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**THE POETICS OF SUFFERING AND REFUGE  
IN NEWER SERBIAN LITERATURE OF KOSOVO AND METOHIIJA**

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**Abstract**

In the paper, we talk about the newer Serbian literature of Kosovo and Metohija which deals with the problem of persecution and fleeing of people from their home places and hearths. Such poetics has been especially present during the last few decades as a proof of massive affliction. Partially colored by neo-patriotic nuances, this kind of literature has more epic qualities than lyric ones; it is more of an expression of general suffering and sorrow, than sadness over personal fate. Quiet and meditative, it is also a distinctive testimony about the suffering, which has more and more often been referred to as New Testament affliction. Some of the more significant representatives of the new poetics and canon of Kosovo and Metohija are Darinka Jevric, Radoslav Zlatanovic, Moso Odalovic, Dragomir Kostic, Blagoje Savic, and Aleksandar Lakovic.

**Keywords:** Kosovo and Metohija; homeland; literature; persecution; distinctive poetic world.

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**ПОЭТИКА СТРАДАНИЙ И БЕГСТВА  
В НОВЕЙШЕЙ СЕРБСКОЙ ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ КОСОВО И МЕТОХИИ**

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**Аннотация**

В статье говорится о новой сербской литературе Косово и Метохии, в которой затрагиваются проблемы преследования и бегства людей из своих родных мест и очагов. Такая поэтика особенно заметна в последние десятилетия как доказательство массового бедствия. Частично окрашенная нео-патриотическими нюансами, подобная литература обладает больше эпическими качествами, чем лирическими; это в большей степени выражение общих страданий и горя, чем печали над личной судьбой. Тихая и медитативная, она также специфическим образом свидетельствует о страданиях, о которых все чаще упоминается как о новозаветной скорби. Некоторые из наиболее значительных представителей новой поэтики и канона Косово и Метохии Даринка Jevrić Радослав Zlatanovic, МоСо Odalovic Драгомир Kostic Благое Савич и Александар Lakovic.

**Ключевые слова:** Косово и Метохия; родина; литература; преследование; отличительный поэтический мир.

*Poets who have placed their happiness and personal life in the frame of their outer being – the homeland of their soul – in their home place – are rare in world literature. They placed it in Kosovo, as the most mythical of all homelands. The Old Testament and New Testament one. On their Golgotha, and at their last judgment.*

Slobodan Rakitic

**INTRODUCTION**

Serbian literature of Kosovo and Metohija has always been a reflection of the heritage, the same as it is now a current (actual) reflection of the most important problem – whether Serbian people should

leave Kosovo and Metohija, or survive in the land of their forefathers<sup>1</sup>.

For the most part of it, this literature is *neo-patriotic*, due to its actualization of the past, but also

<sup>1</sup> More about this can be found in the book [2, pp. 1-215].

due to a certain chronological testimony of everyday exodus. „The poets from Kosovo and Metohija of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have not been studied systematically in literary criticism so far“, Danica Andrejevic wrote. “<...> From the literary and historical point of view, the question of affirmation and evaluation of poetry from so-called smaller areas has been affected by numerous prejudices, resistance, and beliefs about the marginal place of *provincial literature*“ [1, p. 23]. It is well known that a distinctive attitude towards the theme of Kosovo can be found in the writings of almost all contemporary poets from Kosovo. Most of the writers from Kosovo and Metohija have blended *national ethics and literary aesthetics* into the power of patriotic unity of the suffering populace who write about the new Kosovo apocalypse from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This kind of literature, is above everything else poetic in its nature, quiet, meditative, and for the most part - pious. The two phenomena: religion and poetry are almost synonymous in the works of Serbian writers from Kosovo. It is a so-called *deization* of God in the works of these writers, in which it is often the case that the tragic situation of people in Kosovo and Metohija is compared to and measured by *New Testament* torments. Considering that *southern sorrow* (a term used for writers from Kosovo from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>, and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century), i.e. *Kosovo doom* as a specific characteristic of the poetry of these authors, it can be noticed that this kind of literature has created a specific theoretical ground for its singing, has modified the theme of sorrow, suffering, lack of freedom, lost homeland, migration, and persecution... Writers from this area, and these tragic times, have autonomously and unanimously presented their ethics, heroism, melancholy and aesthetics, as *New Kosovo poetics* which will in time function more and more as *New Testament poetics*, new and testamental *literature* of Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija.

The development of this literature had a specific path, one could say a synchronized one, until 1999. Then, that picture changed, lost its media, newspapers and journals, events and cultural meeting places, and it became limited, more or less, to personal engagement.

#### THE PHENOMENON OF REFUGE AS A PHENOMENON OF TEMPORARY LIVING

The theme of refuge and lost homeland appears as the theme of economic, social, political, cultural, and emotional drama. The literature of writers from

Kosovo and Metohija from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a testimony, and a personal account, but also a documentary narrative which, similar to some literary genre with two planes (like in a fable or drama) has a narrator and the side of people in danger and lost people, but also that of the pursuer, as the only winner. A special aesthetic impression of this kind of singing and narration is created in this way.

Determined by the social, historical, and political moment, the works of writers who were forced to leave their homes in Kosovo express the view of their fate as a complete displacement. A lot of poets write about a space where *the direction is lost*, about the feeling of discomfort, loneliness and sorrow which can be measured by *the tear of eternity*. What is interesting in this absolute reality is literature for children, where a specific, new, and it seems unique poetic world has been created, a world in which a child stutters and shivers, and sends views and greetings from *shivering Serbia* (the Serbia which is endlessly shivering from cold and fear). Serbian literature from Kosovo and Metohija of the last few years can already promote volumes of literary pieces with the theme of lost homeland.

Although it speaks about national and personal, this literature is without heroics. It is detached from the national-romantic milieu, which was the case in epic folk poetry and romanticism, also in times of definite turbulences of newer times. This is another kind of literature which, above all other things, is a testimony of the phenomenon of helplessness and silence.

The emotional lyricism and purity in these literary endeavors exposes the ideology. However, there are examples in the poetry of Kosovo and Metohija where the epic has defeated Eros, or where **the myth of Kosovo** replaces Eros.

For its most part, that literature is tied to the being of Serbian people in Kosovo, to everything which constitutes tradition and heritage, as well as to that, which will be the poetic phenomenon and motive of our time: persecution as a doom and fate. That is a natural course of events after the dramatic devastation to the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, who, having lost their jobs, homes, land, and homeland – returned to the existential, to the quest for the soul.

This might relate more to the period before 1999, that is, to the time before the bombing of Serbia, and the time before the complete disintegration of Kosovo – namely, before the persecutions and exodus. However, since *no other art form is so persistently national like poetry*, as Thomas Stearns Eliot would say, the question of poetry from Kosovo, is in a way a question of

Kosovo program, a question of the survival of Serbian people, and the pain for *the motherland and burial ground* – the land of Kosovo, as the essential archetype.

According to the strength of chronotope (the place and time of happiness) and the aesthetic code, Kosovo emerges as a mythopoetic theme in the works of many authors.

This *literature in exile or literature of persecution* can bear the consequences of pathos and subjective impulse as the result of heritage, but it has, no doubt, created recognizable verse, making literature more real than any kind of reality. Not only the aforementioned writers from the area of Kosovo and Metohija belong there, but also many others, not included in this text. Writers from the territories of former Yugoslavia also belong there, those who experienced the same fate, and thus have a similar poetics.

Unlike many others who said that postmodernism is **the end of time**, Mikhail Epstein (*Postmodernism*, Slovo, Belgrade, 1998) claimed that **postmodernism is what comes after the end**, it is a **time of possible future**. All that tells us to categorize the literature of Kosovo and Metohija there: into the literature which comes after the end or in time of possible future. „The ending of a historical story does not have to be an end, since the boundary is not a place where something ceases to exist, but is <...> a place from which something starts its existence“, says B. Homi in the text *Placing Culture* [5, p. 18].

Writing about the modern novel from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Enver Kazaz speaks about literature in a **post-apocalyptic desert** in the text *The Bloody Disintegration of Society and the Poetic Uprising of the Novel*, also in *Sarajevo Notebook*.

#### THE PHENOMENON OF HOMELAND AND EXILE

The question of Kosovo literature is in a way a question of Kosovo program, a question of the survival of Serbian people, and the pain for *the motherland and burial ground* – the land of Kosovo, as the essential archetype.

It has been said that Kosovo emerges as a mythopoetic theme in literature for children. Moso Odalovic and Aco Rakocevic are two important writers there, one a poet, the other one a novelist – both of them poetic recounters of Kosovo sorrow.

Aco Rakocevic writes letters about that to Milica, a girl from Krajina, a two-time refugee, whose stories about Krajina led to a novel *A Man Who Jumps Over Air*. Every story of Milica ends with a sentence: *Well, I always think about my father...*

*The moment we go from Kosovo, we lose direction*, is a verse by Moso Odalovic, which is a testimony of Kosovo endlessness and cosmos, of the homeland where one can only define the four cardinal directions – *and somewhere, nowhere, nowhere again...*, while Stojiljko Stanisic writes about a dog crying like rain while the home of its owner is burning, and when the Albanians stopped it from jumping into the fire, they saw that: *kaj geni si shi – the dog was crying like rain*.

Other authors also talk about the refuge, and migration from Kosovo and Metohija in their works<sup>2</sup>.

In the novel *Cuckoo's Snow*, through the monolog of Krstinja Draskovic, Ratko Popovic speaks about man's connection to the land where everything is „between life and death, between home and thunder, between history and testament“. It is as if the character of Krstinja came out of epic tradition, and she does not function as an individual, but as a collective voice which is a painful chronicle of history and homeland.

The novel *Taken Homeland* by Milorad Roganovic bears witness to the events from 1968 until 1981, when the *Kosovo syndrome* was clearly defined, and also to the people whose homeland was taken away from them. The writer says that for him the Kosovo homeland is mythical and epic. It is an image of ceaseless persecutions, tragic destinies, and innocent victims.

Pera Stefanovic also writes about the exodus in two of his works: in the documentary prose *Gah, My Pristina* from 1999, and in the book *The Scent of Home*, published in 2007. In these books, Stefanovic evokes his days in Pristina, in which his ancestors lived for several centuries, important people for this quiet, and now a completely different city.

In the first book, Stefanovic bears witness to the bloody events of 1999, when he was driven out, together with thousands of his countrymen, of his home and homeland. The old, quiet, dignified Pera Stefanovic believed until his last day in Pristina that he should be the last one to go. And, after numerous attacks and blackmail, „beaten, sworn at, humiliated!“ In front of so many U.S.A. witnesses and pro-Europeans! And there, in his apartment, on the wall – A Certificate and Plaque of Acknowledgement and Recognition awarded to *A distinguished citizen of Pristina* for the contribution to the development and growth of his hometown. And the document *Man of the Year 1992*, by

<sup>2</sup> The author of this work also wrote about that in her novels *Three Worlds* (2008) and *The World Outside* (2014). Both novels were published by the publisher *Albatros plus*, in Belgrade.

American Biographical Institute! And a biography in a “prestigious” Cambridge biographical dictionary! And decorations for the contribution in the anti-fascist fight, from which he got out as a minor and a war invalid. A *Russian Medal* for „victory over fascism“! And a dozen of books, three of which on the topic of old Pristina, and in which some of the honorable men mentioned are Albanians! Some of the books were translated into Albanian and Turkish. And while a child on the street is painfully kicking him on the shins, he is thinking that perhaps this little “warrior” has been learning in school from the reader in which there are some of his stories. And many books of his Albanian friends which he has reviewed... He says: „I am standing by the truck, and watching for the last time the passers-by in *my* street, the very one I was inventory of!!! There are not many of my fellow citizens. When they come along, they turn their heads away in embarrassment! My friend Nazmi Rahmani did the same, and he was once the President of the Association of Writers of Kosovo and Metohija“ (p. 223).

An image of convoy which will be “protected” by KFOR armored vehicles until it leaves the territory of Kosovo and Metohija seems paradoxical. An impossible order in chaos, paying attention to the road and time, when you leave a whole life behind. Not only a geographical space! Amid all that sorrow and sobbing, an almost Shakespearean voice resounds, the voice of the musician Toza, an inimitable wedding-time violin maestro, and the song: *Are you sorry that we have to part!*<sup>3</sup> The song of the player Toza is a collective lament for the homeless and displaced people who are passing by followed by heavy roaring of cars and various trucks and trailers. The author’s response to Toza’s lament: *Are you sorry that we have to part!*, is: *I am sorry, and my heart is aching* – empty and devastated. Also, the image of the bombed Pristina graveyard seems like a flood. If it were the time of herald drummers, says Stefanovic, „then Aleksa, a well-known and much loved *drummer* from Pristina, would do the rounds of Pristina crossroads to announce: „Hear and behold, citizens of Pristina! There has been a crime in the cemetery! Listen here, people, if you are still there; they killed the cemetery!“ (*The Scent of Home*, p. 143) The heaps and mounds at the cemetery look as if they were coming from the underworld, and that new *relief* (i.e. *elevations of land*), says the writer, is the relief of the new order of things.

In the latest book, Pera Stefanovic evokes his love for Pristina and Kosovo and Metohija, showing

to some new people the centuries-old heritage and culture whose glow turned into a cataclysm. *The Scent of Home* is a book which, in a fact-based and documentary way, put a stamp to a life together in “brotherhood and unity”, and to a false belief in that imaginary theory. Although the writer recounted everything to journalists and observers in a large number of pages, the end of the book confirms that those from whom he expected help turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to this. And „I can go anywhere“, says the writer. „Only I could not go through my hometown, to feel its breath, the scent of home and ancestors’ graves. They would not let us do that today, but *sneaked us out* of the town using some byroads and marginal paths, like haiduks, or outlaws“ (p. 343). The only thing left to him in this helplessness was to recite his verses to strangers (foreigners) who did not understand the words, but felt the lament.

*You gouged my both eyes out!*

*In return you sent me*

*in a glossy wrapper:*

*dark glasses and a white cane.*

*(...) I can read you well without the Braille!*

*And I read you like a book!*

*And the new magna carta libertatum!*

*And I read what you are yet to write!*

Stefanovic says that he was *exiled, persecuted, cast out*, a linguistic trilemma. *Displaced, scattered, blown away* like the chaff left after threshing grains on the threshing floor of the new world order. Circumstances took him to Obrenovac, where he now “lives”, not only without a desire but also without any thought that the Kolubara or the Sava could be a replacement for the Pristevka, Velusa, Gracanka, Lab, Sitnica, Drenica, Klina, Mirusa, Nerodimka, Lepenac, Kriva Reka, Binacka Morava, Drim, Ibar, and all the rivers named Bistrica in Metohija.

In his collection of short stories, Radosav Stojanovic „elongates“ the persecution time from the Second World War until the events leading to the exodus. The severity of such doom and martyrdom is compared to Christ’s wounds, making those tragic heroes Christ’s witnesses.

Out of many characters from different intellectual and social circles, we can single out the story *The Property Master*, with the main character Andras, i.e. Lajos Balog, an elderly actor „who slowly loses touch with reality, and immerses himself into the world of actor’s dreams and fantasies“. A young Albanian who worked as a property master in the theatre and was close to the actor, comes to take his apartment from him, playing the main role for the first part in his life, that of an executioner, severe and merciless. Although he feels

<sup>3</sup> Serbian folk poem about a parting with family and friends.



somewhat uncertain and uncomfortable, knowing how an actor lives with all those characters and sense of justice, he does not fail to wrong his two old friends, in whose home he has always been a dear guest, almost a part of the family. The naïve Andras, forever on the stage, cannot believe that such is the harsh reality, but he continues the scene from the play *Costume Designer*, with passion, but to no avail: *What? The scene has already been set? The audience is coming in? Marija, my robe, please! My costume! I am late! God, Braim, where have you been*, the actor was stuttering, while Ibrahim was attacking him, taking him by the collar: *You fool, do you want a knife under your throat!*

To his question on the following day why he was being evicted from his apartment by masked men, he got an answer that he had been carrying a weapon. „I do not deny“, the actor said, „I have been carrying it on the stage, playing Albanians from Kosovo – people from Drenica, Rugovo, Labljane – beys, merchants, outlaws, and avengers, and victims from Pec and Djakovica. Ali Deda, Bashkim, Mic Sokolji. Better than Albanian actors from Kosovo. There was a time when I was called Andri Drenica. How quickly you have forgotten all that“.

The actor mentioned all those things, thinking that if Shalja and Shanija, well-known actors from Pristina were still alive, none of this would have happened.

A mistaken belief, shared by many in that area, led Andras Balat, an actor from the story *The Property Master*, and from real life, to a field belonging to the village Ugljare near Pristina, where he has been ever since in a makeshift accommodation shared with other sad people from Prizren and Urosevac. He has been roaming with dogs, in boots and with a beard down to his knees, forever grumbling to himself: *Mrekulli (just great), I was a better Schiptar than half people from Drenica!*

In the book *Christ's Witnesses*, Radosav Stojanovic speaks about the tragedy of individuals, who are both prisoners of the past and their homeland, in a constant desire to bring back the world or return to the world from which they were exiled.

In the book *Poet and Homeland*, Nikolaj Timcenko said about Stanislav Vinaver that he, being exiled from his homeland, was in fact exiled from the **homeland of meaning**. Being exiled from one's homeland is like being exiled from the planet.

It has already been said that this reality of Kosovo and Metohija, transformed into a metaphor and a symbol, perhaps even a hyperbole; into a verse or a story, is the result of the historic tragedy present in Kosovo and Metohija for several decades, if not centuries. In the aesthetic sense, it has been an all-around national search for a valuable literary

expression, but always with certain going back to regional themes, and regional values.

It would be good not to lose something at the point where it stops, but to hold something there where and for what something comes into existence!

Writing about *Homeland Elementary Reader* by Moso Odalovic, Olivera Vuksanovic, among other things, says that „no matter where we were born, where we go, are exiled from, flee from or stay at, one thing is more than clear – our homeland is the only place from which we can never go, and we cannot go anywhere else from there, we can never totally leave it, even when we have where to go, even when we are forced to go anywhere. The *Elementary Reader* by Moso Odalovic, devoutly and happily written and illustrated by hand, is a book about every one of our homelands, because the homeland is not only the place where you were born, the space that remembers the early sensitivity, the area we have chosen or which has chosen us, as it sometimes happens, God know why. (...) It is the only place to which you can go from any other place, because, as Moso says, „*I can only tell the sides of the world in my homeland, and nowhere, nowhere else.*“ Our homeland, as the third parent, has prophetically defined us.

Moso Odalovic has, like not many of us, revived Serbian literature for children with a big experience of being protected in time and space, enriched it with the memory of Kosovo, as God's settlement. Although it is not typical for poetry for children and youth to get readership with such *hard*, epic, even political themes, Moso Odalovic has, no wonder, conquered the world with his light, humane, sorrowful and cheerful poetry, writing about his childhood in his homeland. He writes about something which is encountered by every child nowadays?

In the book *Unfinishable*, the French poet Yves Bonnefoy writes:

*What to grab but the thing that escapes us,  
What to see if not that which is disappearing  
into the darkness,  
What to long for if not for that which is dying,  
Which speaks and tears apart?  
(The Last Motion)*

The thing that escapes us, is disappearing into the darkness, is dying and tearing apart, is something familiar to all those who have Kosovo as their homeland. It is the subject of the purest of poems. By using his poetic imagination, Moso Odalovic turned the image of his parents' home, as well as everything that constitutes the image of childhood, and thus welfare, into an ideal, and a sort of the only and all-time shelter. His poem *M.O. Stole a Swallow* is Moso's "poem of poems" on this subject. It expresses in the best way children's fears and helplessness

before a necessary task: *the selling of the house as the selling of the soul.*

*Something serious is going on.  
Sparrows are hiding in the bushes.  
Somebody's haggling with Dad –  
He's buying our house.  
Also everything around it:  
the path, the field, water...  
Home, fairest home,  
they are buying the nest and the stork!  
They are buying the sides of the world.  
Now everything is messed up.  
It is summer, the frost is crackling,  
the sun is fluttering snowflakes.*

The house as the homeland, as home, is an image of a ruined tower for the people from Kosovo. As if the people who fled from Kosovo are beings from a ruined tower, i.e. beings with a ruined soul. Without it, there is no foundation, there is nothing. A house is both the basement and the roof, the deep and the high. And the circle, the center of the circle, the same as the house is the infinity, and the ancient place of memory and imagination. The house is a nest. „*I dreamt about a nest where the trees stood up to death*“, another poet wrote, using the house and homeland as places against death, oblivion, and extinction.

The Great Battle of Kosovo, as a great calamity of Kosovo, was making our grand epic poetry for centuries. That is how we got the first expression of our national poetics. The current pogrom, as a great torment suffered by Kosovo people, creates a new and recognizable poetics of disappearance and helplessness, sorrow and dying, as the second expression of national poetics. It appears that Moso Odalovic, a cheerful poet much loved by children, who like to play with him, leads in melancholy, no matter if he tries to hide his tears, or fly with sparrows, or fly with that stolen swallow, which will show the sides of the world to him.

#### ESCAPE AND PERSECUTION

Fleeing as refugees is not the same as going willingly, changing the place of residence, accepting another space. It is an escape. By escaping, you can, in fact, change the place of life and work, but you cannot find solace and shelter from tragedy.

A large number of poets from Kosovo and Metohija compare the unwilling leaving of the homeland, birthplace and one's surroundings, to a loss of meaning and unobliterable roots. The tendency to preserve the national memory is a dominant tendency in the poetry of Blagoje Savic.

To keep the awareness of existence and belonging, of former life in Kosovo – like ashes – is a thought

imposed by Savic, which can be grasped from the very title of his selected and new poems: *Lock the Ashes*. **Lock the Ashes** can be understood in multiple ways: to lock the sorrow and nothingness behind you, lock them behind you and prevent evil from developing and spreading, lock, that is, preserve all personal and public heritage so far, protect and don't let the feeling of belonging and identity be lost. **Lock the Ashes** like a secret you have brought with you, although it might be worthless at the moment, unpleasant because of being loaded with layers, myths, and tradition... **Lock the Ashes** – preserve the images of ancestors and historical heritage.

Although the images in his poetry are associative, surreal, indicative of the chaos left behind; they anxiously give a surreal image of what there is or can be grasped. „Light is the power of small nations“, he writes in the poem *The Power of Small Nations*,

*Their past cannot find  
Its sandy cove  
to get a new home again.*

A failure to find direction, the feeling of despair and hopelessness, is the atmosphere in which the subject of his poetry is passing through or resides. It is chaotic and hopeless without any known faces, friends and family.

*What Now  
Guided by an unfamiliar voice  
Who can move  
to anything  
A chaotic place  
increases the feeling of emptiness  
breathes a mess*

*(Kosovo, what now)*

An apocalyptic image of fear which appears as „a ridicule of the mind“, is a testimony of the strength of the poet who is torn in a nightmare, endangered by many things due to somebody else's will.

*Kosovo, what now?* As if it were enough to pose this dilemma? To mention a name which is sufficient for a short or a long poem, a novel, a play. The drama of Kosovo doom has created an elegy „with a sober concept“, to use a term coined by Sasa Radojic.

Blagoje Savic's doubts and queries, which appeared after the bombing (1999), in exile, are a continuation of his poetic expressions. „Although its form is modern,“ according to Sasa Radojic, „this poetry do not cease to exploit mythic and folk symbolism. This can also be said in a different way: always rooted in tradition, it *searches* for its own measure of distinction“ [6, p. 16].

Speaking about the poetry of Darinka Jevric, one of the most significant Serbian poets from Kosovo and Metohija, is always a return to or a reference to the specific. That *specific* is not always in the spirit of

time, which is also true about today. To live in Kosovo and Metohija, and be a contemporary Serbian poet with a unique poetic style, does not have to mean that the causality and effects will be bound to appear as traditional, pathetic or anachronic. She spent a lifetime in Kosovo. When she moved from Kosovo (we don't say *left*), she stopped writing poetry, the way she stopped breathing. She remained faithful to Kosovo and Metohija until her last breath and last verse. The tragedy of Kosovo is followed by epic images, epic intonation, epic singing, as the most suitable metaphorical meaning. That epic note and form contributes to the general character of Kosovo drama in some poems with the theme of Kosovo reality. *Darkness dawning through rays / rainbows through dusk / cawing of crows over Gracanica. / Crows all day / blackness all day!*, in the poem *The Parliament of Crows in Pristina*. Somebody said that these poems are „a diary of a deep and personal experience of all Serbs and Montenegrins in Kosovo“. Darinka sang for all homeless and desperate people, turning hatred into goodness, wailing into duty, replacing skepticism with faith. In the poem *Sunset*, one of the last poems created as *Emissary from the Sunny Hill*, Darinka peacefully says goodbye to the day as if to life itself:

*Locking eyes in a golden evening  
We look at each other: the sunset and me  
We are somehow always late for the rising  
Either the sun, or me, or the day.*

That is how silence and loneliness are compared to eternity, as Darinka would say „to the metaphysical awareness of ancient fear, which intensifies the fear for the destiny of the people“. The tone in her poetry often turns into solemn confession.

The author evokes that world by identifying with what she encounters, be it a fresco, the bells of Decani, a warrior's love. The aim of such poetic evocation is to give it a permanent substance and timeless value, to transport these things into eternity. We can thus say that Darinka Jevric transforms her poetic fluid, a moment, her lyrics, and a personal experience into the big picture, general matter, and wide movement. Therefore, we can say that she creates epic poetry by using lyricism. The lyric interweaves with the epic, which is an essential trait of the poetics of Darinka Jevric, and her own dramatic creation. That is her silent embroidery, her prayer, her wail, and her firm walk through the drama of Kosovo doom. It's a warrior's psalm and the prayer of the bells of Ljeviska, Decani, and Gracanica.

Radoslav Zlatanovic is one of the leading Serbian poets from Kosovo and Metohija of the so-called “new wave”, as the poetry of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup>

century has been named by Danica Andrejevic. What can be grasped from his poetry after leaving Kosovo is a new patriotism and a new Kosovo theme.

In refuge, he writes the names of places and the dates of foundation, and based on the unpublished manuscript *Completed Verses*, we can see that Zlatanovic opted for a great number of toponyms, in order to speak about the nature of such important linguistic determiners. That is not just a simple confirmation of the etymology of words, together with all those grammatical, linguistic, morphological and other characteristics, but an idea to determine the belonging of places, towns and villages, rivers, and mountains based on the etymology of words. Not only in Kosovo, but in the wider region.

In the cycle of poems *Serbian Thresholds in Albania*, in the poems *Vraniste, The Tower, Dreams, Ashes*, Zlatanovic enumerates the places, river and settlement names, people and towns, where old forms with the Slavic, i.e. Serbian root and meaning are mentioned.

The poetic formation of this lexicon of words and names is connected to a wider and deeper semantics, to the questioning of origin and belongings, as well as to robbing an individual and wider community who left their “thresholds” of joy and life. The poet complains that nobody sees or hears the struggle of refugees, that everything has become chaotic, individuals and friends who disappear without a trace, but also total communities. Indifference is the true face of a great fall and misfortune, and people don't care what an individual will become or what will happen to him.

Aleksandar Lakovic tries to turn that historical space into a cosmic construction, softening it by generalizing it, focusing it not only on daily qualifications, but on the *Secret*, religious objectivity and devotion. Quietly and calmly, the way he lives and works, Lakovic respects the extremes and the scream of Kosovo daily life, trying to „close the window“, until *the storm passes*.

*Under the holy bones of the founders  
We crawl,  
Stooped over*

*Three times  
There is no sound*

*We gain right for  
a candle  
a prayer*

*from the wall  
the eyes of Jesus*

*follow us*



wherever

we move

even outside the fortification

Unlike the poetry of a lot of writers from Kosovo and Metohija, his poetry boldly relies to the “help from above”, to some cosmic harmony which will save us, if we just only protect ourselves better. Not save us now and here, and not in the physical sense – obviously, but in the spiritual sense, which is the most important one, as it has been proven throughout history.

Poets who have placed their happiness and personal life in the frame of their outer being - the homeland of their soul - in their home place - are rare in world literature. They placed it in Kosovo, as the most mythical of all homelands. The Old Testament and New Testament one. On their Golgotha, and at their last judgement.

Milica Jeftimijevic Lilic is almost uncompromising when she compares her life to Kosovo itself, where death is *less important* than losing the homeland. If one leaves, there is a danger of falling into despair and alienation. A departure from Kosovo would silence the prayers of apostles, the *Three-handed* Theotokos would go blind, and Decani would begin to see „to see the evil“, says the poet, everything would change for the worse: the essence of heaven and earth would be lost; man would not be whole any more, nor cosmos the same. It is clear here that, although the poet is not in her homeland, she thinks that a true apocalypse would happen if Kosovo was completely lost. Everything in her poetry is less important than the homeland. Death included! Her verses of sorrow and crying are very powerful.

Speaking about the poetry of Darinka Vucenic, Zoran Gluscevic said that: „The term of patriotism under the pressure of so-called mondialism remains something which is not only outdated but also ugly and antihuman; the old poetic vocabulary of patriotic poetry related to the liberation movement and the success of Serbian people after the 19<sup>th</sup>, and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has in time thinned out and lost its edge... and the theme is prone to risks“[4, p. 175].

The Kosovo propensity for myth and the cult of suffering is dominant in the poetry of Dragisa Bojovic. In the collection *Holy Elegy*, inspired by hagiographies and holy sermons, Dragisa Bojovic, as a theological aesthete, deals with the issues of meaning and existence of the world. Christian and local themes, formed by prayers, place this collection into the canon of Orthodox spiritual letter books. He related the centuries-long *suffering* in Kosovo to calvary, comparing the suffering of people from Kosovo to Christ’s suffering.

Bojovic evokes characters from old and new Biblical iconography in order to drive away the current suffering and call for salvation.

#### POETRY IN THE GHETTO

When we talk about the persecution of writers from Kosovo and Metohija we can talk about persecution from multiple aspects. We can talk about physical persecution, when one is forced to leave their home and hearth, the general space which contains the so-called Bahtinovski phenomenon of chronotopia, when one is left without *signs by the road*, without meetings, joy for going or coming back, without general synonyms for man: job, home, school, street, field, theatre...

We can (especially) talk about persecution, exodus, confinement, and punishment, when we talk about the group of Kosovo writers who accepted the ghetto as their destiny, and turned their inner struggle into wailing and writing about injustice and helplessness. *Returning backwards* is withdrawing into oneself, returning to one’s childhood, the past, a memory of happiness. When we talk about creators who devoted their life and work to Kosovo, still staying there as guardians, something can be noticed, something which will show itself as an interesting and theoretical characteristic for future research. Namely, after 1999, after the fall of Pristina, Kosovska Mitrovica takes over the role of the main Serbian city, the role of the cultural center, as well as the center for many other fields. Remaining until now (2015) the center of spiritual, scientific, political, and economic being of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija, Kosovska Mitrovica gathers a number of creative people; it renews, preserves, and initiates a lot of ideas and events. In the so-called *free zone*, next to central Serbia, the writers of Kosovo and Metohija have spoken about the reality of Kosovo in a more open, powerful and louder voice, in a more epic way. The circle of poets from Kosovska Mitrovica has the greatest number of authors. Namely, conditioned by its present state and status, Kosovska Mitrovica has taken over the responsibility and burden of the capital city, being the only city in which Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija can live and work in a dignified way. All important institutions of Kosovo and Metohija are in Kosovska Mitrovica, the University of Pristina perhaps the most important among them, especially regarding the theme we are talking about here, with all study groups that existed before 1999, and the Association of Writers of Kosovo and Metohija.

The most important representatives of contemporary Serbian literature in Kosovska Mitrovica are: Milan Mihajlovic, Novica Sovrljic, Lenka Jaksic, Vidosava Arsenijevic, and others.



Enclaves got the short end of the stick. Some centers, like Pec, Prizren, Urosevac, Gnjilane, and especially Pristina, have completely gone silent, numb... Nothing has remained in the possession of Serbs (at least during these last years), out of material culture, libraries, the University, schools, museums, publishing houses, associations... Small groups of artists gathered around Gracanica, near the City of Pristina, as a cultural center; around the Cultural Center and the monastery, as well as around the University branch. During the last few years, the greatest work has been done by enthusiastic individuals, those who have recognized the importance and value of spiritual survival. Here, the most significant one is Dragomir Kostic, a poet, researcher and university professor, who has been gathering people around him or joining those who were active before 1999. He is also one of the most significant representatives of Serbian literature of Central Kosovo. Apart from Kostic, the poets who also belong to that circle of poets and victims are Ratko Popovic, Dragan Nicic Cinoberski, Zivojin Rakocevic, Zivorad Milenkovic ... We should also mention Petar Saric here (living alone in Brezovica, under the mountain Sara)... As a poet, journalist, and public figure, Zivojin Rakocevic made a lot of problems of Serbs in Kosovo more visible, and informed the public about them. He has spoken on behalf of many people and for all of them. It has often been very risky for him to call from conflict-afflicted areas and situations, the way that his existence in Kosovo presents for many people some sort of hope and proof that it is possible to remain there, that it is important to endure. He gives an important contribution to the current kind-of-sufferable cultural and political life of Serbs in the central part of Kosovo and Metohija.

In a large number of poems, in an unexpected lyrical way, Dragomir Kostic has spoken as a folk bard being whispered to words and thoughts by stars. Gentle and pure as a child, the poet Kostic believes in light and beauty; he does not doubt or curse fate. That is why he believes that Gracanica will survive, and that *one hundred godlike beauties* will survive. Kostic believes that we are losing Kosovo because *we do not deserve it*.

*Perhaps we have not loved you enough  
/Or cherished you much.  
Or prayed to you (or for you)*

*Forgive us for possibly being coarse  
Thinking more about ourselves  
Being dedicated to ourselves  
Sometimes in our history (Dedication)  
of preserving our bare lives A daily  
Worry simply forced us to*

*Forget not only where we live  
But also that we  
Live at all*

*Forgive us Forgive us But that's us  
The way you  
Kosovo  
Made us*

*(And perhaps we don't deserve you)*

Like in a prayer, begging God to do everything possible to prevent that everyone leaves Kosovo, which would be the greatest evil so far, Kostic prays for forgiveness for the committed sins, selfishness in love, and oblivion, in the poem *To God of Kosovo*. He prays with a song over the ruins, over scattered bones, in grain fields, the pits of Volujak, with the cry of harvesters in the field, a frozen laughter of children – swimmers in a river, that at least in the *remaining parts* of Kosovo there is somebody left... A chronicler of the gravest Serbian reality in Kosovo and Metohija, at the most terrible time for the Serbian people, in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>, and the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, he says that there is no myth of Kosovo, meaning that that myth, related to the Battle of Kosovo, is now outdated and has been pushed into the background by what has been happening to Serbs in the newer history. Now, there is a myth about an exiled people. Or about a few remaining people there - all the same! Now, the myth of a taken-away country and a persecuted people is stronger, and the defeat greater. (In his defeat, a believer sees a triumph, Kierkegaard) In *the Map of Kosovo*, a poem-document, as in a „dead bible“, the poet gives all the places in Kosovo in the alphabetical order, from Ajkobila to Sumnik, making thus a unique and unusual dictionary of disappearing.

Dragomir Kostic is the most authentic poet from Kosovo and Metohija, and from the “old” central Kosovo, Kosovo around the Lab and Sitnica, Gracanica and Susica (the so-called Central Kosovo)... It will yet be written about the stylistic and poetic quality and value of this literature, because the contemporary quality of this poetry and a certain aggressive unusual quality of its form and essence make it the poetry of *future time*.

For a poet there is no award that can be measured by Kosovo, there is no eternity or happiness without Kosovo! There is no price or measure for Kosovo!

Due to his inability to distance himself from everyday current reality and politics, Dragan Nicic Cinoberski often presents himself as a critique of the new world order. These poems, although they have not lost their poetic or aesthetic qualities, but are under the risk of doing so (on purpose, one would say), can stand up to genocide and destruction as a program. We

believe that their task is wider, deeper and more all-round than to be used for political purposes!

#### INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

When we speak about the literature of Kosovo and Metohija, no matter when it was created, we can differentiate certain factors which make that literature unique and recognizable. It is characterized by:

- specificity of themes and motives;
- *The Battle of Kosovo* as a central starting point, especially in older works;
- Kosovo heroics and Kosovo doom;
- the relation between heaven and earth;
- a bad social situation;
- regionalism;
- ethical and aesthetic measure;
- noticeable ethical quality; fight for justice and purity;
- Genre dominance: prose from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, poetry at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century;
- recognizable poetic-stylistic quality (use of localisms, archaisms, words of Turkish or Albanian origin, use of expressive figures, sensuous images, hyperbole ...);
- focus on religious themes;
- persecution and resettling;

- lost (taken-away) homeland;
- survival and suffering;
- emotional exclusivism;
- Kosovo and Metohija as a value measure of everything human

That kind of focus, like an archetype, could be seen in the works of older Serbian writers from Kosovo and Metohija who „depicted the clashes of irreconcilable sides which have been poisoned by hatred for anything foreign due to permanent animosity for each other.

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