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Author(s): JOHN K. COX

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# Pannonia Imperilled: Why Danilo Kiš Still Matters

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JOHN K. COX

*North Dakota State University in Fargo*

## Abstract

This essay explores the significance of the works of the Serbian–Jewish–Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš (1935–89) more than twenty years after his untimely passing. To understand Kiš's place in Serbian culture today, it is necessary to revisit the controversies that bedevilled his public reception in Yugoslavia in the 1970s and 1980s; to understand Kiš's place in Central European history today, though, it is necessary to broaden our familiarity with his increasingly accessible corpus of writing and recontextualize his proverbially anti-nationalistic and apolitical positions. With an expanded reading of Kiš, he emerges as a useful source of information and critique on Yugoslavia's 'self-managing' socialist system itself as well as a proponent of expanded notions of both East European and Central European identity and of an emotionally authentic if controversial thesis of totalitarian equivalence between fascism and communism.

The highly regarded Serbian-Jewish-Yugoslav writer Danilo Kiš (1935–89) has earned an enduring place in literary history for his evocation of the Holocaust through a series of autobiographical fictions.<sup>1</sup> He is also celebrated by dint of his controversial advocacy of postmodern practices at a time when many of the elites in his communist Yugoslav homeland understood and trusted only realism. He reached a wider audience by his sympathetic exploration of the sufferings of outsiders who, are victimized because of their ethnicity, religion, sex, state of mental health, or political views, especially (but not solely) under Stalinism and fascism. As we move into the third decade after his death it would seem an opportune time to re-evaluate Kiš's role as an intellectual and, to a lesser degree, as an artist. The passage of time makes it possible to lift Kiš out of the shadows of both the Cold War and the Wars of Yugoslav Succession. While no historian would propose examining Kiš apart from his context, we are now in a position to piece together a richer and more nuanced picture of the man as writer.

<sup>1</sup> Kiš's autobiographical trilogy or 'family circus' consists the novels *Garden, Ashes* and *Hourglass* and the stories of *Early Sorrows (for Children and Sensitive Readers)*. These works appeared as *Bašta, pepeo* (1965), *Rani jadi: za decu i osvetljive* (1970) and *Pešćanik* (1972). All are available in English translations.

The first step in that direction is predicated upon abandonment of our embarrassment or perplexity at Kiš's equation of fascism and Stalinism. This boldly dissident-like assertion was rooted in ethical, emotional and artistic truth, in the lived experience of individuals, and not in comparative analysis of political programmes or in a methodical historical dissection of origins, convergences and mutual repulsions. Likewise, we can now relegate to the background the characterization of Kiš from the 1990s as a 'good Serb'. Kiš was deemed worthy of our sympathy because he was anti-nationalistic and cosmopolitan, and he seemed capable of being easily understood because he was essentially apolitical. Both of these statements about Kiš are true to a significant degree, but they do not tell the full story of his loyalties and commitments. The second step towards a re-evaluation of Kiš is to look at a fuller range of his works beyond the three or four well-known works of fiction and the now canonical interviews from the 1970s and 1980s, which supply his eloquent if repetitive thoughts on questions very much coloured by the concerns of the day. It is the purpose of this article to build a case for Kiš's continuing relevance in the post-Cold War world by using a genuinely broad cross-section of his writings. Thus this essay uses lesser-known sources to recontextualize Kiš's apolitical and anti-nationalist attitudes, to supplement the list of thematic concerns of his art through the addition of topical issues such as the legacy of Serbian literature and Yugoslav society under communism, and to attach a new interpretation to Kiš's equation of fascism and Stalinism.

That Kiš is not well known in the anglophone world is an understandable, if not edifying, fact of life. Even much more prolific European writers such as Ismail Kadare, Ivan Klima, Miroslav Krleža and György Konrád have a hard time getting the recognition and readership they deserve in the anglophone world. Milan Kundera is perhaps an exception to this trend. In the 1990s Kiš enjoyed a surge of scholarly and journalistic popularity in the English-speaking world, both because of his untimely death in 1989 and because of his harsh criticism of exclusivist or ethnic nationalist thinking. But a discussion of the contemporary relevance of his work must begin with some additional consideration of the trajectory of his career.

Kiš was already an accomplished writer and the recipient of several important literary prizes when he published *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich* in 1976. The book triggered a tremendous set of controversies in Yugoslavia; although it was not subjected to censorship for political reasons, one can see why the League of Communists would not have approved of its message. Hard-hitting challenges to Stalinism, as in the works of Montenegrin dissident Milovan Djilas, often caused the regime discomfort. It is also possible that chronicles of victimization that focused on one ethnic group (here, Jews) could have stoked communists' concerns about improper ethnic particularism.

The book was attacked above all by Dragan Jeremić, a powerful editor of such journals as *Savremenik* and *Književne novine*. The 'unprec-

edented' Jeremić-led 'smear campaign', to use Kiš's phrases, lasted in its first phase from September 1976 to March 1977. It led Kiš to write a large literary apologia, *Čas anatomije* (The Anatomy Lesson), containing responses to the charges and accusations appearing in the press and elaborating upon his methods of creative writing. For Kiš the central issue was a 'well-known phenomenon in modern literary technique', widespread since the time of Flaubert: the 'use of paraliterary and documentary material for literary purposes'.<sup>2</sup> The tone of the work is mostly scholarly but it does contain some *ad hominem* remarks as well as a sense of frustration and indignation. Humour is also certainly not absent.<sup>3</sup>

*The Anatomy Lesson* rolls through justification of his choice of cover illustration and title (a painting by Rembrandt of a public dissection, conducted in the spirit of openness to discovery but building on a synthesis of the already known), elements of Kiš's autobiography enriched by observations from Stanislav Vinaver and Isidora Sekulić, philosophical wranglings over the definitions and applications of literary terms and devices, and blow-by-blow delineations and refutations of the arguments put forward in the press by what Kiš calls Serbia's literary "mafia," which includes critics ranging from Jeremić and Nedeljković to famous writers such as Miodrag Bulatović. There are short, loosely connected essays on topics that figure in his adversaries' criticism, such as 'Judaism' and 'Borges', and there are analyses of the sources for individual stories, or chapters, in *Boris Davidovič*. Kiš introduces a chrestomathy of *textes à l'appui* by other writers to help him make his case. The most interesting of these help him discuss at length Ivo Andrić's literary use of documents and facts and Thomas Mann's techniques of 'montage'. Finally, Kiš takes Branimir Šćepanović, another of his writer-adversaries, thoroughly to task for his own works. There are some references throughout to Yugoslav intellectuals who supported Kiš, such as Nikola Milošević, Predrag Matvejević and Borislav Mihajlović Mihiz.

Another important milestone in these great Yugoslav literary controversies was the appearance of *Treba li spaliti Kiša?* (Should Kiš Be Burned at the Stake?) in 1980. Compiled by Boro Krivokapić, a Serbian journalist, the book remains an invaluable primer on nearly all aspects of these polemial and legal exchanges. The first section of the book documents the back-and-forth about *Boris Davidovič*, the second section deals with *The Anatomy Lesson*, and the third documents the lawsuits brought by the critic Dragoslav Golubović against Kiš and his supporter Predrag Matvejević. Included are articles, chapters of books, letters to the editor, reviews and court documents; nearly all were originally written in Serbo-Croatian, including a number from Kiš himself, with a few translations from the Slovene. The media drawn on for the collection include *Oko*,

<sup>2</sup> *Anatomiestunde*, trans. Katharina Wolf-Grießhaber (Munich, 1998), p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Kiš creates a scientific formula for showing why Borges is greater than the sum of his parts: Borges's work can be expressed as:  $S_{30}P_{20}W_{20}C_{20}J_{10}$ , where S is Schopenhauer, P is Poe, W is Whitman, C is Chesterton and J is Henry James (*Anatomiestunde*, p. 213).

*Književna reč, Književne novine, NIN, Borba, Komunist, Student and Slobodna Dalmacija*. Weighing in against Kiš are not only Golubović and Jeremić but also Božidar Milidragović and Branimir Šćepanović; texts in support of Kiš or in praise of some aspect of his writing come from, *inter alios*, Mirko Kovač, Tvrtko Kulenović, Matvejević and Taras Kermauner.

Many of the arguments mirror those discussed below, at least in essence. But at a few junctures there are interesting additions to the record that help capture the texture of the times. Igor Mandić, for instance, embraced the documentary foundation of Kiš's work, saying that it forced Serbo-Croatian literature to deal, for the first time, at long last with Stalinism, the critique of which had heretofore been in the preserve of nonfiction writers only.<sup>4</sup> What's more, Kiš's texts are masterfully ironic and carefully created, leaving interpretation open and aesthetic enjoyment quite possible. The Slovene sociologist Dimitrij Rupel wrote that Kiš was a multi-faceted writer whose work encompassed many important issues beyond the literary. His creativity and the role he played in the ensuing controversy demonstrates Kiš's progressive nature and the evolution of the spirit of autonomy and self-management in Yugoslavia!<sup>5</sup>

Kiš's main opponent in the polemical storms of the late 1970s, Dragan Jeremić, did not rest after the appearance of *The Anatomy Lesson*. In 1980 he published *Narcis bez lica* (Shameless Narcissus), a hefty volume of literary criticism and theory that was meant above all as a refutation of Kiš's most recently aired arguments. Jeremić's new volume also contained, though, a recapitulation of the ebb and flow of the earlier exchanges and thumbnail sketches of the stances of Kiš's adversaries (Dragoljub Golubović, Božidar Milidragović, Zoran Avramović, Miodrag Bulatović, Branimir Šćepanović) and advocates (Oskar Davičo, Mirko Kovač, Predrag Matvejević, Predrag Palavestra and Nikola Milošević). Jeremić claims to have risen above any need for invective and personal criticisms of Kiš. This is only partly true, as we see when he writes: 'It does not bother me that Kiš does not write about our reality and that he is not the product of our literary tradition, but I am sorry that he isn't an original creator but rather an imitator.'<sup>6</sup> But even though he renders many bare-knuckled judgements on both specific and general features of Kiš's art, including many that are highly debatable, and he does stray from purely literary arguments, his approach does seem much more focused and less xenophobic than that of some other critics, including a more recent one (Vasović) discussed below. His essential argument is that Kiš's mode of writing is based simply on imitation, copying, retelling, borrowing and outright appropriation, as he claims his detailed

<sup>4</sup> Igor Mandić, 'Potresne (neizmišljene) priče', in Boro Krivokapić, *Treba li spaliti Kiša?* (Zagreb, 1980), pp. 25–5, at p. 26.

<sup>5</sup> Dimitrij Rupel, 'Kišova anti-knjiga', *ibid.*, pp. 318–20, at p. 320.

<sup>6</sup> Danilo Kiš, *Narcis bez lica* (Belgrade, 1981), p. 367.

studies of the provenance of the stories comprising *A Tomb for Boris Davidović* demonstrate.

Jeremić's thin skin and injured national pride can be felt in statements about Kiš's 'colonial' attitudes towards the literature of the 'metropole'.<sup>7</sup> Ultimately, Jeremić characterizes Kiš as capable only of 'hair-splitting, wrong-headed, and short-sighted observations, and misconstruals of almost every word' of others.<sup>8</sup> Finally there is the extensive mockery in this passage:

In my opinion, Kiš's way of writing is most reminiscent of gastronomy, which, of course, is not an art, but it is a skill. For that reason, although the same recipes are available to everyone, not everyone can be a champion chef. Kiš uses foreign recipes (approaches), and from other people he takes the material for the preparation of his products, using in the process a bit of his own experience, but food prepared in this way, even if it is 'spiritual sustenance', can only be a short-lived consumer merchandise, whether made for left-wing European intellectuals or for those readers in our country who do not read French literature (if any kind) . . . and for whom Kiš's texts might seem new.<sup>9</sup>

Ultimately, the Kiš controversies involve much more than creative technique and literary theory. They show the world a fissured civil society, with various newspapers and journals and prize juries pitted against each other. There are inter-republican tensions at least intimated in the polemics, and, perhaps most concretely, we are witness to the continuing debates in the maverick socialist country over destalinization, its opponents, and the many uses to which anti-Stalinism and, if you will, anti-anti-Stalinism, can be put.

Meanwhile, polemics against Kiš's writing continue to appear in post-communist Serbia. In 2005 literary critic Nebojša Vasović, for instance, published a *cri de coeur* against all things Kiš-related; in it he summarizes and repeats many of Jeremić's arguments but also adds his own particular nationalist touch to a grand inquiry into Kiš's foreign ties, his manipulation of the Serbian reading public and his supposed creative inadequacies. Allegations of plagiarism are bad enough, but it is the question of Kiš's Jewish identity, such as it was, that Vasović subjects to the most hard-hitting and troubling scrutiny. Why should Kiš be allowed to play up an identity that is situational and utilitarian and particularist? Kiš, of course, grew used in his own lifetime to answering such charges. He noted, for instance, 'I am a Jew insofar as others see me as one.'<sup>10</sup> And in a stance he held consistently over the years, he said, 'I refuse to be categorized as a Jewish writer. I am opposed to every variety of minority

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 361.

<sup>10</sup> 'I Don't Believe in a Writer's Fantasy' in *Homo Poeticus: Essays and Interviews*, ed. Susan Sontag (New York, 1995) [hereafter *Homo Poeticus*], pp. 269–80, at p. 274.

literature.<sup>11</sup> Ultimately, when pressed to justify why he told so often of the fate of Jewish victims, Kiš asserted that in his search for the truest measure he could find he had made a conscious choice: 'I approach being Jewish (in my writing) as a metaphor.'<sup>12</sup>

Kiš was personally angered and disappointed by the rise of Slobodan Milošević and by the poisoning of Yugoslav politics in the 1980s. His older, theoretical stands against nationalism – usually provoked by insinuations from his critics that he was not nationalist enough – were in this case supplemented by a specific rejection of exclusionary and potentially violent ethnic or integralist or 'Great Serbian' nationalism. Nonetheless, to understand Kiš's thinking more fully, some distance from journalistic tropes is necessary

During the wars of Yugoslav secession, many in the west assumed that Serbian and other South Slavic nationalisms were monolithic, interchangeable and uniformly 'bad', as in violent, undemocratic, primitive, irrational, intractable and unpredictable; furthermore, it was widely assumed that national identity or self-identification and a political programme of expansionist or exclusionary nationalism were equivalent. If all nationalism is, illogically but conveniently, assumed to be 'bad' nationalism, then naturally Kiš's admirers in the West have wanted to sever any link between his name and this sociopolitical concept. The issue, though, is that nationalism is notoriously hard to define and analyse across case studies and means many things in many different contexts. Linguistic identity, for instance, is an extremely important constituent element of nationality or national consciousness, as well as a frequent target of policy manipulation by 'nationalist' politicians intent upon feeding their own legitimacy or steering domestic politics. And nationality itself, or the nationalism of the individual, need not be based on ethnicity or religion or reliant upon violence or arguably even upon exclusion, and it need not ramify into a political programme; it can be one of a person's coexisting, interrelated 'nested' identities. It is in this last sense that Kiš can be seen to have retained throughout his adult life important parts of his identity both as a Serb, or Montenegrin Serb, and as a Yugoslav. This is important to mention, not because it weakens his genuine attachment to cosmopolitan culture, but because it explains his personality more fully and strengthens the case for Kiš's inclusion within the (modernizing) traditions of South Slavic cultures and not, as his critics have maintained, on the lists of the alien and epigonic who simply troll the Balkans for colourful subject matter.

Kiš's South Slavic identity is, of course, not primarily biological, but neither is it harmed by his assertion that he was an evanescent 'ethnographic rarity'.<sup>13</sup> Kiš's national identity can be remarked in his attachment to the Serbian (or Serbo-Croatian) language; in his praise for

<sup>11</sup> 'The Conscience of an Unknown Europe', *ibid.*, pp. 212–30, at p. 216.

<sup>12</sup> 'Seeking a Place under the Sun for Doubt', *ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>13</sup> 'Birth Certificate (A Short Autobiography)', *ibid.*, pp. 3–5, at p. 3.

Serbian and Croatian writers, prominent among them Crnjanski and Andrić; in his torrential work as a translator of modern and Modernist poetry from France, Russia, Hungary and elsewhere, including Vietnam, into Serbian (or ekavian Serbo-Croatian written in *latinica*); and in his request to be buried in Belgrade with Orthodox rites.<sup>14</sup> Readers of his essays, both of the large Serbian set of them but also of the much smaller English-language set, can find any number of quotations and arguments to fill in this picture of poignant attachment to a particular culture. The sayings and images, of course, are not without their thorny or trenchant or even ironic aspects, as when Kiš writes that ‘language is destiny’.<sup>15</sup> The patent surface meaning is indeed intended: that Kiš knows he will never be considered ‘French’ and will not end up writing in French. But as he goes on to say in that essay, and elaborates elsewhere,<sup>16</sup> part of this destiny for Central Europeans is that one’s intellectual and affective world strikes outsiders, regardless of the choice of theme, as inscrutable or arcane. Likewise, one’s ‘family libraries’ and ‘literary ancestors’, that is to say, one’s ‘roots’, cannot be translated or made relevant to readers and critics from the major languages.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, one must also be careful to distinguish between the reasons why Kiš encountered suspicion from Serbian nationalists, on the one hand, and Serbian and other communists on the other. Admittedly, the history of late Yugoslavia has shown us that these groups overlapped to a significant though far from universal degree. Kiš’s rejection of censorship, political violence, and gnostic political ideologies, along with his insistent evocation of an asynchronous, epistemologically challenged, death- and history-soaked world by means of a non-linear form of narration, kept many communist critics at arm’s length. On the other hand, his rejection of ethnic criteria as determinants of nationalism; his condemnation of subculture or niche designations based on ascribed, essentialist identities for writers and readers; his propensity for innovative, even revolutionary forms that undermine all stable narratives, such as nationalism certainly aspires to be; and his emphatic metaphorical use of the image of Jew as outsider made nationalist critics wary.

One of Kiš’s most widely circulated essays in English is entitled ‘*Homo Poeticus*, Regardless’. It was first published on 19 February 1980, in *NIN*. The short but dense and sarcastic essay unpacks the reasons for eastern Europe’s contested artistic image in the west. An East European is only understood or appreciated in our Cold War or Orientalist fashion (as this historian would term it), as a *homo politicus*. As in other essays we can see

<sup>14</sup> Discussion of most of these points can be found in John K. Cox, ‘Bridge to Nowhere: Danilo Kiš’s “Muddy Tale” and Europe’s Shifting Frontiers’, *Hungarian Studies*, xxiv (2010), 265–72.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Varijacije na srednjoevropske teme (fragmenat)’ [hereafter ‘Varijacije na srednjoevropske teme (fragmenat)’], in Danilo Kiš, *Skladište*, ed. Mirjana Miočinović (Belgrade, 1995) [hereafter *Skladište*], pp. 305–7, at p. 306.

<sup>16</sup> See also *ibid.*, p. 307, and ‘Protiv duha evrocentrizma’, in Danilo Kiš, *Varia*, ed. Mirjana Miočinović (Belgrade, 1995) [hereafter *Varia*], pp. 517–19.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Varijacije na srednjoevropske teme (fragmenat)’, p. 306.



that the first conditioning factors are the ignorance, superficial attitude and laziness of powerful outsiders towards the basic reality of the 'lands between'. Equating politics with war and scandal, and culture with *šljivovica*, and orthography with consonantal train wrecks ('Yugoslavs' and 'krkrs', as the natives are known) – this cannot engender any real appreciation for the language-in-motion of the *homo poeticus* attempting to 'describe the beauty of our sunsets and our childhoods'.<sup>18</sup> A second cause of misapprehension by the west lies in the changing mission of literature in today's world: *engagement* is a fact of artistic life in the age of ideological dictatorships, and it 'shows to what extent politics has penetrated the very pores of our beings, flooded life like a swamp, made man uni-dimensional and poor in spirit, [and shows] to what extent poetry has been defeated'.<sup>19</sup> This is unfortunately true, says Kiš, even though poetry, that is to say literature, is also increasingly useful in the condemnation of social injustice and the kinds of political oppression 'aimed at reducing human beings to a single dimension, the dimension of a *zoon politikon*'.<sup>20</sup> Finally, Kiš admonishes his fellow East Europeans for drawing undue attention to politics by airing their family feuds and dirty laundry in the west.

Although Kiš was thus, like Milan Kundera, a robust defender of the right of 'minor' literatures to be evaluated organically rather than geopolitically, this does not mean that he himself was apolitical or that his works are devoid of political content. In one of his final interviews, Kiš made the straightforward statement, 'I've been talking about politics for my whole life.'<sup>21</sup> He recounted all the hours over all the years spent in cafes and with friends criticizing the political system and hammering out ideas on how to save the world. And Kiš's personal history, especially in his youth, which is revealed not just in his novels and essays but also in his stories and poems, is shot through with political slogans and conflicts.

At an ethical or moral level, Kiš made many aphoristic utterances and, occasionally, judgements that have a direct bearing on politics. Consider, for instance, these:

The ethical position of the persecuted is more acceptable than that of the persecutor.<sup>22</sup>

Cultivate suspicion of reigning ideology and princes.<sup>23</sup>

Do not side with the opposition: you are below, not against them. Do not side with power and princes: you are above them.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> 'Homo Poeticus, Regardless', in *Homo Poeticus*, pp. 75–9, at p. 76.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> 'Politizirao sam celog svog života', in *Gorki talog iskustva*, ed. Mirjana Miočinović, 2nd edn. (Belgrade, 1991) [hereafter *Gorki talog iskustva*], pp. 251–3, at p. 251.

<sup>22</sup> 'The Conscience of an Unknown Europe' [hereafter 'The Conscience of an Unknown Europe'], in *Homo Poeticus*, pp. 212–30, at p. 214.

<sup>23</sup> 'Advice to a Young Writer', in *Homo Poeticus*, pp. 121–7 [hereafter Sontag, 'Advice to a Young Writer'], at p. 121.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

Some of Kiš's socio-political scepticism works just as well for nationalism as for politics. When he writes that nationalism is highly relativistic or subjective,<sup>25</sup> it is not just individuals or universal human values that suffer. By assuming the mantle of objectivity, something as inherently subjective as politics, religion, or nationalism is actually denying individuals their own ability to act with agency, that is, as the subjects of their own lives. This state of affairs cannot possibly sit well with someone tilting at the windmills of narration and fishing in the muddied waters of lost and imagined sources like Kiš. Love and death matter to real people, and to real artists – and not ideology.<sup>26</sup>

The most overtly political work of Kiš's translated corpus is *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, which, as we know from various sources, Kiš intended to be a wake-up call to French intellectuals in denial about the true nature of Stalinism. This is, then, a product of a quest for truth but it is certainly political in its conception. Kiš somewhat paradoxically denied that the book had a political message, but it is hard to deny that it had a political intent in terms of influencing public discussion on issues of recent history; what it did not do, arguably, was promote any actual party's interests. It was also not intended to place political values over artistic ones. Kiš called the book 'poetry about a political subject, not politics'.<sup>27</sup>

There are, however, two works by Kiš that also come across as overtly political, however that term is construed. The first is the short story entitled 'The Poet'.<sup>28</sup> This tale, set in Belgrade, is an account of a man of letters driven over the edge by physical and emotional brutalization at the hands of the communist secret police in the immediate post-war period. The second work is the long satirical poem 'The Poet of the Revolution on Board the Presidential Ship'.<sup>29</sup> This poem, dating from 1986 and well known in the former Yugoslavia, ridicules the clique around Yugoslav communist leader Josip Broz Tito (1892–1980), who was fond of sea voyages on his 'floating residence', the naval ship *Galeb* ('Seagull'). Some observers maintain that the poem is a broadside aimed at the Serbian writer Dobrica Ćosić, who had been close to Tito and travelled with him in the 1960s prior to becoming a Serbian nationalist who enjoyed a reputation as dissident.

The narrator of the poem is a party official who is briefing a group of writers-cum-journalists on how to behave during their cruise with Tito.

Pertaining to conversation:  
it should be (for the most part) light.

<sup>25</sup> 'The Gingerbread Heart, or Nationalism', in *Homo Poeticus*, pp. 15–34, at pp. 24–5.

<sup>26</sup> 'I Don't Believe in a Writer's Fantasy', *ibid.*, at p. 273.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Translation by John K. Cox forthcoming in Danilo Kiš, *The Lute and the Scars: Stories* (Champaign, IL, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> See 'Pesnik revolucije na predsedničkom brodu', in Danilo Kiš, *Pesme: Elektra*, ed. Mirjana Miočinović (Belgrade, 1995), pp. 81–96. Unpublished translation by John K. Cox.

With the maximum possible number of anecdotes from the NOB<sup>30</sup>  
 (and here and there a couple in peasant *moba* style)  
 and some from Drvar and Vis while we're at it.

Do not dip into the turbid water of nationalism.  
 Safeguard that ol' unity-'n-brotherhood  
 it's our greatest treasure.

By no means even mention  
 Djilas, Dedijer, Hebrang.  
 Don't forget your place.

With Stalin: proceed with caution.  
 Refer to Trotsky with a scornful smile.  
 And don't spout off about the living.  
 (In politics everything changes from day to day.)

The poem continues with a lampoon of all kinds of sage advice for the socially and politically inept writers. Remember your Marxist classics, sing your Partisan songs from the Second World War at every opportunity, and always defer to Old Man Tito, because he's right, he's strong – and he's very very busy! Kiš was not apolitical. He did write about politics. What Kiš uncompromisingly rejected was the imposition of political criteria on the evaluation of art; this stance was non-negotiable with him, as was his rejection of what we might call 'identity niches' for literature dedicated to 'subcultures'. In his own life, furthermore, he eschewed political extremism with its follies and abjuration of pluralism as well as the profligate, endless cycle of political posturing.<sup>31</sup> Kiš had no desire to engage *in* politics, but he was deeply, fundamentally moved to engage *with* politics. This same dichotomy exists for him with regard to history: history is what has happened in lives, not necessarily the written, interrogated and interpreted accounts thereof. The comment he once made about the reflection of the Dreyfus affair in the writings of Proust applies to his own art: 'All that is history; it's not politics at all!'<sup>32</sup>

The customary ways of thinking about Danilo Kiš, at least in western Europe and North America, are as self-sentenced exile, as a memoirist of childhood, as creator of postmodern cautionary tales about politics in other countries in other times and as staunch polemicist about the values of art. They do not seem to leave a lot of space in which Kiš can chronicle social or political events and trends in his home country. But a number of his essays, typically ones that have not yet seen publication in English translation, as well as some lesser-known but major examples of his literary works, do indeed confront us with useful aspects of the Yugoslavia that we thought we knew or at least that we had no firm indication

<sup>30</sup> NOB: *Narodnooslobodilačka borba*, or national liberation struggle, the Communist designation for the Partisans' resistance to the Axis and their allies during the Second World War.

<sup>31</sup> 'Politizirao sam celog svog života', in *Gorki talog iskustva*, ed. Mirjana Miočinić, 2nd edn. (Belgrade, 1991), pp. 251–3, at p. 252.

<sup>32</sup> 'The Conscience of an Unknown Europe', p. 215.

that Kiš cared about. Some of his interviews, which again are often rich in telling details and trenchant observations, serve this same function.

Let us begin by looking briefly at Kiš's essays. He was a talented writer in this genre. At times critical voices have noted that he spent too much time writing polemics and being interviewed instead of producing novels. Such is not my assertion, for the historian, like the serious biographer, limits himself or herself to the establishment of as full a picture as possible and, above all, causes and contexts. One cannot help but note the personal nature of most of Kiš's essays, with those from the first half of his career tending to focus on his literary influences, and his love of international modernism in its many aspects and the later essays concentrating on the sprawling 'literary affair' discussed above. Many of the essays in these two categories, as well as a number of his interviews, are frankly repetitive or of interest primarily to literary theorists or literary historians. But an intellectual or political historian might well assert, as I do, that for students of Yugoslav society, Kiš's most interesting essays are a handful that cropped up irregularly over the years and includes those discussed briefly below.

A rough bifurcation of the relevant Yugoslavia-specific essays presents itself and rests upon the two classifications of 'the arts' and 'politics'. We are presented in the first grouping with reviews of recent Yugoslav writers such as Dragan Kulundžić, Živko Jeličić, Blažo Šćepanović, Skender Kulenović, Slavko Batušić, Dragoslav Mihailović, and Erih Koš, as well as with longer reflections on Ivo Andrić.<sup>33</sup> He wrote reflections on painters such as Radimir Reljić, Leonid Šejka, Ivan Picelj,<sup>34</sup> Milo Glavurčić<sup>35</sup> and Vladimir Veličković, and on the films of Emir Kusturica. *Balkan bohemia* is treated in sketches about Tin Ujević, Antun Gustav Matoš and Đura Jakšić.<sup>36</sup> In sometimes humorous, sometimes acerbic sociological texts, Kiš spans the world of art and politics by establishing detailed comparisons of the relative worth of works of art and sausages,<sup>37</sup> of writers who betray other writers to the police,<sup>38</sup> and of the relative merits of works of literature designed to capture the true essence of war by generals, on one hand, and by poets and novelists on the other.

The political territory Kiš was capable of covering can be even more surprising. In one of several essays on Hungarian poetry, Kiš makes comparisons between Hungary's and Yugoslavia's experiences under socialism. In an essay on Poland he discusses the mechanisms of East European censorship. The Balkan political personality is a main subject of one of his interviews from 1980.<sup>39</sup> In a letter to an editor, Kiš discusses

<sup>33</sup> See 'O Andrićevoj *Gospodići*', in *Najlepši eseji Danila Kiša*, selected by Ivana Miliivojević (Belgrade, 2003), pp. 244–6; and 'Andrić doživljava istoriju . . .', in *Najlepši eseji Danila Kiša*, p. 247.

<sup>34</sup> 'Kocka Ivana Picelja, ili otvoreno delo', in Danilo Kiš, *Homo Poeticus* (Zagreb and Belgrade, 1983), pp. 133–4.

<sup>35</sup> 'Slikar Milo Glavurčić', *ibid.*, pp. 135–8.

<sup>36</sup> *Posmrtno slovo boemiji* in *Varia*, ed. Mirjana Miočinović (Belgrade, 1995), pp. 82–6.

<sup>37</sup> 'Šekspir i kobasice', in *Varia*, pp. 77–81.

<sup>38</sup> 'Pisci-cinkaroši,' in *Skladište*, pp. 195–7.

<sup>39</sup> 'O zlu i iskustvu', in *Gorki talog iskustva*, pp. 89–93.

the then-volatile subject of the study of the Third Reich and display of photographs of Hitler. The short stories and poems mentioned in the previous section of this article could also be listed again in this section.

Kiš also wrote a substantial one-act play called *The Parrot*.<sup>40</sup> It is set in Belgrade in a time that appears to be 1968, when there was considerable unrest among students and independent leftists concerned about alienation, materialism and the atrophy of communist ideals in Yugoslav society. A young man breaks into the apartment of a wealthy, pretentious couple aptly named the Smerdels (roughly ‘the Stinkers’). His demeanour is alternately threatening and absurd, and the fictitious parrot on his shoulder is no less prominent than his own feelings of inauthenticity brought about by a society filling him with useless ideas.

The central figure of this young man, who is brutally killed at the end of the play, is the key to understanding this dramatization of strained intergenerational relations in socialist Yugoslavia. He could be seen as protesting against the late 1960s embourgeoisement of Yugoslav urban classes; in that case we are supposed to take him for the last gasp of socialist-humanist revolutionary tradition in an increasingly hypocritical communist world. The young man feels emotionally rootless and ideologically confused, as his projection of shifting personalities to animals and non-existent relatives attests. The intruder represents a kind of *Lebenskünstler*, or perhaps the strangled cry of a kind of humanism. Kiš’s view of the society of developed socialist Yugoslavia is grim.

One of Kiš’s least-known works is the screenplay *Končarevci* (*Factory Story*), written in 1979;<sup>41</sup> the planned film, with Veljko Bulajić as director, never materialized. This work has, as Mirjana Miočinović has noted, a ‘documentary basis’, and it is concerned both with the nature of work and changes in society, linked together as the ‘dark side of industrialization’, as well as with the domestic settling of accounts between pro-Soviet Stalinists and pro-Tito Stalinists in the post-1948 period.<sup>42</sup> It is written mostly in colloquial Croatian. This recently published work is quite intriguing and, with its visual elements and short scenes, very well tailored to cinematic production. It grimly deconstructs Titoist standards from the post-war veneration of Partisan heroes to industrial ribbon-cuttings, and from the privations of the Cominform blockade to the brutality of the secret police, or UDBa. It also lampoons socialist realism, while carefully reconstructing the painful fate of émigrés and former collaborators. This work is almost encyclopaedic in its view of Yugoslav socialism, and it leaves little doubt about Kiš’s views on the political system of his home country.

Kiš did not shy from warning of the lethality and horror of both fascism and Stalinism. Stalinism, in turn, was not limited to a few decades

<sup>40</sup> ‘Papagaj’, in *Noć i magla* (Belgrade, 1995), pp. 23–52. This drama was also filmed for television, although the author has not had access to a copy of the production.

<sup>41</sup> See Danilo Kiš, *Dva filmska scenarija* (Vršac, 2011).

<sup>42</sup> Mirjana Miočinović, unpublished introduction to Danilo Kiš, *Dva filmska scenarija* (manuscript provided to the author, March 2011).

of Soviet history but, as in the conception of Milovan Djilas in *Conversations with Stalin*, it was a temptation haunting all sorts of communist experiments. Furthermore, the problematic term *totalitarianism* suited Kiš fine in his campaign to etch into our consciousness the dangers buffeting the individual in history. But arguably the most productive way to view what we might therefore call Kiš's 'grand equivalence' is to combine it with his reworkings of some of the vaunted historico-cultural regions of Europe. In short, it will be argued here that eastern Europe, a concept Kiš does not employ with much zeal or frequency before the appearance of people's democracies after 1944, is largely formed, savagely imprinted and granted a considerable life span because of its full-bore exposure to the twin totalitarianisms of the twentieth century.

In his essays and interviews, Kiš for years interrogated the received wisdom about European regions. He reversed the traditional value system that placed Central Europe above the Balkans, inverting them in terms of the impact on his own life. Central Europe, geographically and historically, came to represent for Kiš a place of menace and foreshortened horizons, a freak show of grim isolated farmsteads, reeking stalls-cum-domiciles, and hostile communities steeped in the verbal aggressiveness and physical violence of anti-Semitism and fascism. South-eastern Europe, in turn, was a fragrant and sunny place, filled with dramatic vistas and tales of heroes and family libraries and the freedom to learn French.

At the most abstract level, one can divide Kiš's canonical works into two main groups; one is devoted to exploration of the Holocaust and it is followed then by the other grouping that demonstrates his concern with Stalinism. The first group, specifically, consists of the three types of autobiographical fiction represented by *Early Sorrows*, *Garden*, *Ashes* and *Hourglass*; these works treat Kiš's bittersweet memories of growing up in the Vojvodina, perched between the Hungarian and Serbian culture, and of the chaos into which his family was plunged by the Second World War. An early work, the just translated *Psalms 44*, deals in a non-autobiographical way with many of these same themes.<sup>43</sup> Following this increasingly complex and postmodern 'family cycle' came the Borgegian, hermetic, historico-political story collections *A Tomb for Boris Davidovič* and *The Encyclopaedia of the Dead*; here Kiš focuses on the fate of political and religious outsiders, mostly in communist systems. In this very bifurcation or dichotomy is a kind of balance, an admission of the need to address both ideological systems that had strongly influenced the course of Kiš's life. He made remarks to this effect in interviews as well.

One of Kiš's final projects was a four-part television series, *Goli život* (*Bare Existence*), which was directed and co-written by Aleksandar Mandić. This series is remarkable testimony to Kiš's intertwined interests

<sup>43</sup> Danilo Kiš, *Psalms 44*, trans. John K. Cox (Champaign, IL, 2012).

in the twin totalitarianisms; it also provides a fitting rebuttal to his Serbian critics who claimed that Kiš had ignored the communists' crimes against Serbs. In all of the episodes, which measure roughly forty-five minutes each, Kiš appears on screen at various sites in Israel, ranging from a beach to a kibbutz to lush parks, conducting interviews with two Serbian-Jewish women who emigrated from Yugoslavia in the post-Second World War period. Both of the women, Jenny Loebbl and Eva Nahir-Panić, survived pre-Second World War anti-Semitism in Yugoslavia and the Holocaust, and in response to Kiš's questions they establish for the viewers a narrative of fear, persecution and gradually rising awareness that stands as a parallel to Kiš's autobiographical works. Perhaps most tellingly, Kiš constantly asks both women how certain things began, or when they noticed something, or when others did so. This underscores Kiš's own painful and gradual realization of the shallowness of his family's integration, of the danger facing them, and of the fate of his persecuted and ultimately vanished father. There are other very specific details of Loebbl's and Nahir-Panić's narratives that call to mind poignant passages in Kiš's own life: Nahir-Panić lived in a kind of livestock stall while in hiding during the war, while during Loebbl's post-war imprisonment the Danube was said to be full of floating bodies. Loebbl's father was eventually drafted, much in the same way Kiš's father had to render compulsory labour service; Nahir's parents, like Eduard Kiš himself, were killed in Auschwitz.

But the most unique thing about Loebbl and Nahir-Panić is that they also suffered harsh persecution at the hands of the Yugoslav communists. They are living proof of Kiš's totalitarian thesis. They suffered under Nazis and Stalinists, or, more precisely, under domestic and foreign fascists as well as the evolving Yugoslav communists. The twentieth century is worthy of study, then, because it hosted two dictatorial systems that spread death very widely but that upon fine-grained examination can be seen to have victimized certain peripheralized groups: here, women who were also Jewish. To the extent that Kiš was a target under communism – and he certainly developed a strong antipathy for its cultural controls and the nationalist hypocrisy of many of its practitioners, while taking up the causes of many of its victims indeed – the women's biographies are, again, a parallel and validation of his own.

*Goli život* was filmed on location in Israel in March 1989, approximately half a year before Kiš succumbed to cancer. Unfortunately, access to this television series, broadcast on 12–15 February 1990, has remained very limited, but it is of enormous impact as a kind of valedictory restatement of basic themes in Kiš's work. The interview clips alternate every several minutes between the two Israeli women. They proceed at roughly the same pace through the women's experiences from the 1930s into the 1950s, and Kiš's keen questioning is able to bring out a vast amount of common ground in them. He zeroes in on dates and names through the descriptions of the women's entrapment, interrogations, forced labour and torture, asking how and when they first felt the pain of anti-Semitic

legislation or political activity. Nahir-Panić married an Orthodox Yugoslav military officer and lived with his relatives in primitive conditions during the war, while LoebI escaped from the transit camp at Sajmište in Belgrade and eventually joined the Partisans. After being captured and abused by the Bulgarians, Soviet troops freed LoebI; she made her very circuitous route home, began law school, and then took a job as a journalist for *Politika*. Her lively sense of humour and her unwillingness to varnish truth in her stories brought her to the attention of the authorities and provided her with a fat dossier in the office of state security.

After Tito's break with Stalin in 1948, LoebI was eventually arrested on suspicion of being pro-Soviet (or even pro-Russian); Nahir-Panić's husband was picked up also on the grounds that he was a pro-Russian 'enemy of the people'. Panić killed himself and then Nahir-Panić was arrested, too, when she refused to renounce her supposed political deviations. Although LoebI and Nahir-Panić did not get to know each other until they were both in Israel, their experiences during incarceration and on the islands are remarkably similar. Both were 'convicted', that is to say, sentenced, by administrative procedures to jail time and to 'socially useful labour' on the inhospitable islands. Both mention the basic divide (and animosity) in the camp inmate population between the members of the *banda* (the group of supposedly unrepentant oppositionists) and the women known as the *revidirane* or *revidirke* (those whose views had been revised or corrected), eager now to prove their loyalty to the regime as members of the *brigada*, which was told to be proud of its collective contributions to the building of socialism and to bridging the gap that had separated them from society. Maltreatment for especially stubborn and impenitent women took the form of the *bojkot*, a regime that forbade others from conversing with them and sanctioned all sorts of violence, some of it quite obscene, by the *revidirane*. The forced labour in the blistering sun was brutal and medical care was spare. Kiš urges them both to name names of interrogators and abusers, and be as specific as they can about the context of their epiphanies in camp as well as about the origins and evolution of their feelings. Still, LoebI ultimately tends to stress unusual material specifics of the camp experience as well its position in the overall course of her life, while Nahir-Panić's narrative is anchored in the raw emotional shock and alienation she felt at the ear-splitting, savage and subhuman commands and denigrations issuing from the guards.

At the conclusion of the series, as Kiš attempts to put the twin narratives into some sort of general perspective, one senses a certain tension within the women's interpretations of what happened to them: both felt former friends' and associates' revulsion and fear at their presence, once they were in the crosshairs of the government, but both also felt that anti-Semitism was more powerfully present in the provocations of the government than in the make-up of their society in general. Nonetheless both women refused, despite considerable pressure throughout their periods of mistreatment at the hands of two regimes, to sign documents



incriminating others. Here, then, are two more cases of victims refusing to relinquish their right to live in truth. These women, turned into dissidents by the force of events in the same way as artists and activists and intellectuals in Kiš's oeuvre, clung ferociously to this one right, even when the government acknowledges as their only right the opportunity to beg their guards for practical, incremental privileges connected to daily routines.

Having established, on the basis of his works, that Kiš was deeply concerned with the fate of individuals in both kinds of ideological police states in the twentieth century, one can now ask what impact the historical experiences giving rise to this literature have had on the region of Europe that most directly received the combined brutalization of both kinds of what Kiš would call totalitarianism. Does it not stand to reason that absorption of these two massive annihilatory attacks on civil society, economic traditions and the environment, historical memory, and, not least of all, the human landscape, would serve both to break down barriers within the region and to put up barriers against the rest of Europe? That is to say, regardless of what one believes about the existence (or scope and nature) of an 'Eastern Europe' before the twentieth century, it becomes much easier, on the basis of history and human life as Kiš captures them in his fiction, to believe in its existence by the 1980s.

Kiš, as we saw above, preferred other regional nomenclature to eastern, or even to central, Europe. But the effects of totalitarianism on his home region were immediate and unavoidable in his eyes. In pursuing the 'muddy tale' of his father, the family pain and epistemological pitfalls, as important as they are in purely emotional or in intellectual terms, are inseparable from the collapsing walls of the pre-fascist social order. And the reason he writes, and anchors his writing in so much concrete detail and so many lists – in his 'enumerations' – is because he is called to memorialize a razed and scattered world before it submerges altogether into oblivion. With so many holes ripped in traditional society, and so many of its gardens replaced by ashes, how could eastern Europe not now function as a more coherent appellation? And despite the accession of many of the states in the region to Euro-Atlantic institutions in the recent post-communist era, the differences between this 'new Europe' in the east and the 'old Europe' in the west definitely seem rooted in more than merely a US foreign policy classification.

Examining Danilo Kiš's works anew, one can see that his spectrum of themes and topics was indeed broader than typically presented in the English-speaking world. What is more, Kiš's views on issues ranging from nationalism to politics and from Yugoslav culture to Central European identity, are sometimes surprising and almost always fresh and unique. Kiš's preoccupation with 'equivalent totalitarisms' – as emotionally true and intelligible as it is contentious among historians and social scientists – is seen to pervade his cinematic work and his short stories as well as to underlie his two main sets of prose fictions. It is also part of his small poetic oeuvre and his essays. As he wrote in a famous

essay, 'Should anyone tell you Kolyma was different from Auschwitz, tell him to go to hell.'<sup>44</sup>

Despite efforts by traditionalists and nationalist critics to dismiss his work, Danilo Kiš has remained an important literary figure, especially on the international level. Recent works by Milan Kundera and Andrzej Stasiuk, both translated into English, contain appreciations of Kiš and his work;<sup>45</sup> and the expanding focus of texts now in translation and in ever-wider circulation allows us to profile Kiš's ideas ever more effectively in context and in colour. Meanwhile, in the two national cultures, Serbian (since Yugoslav culture no longer exists) and Hungarian, that could lay claim to him today, Kiš's legacy meets with different receptions altogether. A few Hungarian authors acknowledge their intellectual links to Kiš, as Central European and (half-)Hungarian,<sup>46</sup> but Kiš does not figure at all in recent large-scale analyses of Hungarian culture,<sup>47</sup> nor are any of his books currently in print – or popular – in Hungary; occasionally his work comes up in studies of Holocaust literature.<sup>48</sup>

One could argue that Kiš also deserves greater recognition today in Serbia than he receives, but there the situation is far from completely negative. For instance, the existing variety of publishing houses vouchsafes market access for his books even today. The ongoing scholarly and commemorative work of individuals such as Mirjana Miočinović and Boško Krstić provides opportunities for new texts to be released and for writers influenced by Kiš and for scholars and well-wishers to exchange information, as at the annual KIŠobran meeting in Subotica. Kiš figures in several recent novels<sup>49</sup> by writers from Serbia, and also in a well-publicized literary autobiography.<sup>50</sup> Perhaps the danger of oblivion in Serbia is further reduced, as well, because of Kiš's own self-identification as a writer of Serbian (or Serbo-Croatian, but not Hungarian or French) literature and his wish to be buried in Belgrade in 1989. Nonetheless, anti-Kiš polemics continue to appear in Serbia, and there was considerable delay and even controversy about taking his personal library into the

<sup>44</sup> 'Advice to a Young Writer,' in *Homo Poeticus*, p. 126.

<sup>45</sup> Milan Kundera, *Encounter*, trans. Linda Asher (New York, 2010) and Andrzej Stasiuk, *Fado*, translated by Bill Johnston (Champaign, IL, 2009).

<sup>46</sup> See Péter Esterházy's *Celestial Harmonies* (New York, 2004), pp. 23–8 and György Konrád's essay 'Danilo, neuhvatljivo ozbiljan', in *Spomenica Danila Kiša povodom sedamdesetogodišnjice rođenja*, ed. Predrag Palavestra (Belgrade, 2005), pp. 3–6.

<sup>47</sup> See Richard Teleky, *Hungarian Rhapsodies: Essays on Ethnicity, Identity, and Culture* (Seattle, 1997) and *Comparative Hungarian Cultural Studies*, ed. Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek and Louise Vasvári (West Lafayette, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> See Rosana Ratkovič, 'Danilo Kiš, Imre Kertész, and the Myth of the Holocaust', in *Imre Kertész and Holocaust Literature*, ed. Louise O. Vasvári and Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek (West Lafayette, 2005), pp. 195–204.

<sup>49</sup> See, for instance Filip Gajić, *Pisma Danilu Kišu* (Belgrade, 2009) and Ildikó Lovas, *Kijarat az Adriára: James Bond Bácskában* (Pozsony, 2006).

<sup>50</sup> Rajko Petrov Nogo, *Zapiši to, Rajko* (Belgrade, 2011).

collections of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.<sup>51</sup> In the Serbian case this neglect would seem to be a result of the deep ambivalence shown to his work by many members of the Serbian literary and press communities in the 1970s and 1980s. In some ways official acceptance or recognition continues to elude Kiš in Serbia today. For instance, he does not appear in the recent book *100 Most Eminent Serbs*<sup>52</sup> or in other elite surveys of Serbian culture, and in his hometown of Subotica there is not yet a street named after him.

As literary and intellectual appreciation of Kiš's work evolves, it is worth considering how his understanding of totalitarianism combined with his theses on regional identity. These theses modify our conceptual map of the continent of Europe, so that Central Europe is massively expanded, 'Pannonia' and the Mediterranean outdo 'Balkan' in importance, and eastern Europe enjoys a viable and intellectually useful status as 'the lands between'. Emphasizing the double destruction, from far right and far left, that the twentieth century visited upon eastern Europe (or Central Europe) – or for Kiš that brooding, sedimented, relentless Pannonia – we are left with a sense both of great cultural loss and of the persistence of difference rooted in a unique and enduring, if new, set of shared experiences. Paired with the exasperating differences of opinion about Serbian literary traditions and ethnic affiliation revealed by the literary affair around *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, recognition of Kiš's thesis of synonymized totalitarianisms – whether we accept the equation or not – helps keep his writing relevant today. To do justice to Kiš's art and ideas, we must be willing to update our understanding of his writing, in large part by expanding the source base of his works with which we engage.

<sup>51</sup> Some of his personal effects, however – including a typewriter, menorah, a family sewing machine with which he was often photographed, and many books – can be seen there nowadays by appointment.

<sup>52</sup> *100 Most Eminent Serbs*, ed. Predrag Jeremić (Belgrade, 2004). The book, published 'with the blessing of His Beatitude, the Serbian Patriarch Pavle', does include biographical entries on other prominent Serbian writers, such as Simo Matavulj, Jovan Dučić, Andrić, Crnjanski, Meša Selimović and Vasko Popa.