Peter Handtke, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Harold Pinter, Mikis Theodorakis, Noam Chomsky, Davio Fo, Rafael Israeli, Norman Mailer, Gabriel Garcia Marques, Jean Brodillard, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Regis Debres, Jose Saramago, Vladimir Voinovich, Nikita Mikhalkov, Bela Akhmadulina, Pierre Marie Gallois, Jan Myrdal, Nagib Makhfuz, as well as Dobrica Ćosić, Antonije Isaković, Mira Alečković, Milorad Pavić, Milić od Mačva, Zoran Gluščević, Svetlana Velmar-Janković, Ljubomir Simović, Aleksandar Petrov, and Ljubiša Đidić—who, in various ways, expressed their strong disapproval of, and indignant disassociation from, the acts of aggression which provoked *The Curse*.

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Chuck Sudetic. *Blood and Vengeance*. New York: Norton, 1998, 393 pages.

Reviewed by *Milan Radovich*

Chuck Sudetic's *Blood and Vengeance*, written in a Tolstoyan style, presents the Bosnian war and the subsequent peace (1992–96) alongside the tragic story of the Celiks, a large Moslem family, during this uncivil war. Artfully incorporated into the broader twentieth century Balkan conflicts, their story is real, the people are real, and the reader will remain interested to the very end. Readers familiar with the turbulent, tragic history of the Balkans might well ask if this is really a new story or one they read a long time ago; such a question would not be out of place today, inasmuch as libraries everywhere are

laden with Balkan collections that include wartime literature ranging from 1878 through 1999.

The warring factions, repeating the mistakes of earlier generations, seem to have learned nothing from history. *Teče krvava Drina* (As the Bloody River Drina Flows), a book that is particularly mentioned in Sudetic's bibliographic sources in *Blood and Vengeance*, focuses on the 1941–45 war and describes the tragedy of the author's family. In this story, we find yet another example of fighting without end. *Blood and Vengeance* and *Teče krvava Drina* chronicle the story of two families that live on the same bloody side of the Drina River—in the former book we have a Moslem family, and in the latter we find a Serbian family. In any case, their experiences are parallel: both families are caught in the middle of heavy fighting. Neither book offers an optimistic outlook for the future.

Blood and Vengeance is a pedantic, well-kept diary that registers all of the Celiks' movements and sufferings. Sudetic's attempt to present one family's story of the war in Bosnia is only partially successful. The Celik family story is credible, but the presentation of the Bosnian war is questionable. Sudetic's book is actually a one-sided history that ignores the war's deeper roots. Contrary to the current trend in reporting, the Serbs are not the only villains in this ongoing tragedy.

To his credit, however, Sudetic occasionally portrays a Serbian character positively, and he even casts a few Moslem characters who are not related to the Celik family negatively. However, more objective, factual documentation—a fair representation of both sides of the Bosnian struggle and not just a repetition of the familiar daily journalistic grind—is still needed. Statistics are an author's main stumbling block when reporting on a war; this trap is set to spring at any moment, resulting in lies or, at best, sophistry. Reporting for the *New York Times* from the Bosnian frontline, Sudetic probably used his own "home-grown" statistics, or even more questionable figures provided to him by the U.S. State Department. The following "assertion" is a typical example of such misinformation: in the first year of the war, the Serbs killed tens of thousands of Moslems, the majority of them civilians and prisoners of war. Where are the sources to support this statement? Sudetic mentions that Naser Orić, the man behind the summary executions of Serbs in Srebrenica, was one of his informers. Such "big" stories always made the front pages in the media. Sudetic puts it this way: "In Bosnia I only earned real money if I found stories that were printed; in all the world, Bosnia was the place to find such compelling stories." But a Japanese reporter who sent pictures and a "compelling story" about the massacre of a few hundred Serbs in Srebrenica to the *New York Times* in 1992 was informed that "only pictures and articles on Serbian atrocities against the Moslems will be printed." The *New York Times* ex-

pressed concern for Serbian victims in the same way that Hitler expressed his concern for the Srebrenica Serbs who were massacred in 1944. According to H. Heiber's *Hitlers Lagebesprechungen*, when SS General Herman Fegelein (Hitler's adjutant) reported to Hitler on the brutal massacre committed by the Moslem SS Handar division near Srebernica, so brutal that the Serbian prisoners' hearts had been cut out, Hitler replied: "Who cares, don't bother me" (560).

Last but not least, Sudetic's "discovery" that "during the Nazi occupation the Serbian government turned 10,000 Jews over to the Germans" is totally unrelated and irrelevant to the narrative that is the subject of the book. This lie, claiming Serbian complicity, even collaboration, in the death of so many people, was invented recently by American proponents of the Ustasha and is unfortunately all too often used against the Serbs. It is very questionable, if not impossible, that any book about the Yugoslav situation could be published in the USA without some "qualifying" anti-Serbian propaganda. In spite of this stern caveat, however, I recommend Sudetic's book to readers of any and all persuasions. Many questions remain unanswered, but the bibliographical sources at the end of *Blood and Vengeance* could be helpful to many. Finally, one must always keep in mind the old Irish proverb: There are two sides to every coin.

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Nicholas Churchich. *Marxism and Morality. A Critical Examination of Marxist Ethics*. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1994, 319 pages.

Reviewed by *John Jovan Marković*

Nicholas Churchich, surprisingly, is not as hostile toward Marxism as his critics portray him to be. At a time when communist systems are falling apart worldwide and Marxism is experiencing unequivocal denunciation in the West, *Marxism and Morality* is timely in reminding us that the work of Marx and Engels must not be ignored and forgotten. Marx and Engels were uncompromising critics of economic exploitation and insensitivity towards the poor, all of which are still socio-economic issues today. The cruelty of the nineteenth-century industrial age provoked individuals of courage to stand up and demand the more humane treatment of workers. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels certainly added their voices to the call for workers' rights. Though they both deserve credit for the issues they addressed, they are also responsible for the confusion their theories created in the realms of political eco-

nomics, social studies and, of course, ethics. In the midst of a world that they scorned and detested, Marx and Engels indeed thought it necessary to suggest a method toward the evolution they so craved, but their method would prove to be far more destructive than constructive.

Churchich set a formidable goal for his work: to present a full exposition of Marx's and Engels's ideas on morality and ethics and to bring attention to some of their errors and weaknesses (9). His impressive knowledge of moral philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries allowed him to accomplish his task, and he produced a book instructive for both undergraduate and graduate students. Churchich's final product is for the academic community, as the public would find it hard to utilize. Throughout *Marxism and Morality*, Churchich separates the writings of Marx and Engels from those of other Marxists, and thus "Marxism" here assumes a more narrow scope than what might be expected. Moreover, the author rarely addresses the differences between Marx and Engels; the two are treated as one package.

Those interested in the origins of Marx's ideas and the development of his ideology and values will find plenty of information in *Marxism and Morality*. Furthermore, Churchich explores Marx's conceptualization of right and wrong; rights and duties; justice and virtues; and religion and science. Churchich uses the Age of Enlightenment and the works of Hegel as his two major points of comparison as he examines the origins of Marx's and Engels's ideas and their development as thinkers. Churchich correctly depicts Marx and Engels as radical theorists, as revolutionary political activists, and as alienated individuals who deplored and raged against the world in which they lived. They were not scientists, they were not philosophers, and they were not moral leaders. Churchich, unfortunately, omits to address the educational history of both his subjects, and thus does not demonstrate that Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's greatest handicap was their lack of historical insight. Whatever historical insight Marx might have had was obviously warped and off the mark, though his disciples would strenuously argue this point. Marx and Engels were certainly not historians. They offer a perfect example to the present generation of the fact that one's analysis of social, economic, and political changes taking place in the contemporary world will always end up utterly flawed without a deep, solid understanding of history. What Marx and Engels created is, in fact, an ideology of destruction.

The ten chapters of *Marxism and Morality* cover the origin, development and depiction of moral ideas, as well as the whole spectrum of moral standards and values. Churchich continually compares the work of Marx and Engels with the works of other great moral thinkers of the last two centuries. Although the reviewer finds *Marxism and Morality* informative and intellectually stimulating, he regrets to point out that Churchich chose to exclude

what the Judeo-Christian system's take on morality is. This deficiency is discussed in greater detail below.

The problem with Marxism is not in its suppositions regarding the exploitative nature of capitalism, as Marx and Engels were not alone in that opinion. Many philanthropists, Christians, Socialists, and others criticized capitalism long before Marx and Engels came to the scene. Their fallacy is in the analysis of the historical forces and restraints that are responsible for change in human affairs, and in the solutions offered. Marx's notion of class struggle, his dialectical materialism, and his determinism concerning the development of the individual are simply not to be found in the history of humanity. Marx simply forced history to conform to his preconceived notions in his interpretation of the historical process. What we find in history is war and violence as people fight for power and wealth, not social revolutions. History tells us that it was the growth of the urban population, characterized by entrepreneurship, education, social mobility, and technology that is the "locomotive" of history. Marx completely failed to perceive the emergence of a modern world where technology dominates and the urban population is diverse, including everyone from poor workers to wealthy business owners. These are the entities that shape the course of social, economic, and political transitions. In Marx's and Engels's day, the old world aristocracy and peasantry were being replaced by the new emerging merchant class, CEOs, investors, and, of course, employees. The capitalists, whom Marx and Engels passionately abhorred, were nevertheless producing wealth, which, in spite of rampant greed, trickled down even to the poorest classes and thus improved, at least incrementally, their quality of life. Social mobility and public education further added to the rise of expectations and the opportunities of the poor to move up the socio-economic ladder. These conditions in the modern urban world transformed the poor into everything but a revolutionary class. Moreover, the clergy, that third social group that has been around since the very beginning, is still alive and well despite Marx's predictions that it is doomed to disappear.

Marx and Engels were good at pontificating over moral evils, but failed to articulate how the elimination of them might be brought about. Their only suggestion was the complete destruction of the existing order. Marx and Engels lacked simple common sense. Churchich does not stress this point, but a careful reading of *Marxism and Morality* makes it obvious. Marx expected that a destruction of capitalism would also be the end of exploitation, alienation, and egoism. This downfall would then usher in a society that would be free of that same exploitation, alienation, and egoism. This is a pipe dream. Marx's utopian communist society reflects the hope of the Judeo-Christian tradition of which he was aware, but which he decidedly rejected. Though

Marx denies the role of metaphysical forces in human affairs, he nevertheless implies the same to be at work in the making of a classless society. Marx's classless society even assumes the absence of fear and greed, major causes of human strife: this is yet another fantastic hope rather than a conclusion of a scientific analysis.

Marx and Engels certainly did not reject morality outright. Churchich observes, rather, that Marx and Engels dismiss the bourgeois morality in all forms, not morality *per se* (284). Marx and Engels, though they were condemning the materialism of the day, were also lowering morality to the level of material determinism. Contrary to Marx's and Engels's tenets, morality is based on moral principles, and these moral principles are meant to serve as guidelines. One must transcend human behavior and human conditions to be normative. The legacy Marx and Engels passed on to future generations amounted to "gutter morality."

The main shortcoming of *Marxism and Morality* is the lack of discussion regarding the definition of morality and the stance of the Judeo-Christian tradition on the subject. Churchich assumes that readers are familiar with the Judeo-Christian concepts of morality, values, ethics, and historical process. They are not. After all, much of what has been written on right and wrong, moral standards, morality, justice, and so forth is measured against the Judeo-Christian tradition. The negative reaction of the Marxists to such an approach to Marxism and morality is predictable and the reasons behind it are understandable, but that should not have limited Churchich in the writing of *Marxism and Morality*.

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