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Petko Ivanov

Connecticut College, pivanov@conncoll.edu

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"TO WRITE IN MACEDONIAN MEANS TO FIGHT!"
INTRODUCTION INTO THE MACEDONIAN LITERARY CANON

Petko Ivanov

Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures & Department of Anthropology,
University of Chicago

Верував, цврсто верував, дека имено македонската литература со нејзините највисоки дострели, беше непоништливиот доказ за автентичноста на македонскиот литературен јазик, за неговите творечки можности; беше (и е) најсилно оружје со кое се докажаа: историската животност и идентитет на македонската нација; беше непорекливиот аргумент на нејзината историска и меѓународна афирмација. Усвитениот штик против антимакедонските заговори! И повторував: " Да се пишува македонски значи да се војува"!

Нова Македонија, Dec. 4, 1993, p. 16.

Literature of the Living Classics

I have chosen for the motto of this essay a passage from the artistic credo of the writer Kole Čašule (1921-), one of the "living classics" of the Macedonian literature. The excerpt is remarkable not merely for its programmatic intention, which makes it a valid point of departure for canvassing a general overview of contemporary Macedonian literature, but above all for its apparently superfluous polemic tone. I say "superfluous," for hardly anyone in Macedonia would argue on the validity of its message, and, moreover, because the passage evidently relies upon such a shared ideological horizon of expectations. Its concept of "applied literature" as well as its militaristic metaphorical imagination (cf. оружје, штик, војува) are not addressed to real or imaginary opponents but to a loyal audience of patriotic readers; the polemic text, in other words, is aimed not at converting the non-believers but rather at confirming a stance known to and accepted by all. Before commenting on the stance itself, however, I will discuss first the circumstances that allow for the personal interests of the Macedonian writer to coincide

with that of the nation to such a degree that the private sphere of his literary activity may be transformed into a national deed, and may thus become "the people's concern" (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 18).

Let us begin with the place that writers occupy in the Macedonian cultural space. It will not be an exaggeration to say that, compared to both writers in other cultures and to other public figures in the country, the Macedonian writer enjoys an extraordinary prestige. A possible explanation of this rather unusual respect for the literary author concerns the functional polyvalence of Macedonian literature which still fulfills social requirements that normally are the priority of alternative types of discourses (e. g. political, journalistic, etc.). At the socio-cultural level this "anomaly" can be illustrated by the tendency to interpret the individual talent as a responsibility to the national destiny; in a sense, the talent is even "expropriated" by the national community. For a long period of time the Macedonian writer has had "the double vocation [двојна улога] being both an artist and a voice of the political and the national aspirations of his people" (Спасов 1971: 66-67). The intensity and the modes of this double engagement do indeed vary over time and from author to author, but its inevitable presence across the diverse landscape of Macedonian literature remains one of the constants of Macedonian cultural life. The watershed of 1992 (the year of the emancipation of the modern Macedonian state) did not change much in this respect, at least not overnight. The writer is still very much expected to be a "spokesperson" and the "conscience" of the nation, and is respected by the nation for this role above any other.¹

Strictly speaking, the Macedonian literature consolidated itself *as a national institution* toward the end of the 1950s. It was approximately by that time that the basic

¹ It should be noted that the syncretism of writer's activity is not restricted to the spheres of art and politics alone. Especially in 1950s, the figure of *homo scriptor* (the writer, the poet, the journalist) often merges with that of *homo academicus* (the teacher, the literary critic, the linguist, the folklorist), or rather, one and the same "author" fills in all these social valences (the most eloquent example for a successful fulfillment of such a complex social requirement is Blaže Koneski, who is at once one of the most prominent poets, writers, journalists, literary historians, linguists, and all-rounded *Kulturträgers* of modern Macedonia). A paradoxical consequence of this social modeling of the writer's figure is the fact that the producer of literature is simultaneously licensed to direct the literary process, to construct the very institution of literature, as well as to control and validate ideologically its privileged position among the social structures of the nation.

structures of the literary life in the country took a definite shape (e.g., the establishment of *specialized* literary periodicals and of professional literary criticism and journalism; the creation of a publishing network; the formation of writers' organizations and clubs; the foundation of periodical events, like the Struga Evenings of Poetry, etc.). By the same time the two major literary camps were formed around the journals *Современост* and *Разгледи*, the tribunes of the Macedonian aesthetic "realism" and of the Macedonian "modernism" respectively. It is no less important that during this period the Macedonian literature was constituted as a university discipline and was introduced into the school curriculum as a part of the mandatory knowledge of each and every Macedonian. The 1950s were also the time of establishing the Macedonian literary canon, or of creating that "noble list of literary authors and works" (Кљосев 1993), that made it possible later to produce narratives termed "national literary history." If the Macedonian "classical inventory" from the 1950s was in any way unique, it was because of the ratio between the "living" and the "dead" authors in it (in the literal sense of both terms): even nowadays the quantity of the Macedonian "classics" who are still alive is unusually high. The inertia to think of the classic in past tense notwithstanding, the reasons for that peculiarity are quite self-evident. As Blaže Koneski (1921-1993) noted at the year of his death in an essay entitled *Пишувањето на "мал" јазик*, the Macedonian literature is still a *young* literature written in a *small* language by representatives of a nation with a *disputed* identity.²

All these factors place the Macedonian writer in an apparently disadvantageous position, which is not necessarily deprived, however, of certain advantages. The lack of domestic "irresistible models" (Kafka 1948: 192) of literature endows the Macedonian author with the freedom of a pioneer. He (or she, although even nowadays Macedonian literature is very much a "male" literature) does not inherit a well-established literary tradition and is not compelled to follow the rules of a literary culture imposed on him, but

² Cf. Koneski 1993 [= Koneski 1994: 216]: "Повеќе од половина век јас пишувам песни на јазик на еден народ што го сочинуваат околу два милиона луѓе; да биде мојата позиција уште по-ранлива, јазикот на којшто пишувам, македонскиот, е кодификуван допрва во 1945 година и јас лично сум зел извесен удел во тој чин; [...] за сето тоа време на мојата литературна дејност од некои центри на моќ на Балканот ни се оспорува правото да пишуваме на свој јазик и да се сметаме за современа народна заедница".

is himself their "inventor." That is why, at least until the late 1950s, each new Macedonian literary work had the chance to be the *first one* in its genre, in its subject-matter, or in the literary trend it represents (cf., e.g., *Село зад седумте јасени*, 1952, by Slavko Janevski, which is at the same time "the first Macedonian novel" and "the first Yugoslav novel about collectivization"). On the other hand, the difficulties related to writing in a "imperfect language" (Drugovats 1976: 94) are balanced, and even outbalanced, by the rare opportunity for a 20th-century European writer to mold and model with almost unrestricted freedom the creation of the national literary language, to be in charge at the linguistic "lab" of the nation. It is a well-known fact that Macedonian writers, including the classic Blaže Koneski, took an active part in the codification of the Macedonian language (see Ристески 1988). Language administration, however, is only their peripheral activity. Their utmost challenge is the unexplored literary potential of the language. As Horace Lunt (1953: 382) aptly noted, in the 1950s the Macedonians "have not yet learned to use their native Macedonian on all stylistic levels; actually, it is only the small group of intellectuals daily concerned with the written word who now write easily [in Macedonian]." The language for the Macedonian writer, therefore, is as much a means of literary creation as it is a final goal, and in this sense each new work is a contribution not only to the national literature, but also to the constitution of the national language. This peculiarity has become by itself a mythogenic factor of Macedonian culture. As noted before by Kornhauser (1992: 219), the fact that Macedonian literature is written in "an entirely new literary language" is used in Macedonia as a major argument for *the myth of the uniqueness* of this literature (another element of this myth, according to Kornhauser, is the over-exploitation of the motif "the exotics of the deep South").³

Another feature of the Macedonian literature is the *absence of a dominant talent* or, in another terminology, of a literary genius. None of the Macedonian writers can be named the "single father talent" (Corngold 1994: 93) of the national literature who can represent it *pars pro toto* to the world. (In this respect the contrast with both the Serbian and the Croatian strategy of artificially enforcing an authoritative figure upon the literary

³ It is worth mentioning that Macedonian language alone is the focal point and, often, the subject-matter of the works by the so-called "language poets," a group of Postmodernists, including the imposing figure of Sande Stojčevski (see Szporer 1988; cf. also Miodyński 1992).

landscape -- that of Andrić or Krleža respectively -- and to designate by them the cultural superiority of their ethnic group within the former Yugoslav federation, is too well pronounced to miss.) The Macedonian literary canon is a canon of the numerous "equal" classics, none of whom overshadows the rest to the extent that (s)he may be turned into an object of a literary cult by his (her) readers and admirers. This lack of a "Macedonian Tolstoy," as Saul Bellow would say (cf. his infamous dictum "The Papuans had no Proust, the Bulgarians -- no Tolstoy;" so why should we bother then to study their so-called "literatures"?)⁴ raises the question about the asymmetry between the domestic and the international reputation of the classics: the Macedonian classics, contrary to the Biblical saying, are prophets *only* at home.⁵ This problem is, a propos, common to most of the Balkan literatures which are largely marginalized by the European literary community to which they aspire, much like the region itself is marginalized by the key players in the world politics.

Yet the major consequence from this authority vacuum in the Macedonian literature is not its provincialism *vis-à-vis* the so-called *Weltliteratur*. It results above all in the *intense competition* between the writers, a competition which, somewhat unexpectedly, seems to limit their authorial freedom. Under the "democracy of talents" (Corngold 1994: 95), preconditioned or enhanced by the lack of a dominant literary figure, any more or less talented author has a fair shot at creating a *chef d'oeuvre* of the national literature. This equality, however, has its dark side, since the apparent individual freedom can be exercised only in so far as it does not contradict the sacred goals of the national literature which alone have created such a favorable market for literary talents. Each aspiring writer is compelled to interiorize these goals in order to become a *Macedonian* writer *per se*; subscribing to them is the *conditio sine quae non* not only for his Macedonianness, but for the literariness of his oeuvre as well. In this sense each individual work is only a fragment of the unified text of the national literature within

⁴ See the controversial article by Saul Bellow "Papuans and Zulus" (*The New York Times*, March 10, 1994: A25), which gave rise to a long and intense media discussion.

⁵ The anglophone reception of Macedonian literature is particularly telling in this respect. With the exception of the propagandistic journal *Macedonian Review* (1971-) published in Skopje, the number of English translations of Macedonian literary works is insignificantly small indeed (see Mihailovich 1995).

which it has only a relative autonomy, much lesser than that of the individual texts of, say, the North American or the major West European literatures.

The tuning of the creative ambitions of Macedonian writers directly into the interests of the national community charges positively the literary production "with the role and function of collective enunciation" (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 17). This collectiveness of the enunciation manifests itself above all in the form of a *patriocentrism*, a term by which I designate the overexposure of the *patria*, the fatherland, and the utmost priority of nation-building over any other sphere of creative interest.⁶ This culture-specific Macedonian literary patriocentrism, however, does not necessarily imply that every Macedonian literary work is patriotic by its subject-matter or by its implied aims. It merely means that the central discursive subject in it is the *nation*. Unlike the modern Western-European type of literary discourse, which is oriented mainly toward a particular individual, the aim of a patriocentric literary discourse is not to cultivate differences, but to promote (national) unity and solidarity. The readers of such literature, on their turn, are supposed (and even obligated) to support and defend it, regardless of whether they really know and understand it well, or not (cf. Kafka 1948: 193).

Against this background the passage by Kole Čašule that I quoted above reads more like the next paraphrasis of a *collective* truth about the predestination of Macedonian literature, rather than as an individual and private opinion. It is not accidental that the central thesis of the passage interprets the "usefulness of literature" in relation with nation's destiny. The very fact that certain individuals from a nation created artistic texts in the language of this nation, it affirms, means that the nation itself and its language *do exist*. This statement may be read in still another way -- if without literature the very existence of a nation is questionable, then the national vitality can be (and in fact *is*) sustained by literary means. Taken a step further (where Čašule did not intend to go), it implies that the nation itself is produced, although not exclusively, by the medium of

⁶ A particular version of the nation-building topic in the first decade after WW2 is "the building of the *socialist* fatherland." The most characteristic lyrical "I" in the poetry of this time, for example in the works of Aco Šopov (1923-1982), is "the builder" (see Drugovats 1976: 92ff).

literature, and that it can be defined, much like literature itself, as a discursive formation *par excellence* (cf. Bhabha 1990).

Literature in "Hostile" Environment

According to Macedonian scholars, the dominant characteristics of Macedonian literature until the beginning of the 20th century is the so-called "discontinuity of tradition."⁷ Leaving aside the extreme articulations of this thesis that strive to incorporate into the Macedonian heritage texts as old as Alexander the Great, we can accept its moderate version as a valid point of departure in the attempts to systematize the vicissitudes of Macedonian literary development.⁸ As far as modern Macedonian literature is concerned, this "rupture" theory postulates that in our times Macedonian literature has started its literary development *anew* (the question of whether the tradition is forgotten or non-existent being absolutely irrelevant to the major implications and consequences of this postulate). I shall hereafter uphold to the stance that "new Macedonian literature" began its genuine (autonomous) existence as late as in the period between the two World Wars, the previous century and a half having traced only its *pre-history*, and I shall do that led by the conviction that for the limited purposes of this essay such a balanced and non-controversial stand-point has an evident heuristic value and convenient practical advantages. Having in mind this *terminus ad quem*, I'll try to delineate in the following paragraphs the characteristics of the initial literary situation in Macedonia and its impact on the subsequent development of Macedonian literature.

My conjecture is that modern literature in Macedonia developed paradoxically both *in relation to* and *in opposition with* the literatures of its neighboring Slavic peoples.

⁷ A modification of this thesis is Друговац's (1990) contradictory formula македонската книжевност е со традиција а без континуитет ("the Macedonian literature has a tradition, but no continuity"). This thesis is often combined by the Macedonian literary historians with Гачев's (1964) reductionist idea about the so-called "accelerated literary development" which suggests that certain literatures can condense to a couple of decades the process of their "natural" development, which other literatures, "under normal conditions," undergo in the course of many centuries.

⁸ A review of the existing attempts to offer a periodization of the modern Macedonian literature see in Juda 1992: 10-24.

In this perspective the history of the early Macedonian literature is a history of its *emancipation* from the literatures of the other Balkan Slavs, especially the Bulgarians and the Serbs, with which it has most evident common genetic traits. This process of emancipation develops "in the face of a hostile environment" (in Kafka's terms, 1948: 191), because the Macedonian right to independent national literature has been constantly disputed or simply ignored by Sofia, whereas Belgrade has repeatedly misused it for its own political manipulations. Certain political and intellectual circles in Bulgaria still consider Macedonian literature not as national but as *regional*, a literature written in one of the Bulgarian dialects. In 1993 this position was articulated in the political paradox of recognizing officially the independent Macedonian state without recognizing the existence of a Macedonian nation, language and literature. The Serbian strategy, on the other hand, has been focused on limiting the sovereignty of the still vulnerable young literature by turning it into a vassal of the "federative" Yugoslav literature (in notable *singularia tantum*), which, even according to Serbian scholars, is not only dominated but also staged out and directed by Belgrade (cf. Lukić 1972: 21-26).

The two leading characteristics of the literary situation in Macedonia during the decades that bracketed WW2 -- genetic closeness to its neighboring literatures and a tendency to emancipate from them -- are most evident in the phenomenon described as *дводомство* (bi-homeness) of the artist.⁹ As it is well-known, the first Macedonian literary works appeared in the context of foreign literary traditions (Bulgarian and Serbian, and more often the former than the latter), and were not infrequently written in a foreign language. These works and their authors thus belong as much to the history of Macedonian literature as to that of the corresponding "foreign host," a fact that often turns them into a bone of contention and a subject of endless and fierce debates. Maybe the author most victimized by these debates is Nikola Vaptsarov (1909-1942) whose national identity has been systematically falsified by Macedonian and Bulgarian scholars alike (see Поповски 1979; Ристовски 1995; cf. Балкански 1994). The *дводомство* phenomenon is related to other peculiarities of the Macedonian literary canon. First, it

⁹ The terms *дводомен* and *многудомен* (lit. 'a writer with two, or many homes') belongs to Доровски 1995; cf. Јелена Лужина's term *литературен бипатрид* ('literary bipatride') cited by Друговац 1995а.

presupposes the principal openness of the canon to be filled with new (or "newly discovered") writers torn between two "homes," whose oeuvre usually is mediocre at best and has value only for propagandistic purposes. Second, the Macedonian literature has the rather unusual task of making its existing monuments "more Macedonian" (the so-called *по-* and *до-македончване*; see, e.g., Друговац 1995b), i. e. of adapting them to the norms of the contemporary literary language.

The *dvodomstvo* phenomenon and the "federative" nature of the Macedonian literature until the 1990s are in fact only facets of the bigger question about the Macedonian "anxiety of influences" (Bloom 1973) and, by extension, about the adaptability of Macedonian literature toward different socio-cultural contexts. As Koneski suggests in his already mentioned essay *Пишувањето на "мал" јазик* (1993), the central geopolitical location of Macedonia in the heart of the Balkans makes it a natural crossroad of influences, which Macedonian writer have been striving to harmonize with the local folk tradition. Considering the absence of influential domestic models beside folklore, as well as the remoteness of the cultural capitals of Europe, the fact that the Macedonian literature is prone to be influenced by its immediate neighbors seems but natural. The Balkan models have in this case the advantage that they can be easily adapted to serve the needs of Macedonian writers because of the cultural similarities and the transparency of the languages (Bulgarian and Serbian) without translation. That is why namely the neighboring literatures that were just a few steps ahead in their development served initially as "natural stock" for Macedonian artistic models. To give but one example, *Бели мугри* (1939) by "the founder of Macedonian poetry" Kočo Racin (1908-1943) successfully combines stylization of native folk models with motifs from the South-Slavic patriotic and social poetry (e.g. Khristo Botev, Kosta Abrašević and Khristo Smirnenski).

The circumstances of a Macedonian writer are further complicated by the fact that Macedonia is a topic that is overexploited, often in a highly tendentious manner, by writers from other Balkan countries, especially Bulgaria.¹⁰ This phenomenon, which I

¹⁰ Macedonia is an occasional topic of Western-European literature as well (see, e.g., Eric Ambler's novel *A Coffin for Dimitrios*, 1937), but such works usually reduce the artistic representation of the country merely to an exotic setting for the plot.

would call *literary Macedonism*, is the artistic response of the conflicting national interests and the acute national problems that characterize the Balkan politics in the 20th century. For many Bulgarian writers Macedonia is not, and cannot be, perceived of as a foreign country because they are either born in it (Dimitur Molerov, Dimitur Talev, Nikola Vaptsarov, Venko Markovski, who "becomes Bulgarian" at a rather late stage of his life, etc.), or they merely belong to generations of Bulgarians who consider Macedonia an inalienable part of their fatherland.¹¹ Regardless of the authorial intention, however, the Bulgarian literary Macedonism can always be interpreted easily as tendentious in its treatment of the Macedonian national question.

In the final analysis, the availability of most adequate models namely in the literary tradition of the hostile neighbors intensifies the anxiety of influence of the Macedonian writer and frustrates to a great extent his efforts to cope up with it. The case of Dimitur Talev (1898-1966) offers interesting insights in this respect. He could have easily been considered the literary patriarch of his native Macedonia had he not chosen for himself a Bulgarian identity. Yet, because of his pro-"Bulgarian" stance on the Macedonian question, not only is he not considered a part of the Macedonian literature, but his works, which potentially could be tremendously influential for the Macedonian literary development, are ruled out as Macedonian literary models (see, e.g., Митрев 1970). One can therefore describe Macedonian literature as only selectively susceptible to foreign influences, its selection of models being dependent not on artistic, but mainly on political considerations. Such an idiosyncratic pattern of the Macedonian literary management that often goes against the interests of literature as an autonomous institution is predetermined by the highest priority that Macedonian culture gives to the preservation of national sovereignty, including the sovereignty of the national literature.

¹¹ The noble version of this position is best exemplified by Peyo Yavorov (1878-1914), who proved his engagement in the Macedonian destiny by his active participation in the struggle for the Macedonian liberation. Teodor Trayanov (1882-1945), on other hand, represented in his poetry the aggressively chauvinist stance on Macedonia taken by certain political circles in Bulgaria. It should be mentioned that his overtly jingoistic works are often included in "nation-building literary anthologies" (Jusdanis 1991) like *Македонија в нашата книжнина*, or *Българска бойна лира* (see Sujecka 1992).

Literature of the "Intimate" Community

I shall begin this part with a summary of the previous two. Created by, and addressed to, a local community (a "small" nation), the Macedonian literature is focused strictly on the community itself and is intensely engaged in its problems. The key protagonist of this literature is not the individual, as it is in the so-called "major," or "established" literatures, but the nation -- a characteristic shift of emphasis that I defined as *patriocentrism*. It does not imply, as I pointed out earlier, that the literary subject is necessarily "collective" (although it may be, especially in mytho-historical novels, like *Тврдоглави* by Slavko Janevski).¹² It entails, however, that the preferred optical perspective toward the individual is "collective;" the individual is evaluated above all by means of his/her pertinence to the community, in this case -- by means of their quality of being "Macedonian." A representative example of such an approach is the novel *Црносеме* (1966) by Taško Georgievski, in which national identity (understood, of course, as primordially available and not as "arbitrarily" constructed) is treated -- on a par with such values as life and freedom -- as the *fundamental* right of man and the essence of humanness, which, if lost or denied, reduces the individual to an infertile "black seed." Patriocentrism, or the obsession of the Macedonian literature with "macedonianness," results in the manipulative application of its texts toward annihilating the real or imagined threats of the "hostile world" against the Macedonian sovereignty, and as a decisive argument in support of the indisputable existence of Macedonia on the political and cultural map of the Balkans, and the world. The major function of the Macedonian literature, therefore, is to be a "diary of the nation" (to use Kafka's apt metaphor, 1948: 191), a heroic narrative about its destiny, and, consequently, a source for "active solidarity in spite of [the prevailing] skepticism" (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 17).

The implied aims of the Macedonian literature affect and largely determine its poetics. Almost all Macedonian literary texts tend to recreate, in one degree or another, the characteristics of the small, highly ideologized "native" space inhabited by the

¹² As Sonia Kanikova (Pynsent & Kanikova 1993: 447) justifiably notes, *Тврдоглави* (1969) is a collective biography of the Macedonians that eulogized them as a nation "of martyrs and widows."

"intimate" community of people sharing a common native *Weltanschauung*. This tendency amounts to the reiteration of motives like "falling back into the local" (or the ethnic-specific), the utopian "little fatherland" (cf. the Iron River in Radovan Pavlovski's poetry, Paskvelija in Živko Čingo's prose, or "My valley" in Božin Pavlovski's works), the recurrent metaphors of "roots" and "blood" (among the numerous examples I shall mention only Koneski's short story *Заклано крувче*, which is built entirely on the metaphorical equation of the Macedonian "immigrants" in Bulgaria with grafts without roots), etc.

Along with such idioms for articulating "nativeness," an essential characteristic of the Macedonian literature is its *folklorism*, or the over-exploitation of folklore understood as the most immediate artistic expression of the local community and its ethnic specificity. Macedonian literary folklorism varies from imitation and recycling [*преневање*] of folk text to the so-called oxymoronic "oral writing of narratives" in the works of, say, Stale Popov (1902-1965).¹³ It can be even suggested that most Macedonian writers from the first half of the century are "the last of the folk artists" rather than "the first Macedonian literati" and so their works are adequately described as a form of *folk realism*. Macedonian literary folklorism, however, should not be interpreted narrowly as an artistic device or a discursive strategy. It is most importantly an ideological gesture aimed at the *reinvention of folklore* as a "national treasure" and at its appropriation by "high" culture for the purposes of the national cause. In other words, folklore is used by Macedonian literature not only as a local model for verbal art, but above all as a designator of the national community and as one of its most powerful identifications (cf. Lord 1976).

The folklorism of the Macedonian literature is inseparable from another feature of its poetics, which I define as orientation toward village life, or *ruralism*. As in the other Balkan countries, folklore in Macedonia is associated almost exclusively with the village (or, as a last resort, with the provincial town). The peasant, on the other hand, is constructed by a number of public discourses as the legitimate proxy of the ethnic

¹³ See Drugovats 1976: 175. The particular forms of applying Macedonian folklore to Macedonian literature are analyzed by Mitrev 1966 and Urošević 1984. Cf. also Старделов (1990: 562-563), according to whom folklore is "*the* basic element of Macedonian art," its "immanent aesthetics," and the "corner-stone of [Macedonian] national autonomy."

community, and as the personified national signifier, a role which corresponds to his dominant position in the demographic structure of the country. That is why the favorite matrix for literary representation of the national community is the "little folk world" of the village from which the writers draw the bulk of their topics and plots, concepts and characters. The occasional appearance of city folks in Macedonian literature confirms this rule. They are usually with a well-preserved peasant mentality, as, for example, in the poetry of Mateja Matevski and Vlada Urošević, and their behavior is often revealingly close to that of their rural relatives. This treatment of urban characters mirrors the idiosyncrasies of Macedonian urbanism, or its lack thereof. According to the commonly accepted opinion, even the capital Skopje is a "city with rural population (*град со селска популација*; Андоновски 1995), which also tends to grow rapidly because of the characteristic *skopjecentrism* that prevails over the country migration processes. The literary authors themselves, like most of their readers, belong, by and large, to that first generation of city-dwellers for whom the village continues to be the model of human society. That means that they have the privilege and the limitation of depicting village life from within, or -- as anthropologists prefer to say -- "from a native point of view."

Last but not least, the patriocentrism of Macedonian literature is articulated, somewhat unexpectedly, by the recurrent motif of the exile, or the dispersion of the native community into the global space. This motif, which exists in a cluster of interrelated and sometimes interchangeable plots, features two major protagonists: the *Gastarbeiter* and the emigrant. The Macedonian *Gastarbeiterliteratur* (*Трајан*, 1932 by Angjelko Krstić; *Парите се отенувачка*, 1937 by Risto Krle; *Печалбари*, 1949 by Anton Panov, etc.) is built upon the symbolic juxtaposition between the *roots* (or the static female destiny) and the *wheels* (or the male centrifugal drive).¹⁴ The semantic center of all these works is the concept of the impossible return: the *Gastarbeiter* dies abroad or on the way back home, or goes back only to find his "little fatherland" changed and even alienated from him (the reverse idea of traveling as transformation of the traveler, so well-explored in other literatures, is practically non-existent in the

¹⁴ On the South Slavic *pečalbarstvo* phenomenon see Palairret 1987; cf. Каровски 1974 for a discussion of the so-called *печалбарска литература*.

Macedonian *Gastarbeiterliteratur*). The fate of the emigrant is largely interpreted under the same blanket idea of a desired, albeit impossible, coming-home. The Macedonian abroad is a reluctant emigrant who prefers to think of himself only as a *Gastarbeiter*, his return being constantly "postponed" for the unforeseeable future because of circumstances beyond his control.

Presumably, it is the emigrant topic in literature that should promote most overtly sentiments, dreams and experience opposite to the abiding allegiance to the native community and its values. The challenge of alternatives and "otherness," however, is not attractive for the Macedonian literature. Macedonian writers prefer to adhere to their "native view point," to impose it as the ultimate value even *vis-à-vis* the challenge of their own impulses to transcend the limitations of nativeness. So they treat the Macedonian communities abroad as remnants or fragments of the same "intimate" native community that dominates the artistic world of the Macedonian literature, and they treat each emigrant as carrying in himself, against all the odds, his own Macedonia -- keeping it intact, nurturing it, finding refuge and comfort in it, holding on to it as his most valuable possession. That is why most "emigrant" texts¹⁵ focus on the intimate world of kinship ties that determine for them national affiliation, and on the emigrants' effort to sustain it against the background of an alien and alienated, "big," multiethnic and supra-national community ("America" in the plays of Kole Čašule and Goran Stefanovski, or "Australia" in Božin Pavlovski's prose and Živko Čingo's plays; cf. Stefanija 1983).

Is Macedonian Literature "Minor"?

Let me, in conclusion, try to test the artistic credos of Kole Čašule and Blaže Koneski (1993) against broader conceptual models available in contemporary scholarship. It is evident (once we shift the focus away from the culture-specific characteristics of the Macedonian literature) that the two Macedonian writers make an attempt to articulate a phenomenon with a broader validity whose analogies can easily be

¹⁵ A notable exception is the autobiographical prose of Stoyan Christowe (1898-1995) who discovered in the United States his "real fatherland;" see his *The Eagle and the Stork: An American Memoir* (1976).

found in other literatures. Usually this phenomenon is designated by the Macedonians themselves with the two synonymous terms of "young" and "minor" literature, that employ respectively a temporal and a spatial metaphor. Both of these terms have their correlatives in "developed" and "major" literature, and are certainly not free from geopolitical implications, like a literature of a "small" or a "stateless" nation, etc. In this perspective "minor" is the literature of those peoples who, in one degree or another, have been politically dependent, economically poor, demographically sparse, or territorially limited. A number of Macedonian scholars are prone to view their literature in a similar manner,¹⁶ although usually they unjustifiably treat "minor literature" as a disqualifying (and not as a descriptive) term.

It is exactly this preconception that my exposition tried to avoid, since, in my understanding, *being minor* is not the negative counterpart of *being major*. It is not a disadvantageous status imposed on the literary production of a certain community because of some inherent defects or deficiencies; it does not, therefore, have the negative implications of "secondary," "non-influential," "peripheral," and the like. It is, rather, a mode of creative behavior alternative to that of the so-called "major literatures," which, under certain socio-cultural conditions, is highly advantageous for the purposes of the community that creates it and uses it. In this respect *being minor* is not as much a characteristic of the literature produced, as it is a definition of a literary stance *chosen* as optimal by a particular community to express itself artistically and to consolidate, in so doing, its autonomous cultural status.

Such an interpretation of *minor literature* largely follows that of Deleuze & Guattari (and their numerous followers), who borrowed the term itself from one of Kafka's diary entries from 1911 where he describes the benefits of *kleine Litteraturen*.¹⁷

¹⁶ See, e.g., Поленакoвiк 1971, Спасов 1971 & 1978, Старова 1982; cf. Мицковiк (1983: 43) who introduces the parameters of *мали сирoмашини* (small poor) and *мали богати* (small wealthy) nations in order to justify his idea that "literature is closely related to the forces that support it economically."

¹⁷ See Kafka 1948: 191-195, Deleuze & Guattari 1986 [1975], and Bensmaia 1994; cf. Lloyd 1987 and the essays collected by Abdul JanMohamed & David Lloyd in *Cultural Critique* 6 (1987) and by Gregory Jusdanis in *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 8 (1990). See also Corngold 1994 who critiques Deleuze & Guattari's application of the concept of "small literature" to the works of Kafka.

According to these authors, the key distinctive features of minor literature can be summed up as follows: 1) writing in a language (or a dialect) of lesser diffusion and with a fluctuating prestige;¹⁸ 2) the connection of the individual to a political immediacy; and 3) the collective assemblage of enunciation (Deleuze & Guattari 1986: 16-18). As I tried to demonstrate above, each of these features is observable in the literary production of Macedonia and can be used to characterize and typify it, despite the considerable idiosyncrasies of this literature that make it resist prefabricated socio-literary models and one-dimensional classifications. The relation between unique and universal in it, however, is a subject of an independent study. For the purposes of this general review it suffices to say that the Macedonian case confirms the basic premise of the *kleine Litteraturen*-theory: that minor literatures promote the idea of the small nation as a self-centered "intimate" community, which constructs itself in a "hostile" environment by means of its literary texts. At the same time the Macedonian literature offers a particular variant of this general model by forwarding the dominant of *patriocentrism* as an artistic stance alternative to the *anthropocentrism* of the "major" literatures.

¹⁸ This feature is related, according to Deleuze & Guattari 1986, to the *deterritorialization* and the *reterritorialization* of the language, i.e. to the re-creation of a given linguistic community by means of the re-orientation of the socio-political space it occupies at a given historical moment (in the case of Macedonia this process corresponds to the change in the status of the Macedonian language after WW2). Cf. also Lencek 1977 who defines minor literature as the literature of "smaller linguistic communities."

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