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edited by

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A HISTORY
OF
BULGARIAN LITERATURE
865-1944

by

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FOREWORD

This volume treats Bulgarian literature in its historical context from the earliest times to 1944. Although for the sake of completeness I have included information on the post-1944 careers of authors who were prominent between the First and Second World Wars, I have not attempted any general summary of literary events in Bulgaria after that date, since this period is still unfolding and cannot yet be considered objectively. Many histories of national literatures slight recent writings, but in this book I have attempted to strike what seems to me a more equitable balance between the older and the modern periods in Bulgarian literature. Thus nearly half the volume is devoted to the roughly fifty years from 1896 to 1944, a division which in my opinion accurately reflects the literary — though not historical — value of works published before and after 1896. In order to avoid writing a history which at numerous points reduces to a listing of mere dates and names signifying little to the uninitiated reader, I have tried not even to mention an author if I could not give him at least a paragraph which would convey a notion of his individual literary personality. In the main I have adhered to this principle, although on a few occasions I have disregarded it. All titles are cited in the original, with English translation at the point of first mention, with a few exceptions for medieval works now known only by varying modern Bulgarian titles.

Before 1 April 1916 Bulgaria followed the Julian calendar (old style), which in the twentieth century was thirteen days behind the Gregorian (new style) calendar, in the nineteenth century twelve days behind, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries eleven days behind. Occasionally this correction factor may be needed, although ordinarily very precise dating is unnecessary for our purposes.

In the course of preparing this history I have worked in the National Library in Sofia, the library of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, the Library of Congress, the Sterling Library at Yale University, and the

Widener Library at Harvard University. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to utilize these collections.

Anyone who undertakes a history of this sort must necessarily rely to a substantial degree upon the labors of other scholars in the field. Though this book is not ordinarily footnoted, I have included one note to acknowledge my indebtedness to a scholar upon whom I relied unusually heavily at one point; where my debt was somewhat smaller, I have tried to mention the name of the individual scholar or critic in question in the text; and in any case I have listed in the bibliography all articles and books which I found helpful. Without the contributions of many specialists, this book could not be what it is. I should like to offer my special gratitude to Professor Vivian Pinto of the University of London, who has assisted me both through his published writings and also by reading this volume in proof and making suggestions for its betterment.

This history of Bulgarian literature is dedicated to my wife Anastasia.

March 1969

C.A.M.

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I

OLD BULGARIAN LITERATURE (Ninth-Eighteenth Centuries)

A. THE GOLDEN AGE OF OLD BULGARIAN LITERATURE AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DECLINE (NINTH TO THIRTEENTH CENTURIES)

The literature of old Bulgaria at the end of the first millennium was part of a generally homogeneous medieval culture deriving from the widespread and unquestioning acceptance of the Christian faith by almost all those who created it. Literature was designed to serve ecclesiastical purposes and promote orthodox Christian doctrine, so that there is often nothing either specifically Bulgarian or very original in the major literary monuments of medieval Bulgaria. Consequently medieval literature seems quite foreign to the modern reader, who is alienated by writing so thoroughly ideological and disappointed at its lack of national color or originality.

Indeed the medieval mind hardly recognized many features which modern man seeks in literature, of which originality is among the most important. The chief cultural institution, the church, encouraged the production of translations of the Holy Scriptures for liturgical use, different types of service books, lives of saints for the edification of the faithful, and other works such as sermons and homilies designed to explain the main tenets of the Christian faith to the unlettered believer. The intellectuals who were the guardians of this ecclesiastical culture considered it their mission to transmit the Christian message to the people in as pure a form as possible, which meant that for them any originality was a vice. They drew heavily upon Scripture and the accepted church authorities, and many of their 'original' writings consist in large measure of quotations from these sources. Though the writers of the Golden Age of Bulgarian literature — that period of intense cultural activity following the country's official Christianization in 865 — labored under great handicaps from the modern point of view, some of them possessed sufficiently powerful personalities to produce works of stylistic excellence on interesting topics. They refined certain literary devices to a remarkable

degree within the all-encompassing tradition, and many of their writings are still of value to the modern reader willing to approach them with an open mind.

It should be remembered that old Bulgarian literature did not reach the bulk of the population in written form. The written literature of the period was read by a thin layer of the educated classes, of whom most were churchmen. Some works of old Bulgarian literature which have reached us in a small number of copies probably were not accessible to more than a few readers in the course of the centuries. With the exception of the sermons and homilies delivered orally to groups of the faithful gathered for worship, we cannot speak of literature's reaching anything resembling a mass audience before the modern period.

In its earliest phases Bulgarian culture was closely linked with the eastern, Byzantine tradition. Because of its geographical proximity to Byzantium, Bulgaria was the first Slavic area of significance to be converted to Christianity. Bulgaria continued to draw sustenance from the Byzantine heritage after its conversion; moreover, it transmitted Byzantine culture to the other Slavic nations as one by one they were added to eastern Christendom. Scholars speak of the 'Second South Slavic Influence' on old Russian culture borne by refugees from Bulgaria and Serbia after the Turkish conquest of the Balkan peninsula in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The 'first' South Slavic influence on Russia was precisely this early transmission of Byzantine ecclesiastical culture to it through the South Slavs, particularly the Bulgarians.

In recent years several Bulgarian scholars have asserted that some form of written culture in the native language existed in Bulgaria before its Christianization. Attractive and even plausible though this hypothesis may be, we have no documentary evidence of such a literature and thus must assume for the time being that the beginnings of written Bulgarian literature date from that country's Christianization.

At this point a word should be said about the texts of literary works from the oldest period of Bulgarian literature. In no case do we possess anything resembling an author's manuscript. In some rare instances we may have a manuscript dating from as early as the twelfth or occasionally the late eleventh century, by authors who had died by the early tenth century. More often — since the devastation of the Turkish conquest entailed the destruction of numerous older manuscripts — we possess manuscripts of works originally written in the ninth or tenth centuries which are no older than the fourteenth or fifteenth century. Plainly there is an excellent chance that such manuscripts may contain texts substan-

tially corrupted in the course of being copied several times over the centuries. Moreover, copyists sometimes attributed works to authors other than the genuine one in order to enhance their prestige. All these factors must be kept in mind as we deal with medieval literature.

The first identifiable 'authors' in old Bulgarian literature are Sts. Konstantin-Kiril (born Konstantin, he took the name Kiril [Cyril] when he became a monk shortly before his death) and Metodij (Methodius). Known as the "brothers of Salonika" or the "Preceptors of the Slavs", their activity was of such import for Slavdom as a whole that perhaps they are best treated outside the history of any particular Slavic nation. However, if they are to be included in the history of a single national literature, then Bulgaria may lay the most substantial claim to them.

We obtain considerable information about Kiril and Metodij from the several *žitija* (*vitae*, saints' lives) of them now extant. The brothers were born in Salonika, then a major city of the Byzantine Empire located in Macedonia, Konstantin in 826 or 827, Metodij a few years before him. It is likely that at least one of their parents was a Slav, but even if the brothers were without Slavic blood, they were thoroughly familiar with the dialect spoken by the Slavs who lived around Salonika. Thus when in 862 the prince of Moravia, in present-day Czechoslovakia, requested that someone introduce Slavic service books there, the brothers were deemed well equipped to carry out this mission. After spending some time in Moravia, at the end of 867 or the beginning of 868 Konstantin and Metodij journeyed to Rome to obtain a papal endorsement both for themselves personally and for their cause. The endorsement was partially granted, but Konstantin-Kiril fell ill and died in Rome on 14 February, 869, after adjuring his elder brother to continue their work.

Heeding Kiril's wishes, Metodij returned to Moravia and resumed his labors, translating the Scriptures and other vital ecclesiastical works into Slavic and creating his own literary 'school', despite the vicissitudes of church politics and his own reportedly difficult temperament. He stayed on in Moravia for some sixteen years until his death on 6 April, 885. His followers, expelled from Moravia as a result of ecclesiastical intrigues and disputes, migrated to Bulgaria to carry on their educational task there.

Kiril's chief contribution was the designing of an alphabet for the Slavic dialect known to him, so that the Scriptures might be translated into Slavic. The question of precisely which alphabet Kiril devised is still a matter of dispute. Old Slavic texts were written either in 'Cyrillic' (an alphabet named in honor of St. Kiril, based upon the Greek and Hebrew alphabets, similar to that still employed by the Orthodox Slavs) or

'Glagolitic' (an alphabet of highly uncertain origin quite different from Cyrillic). Although it appears that Glagolitic is the older alphabet — and therefore it would stand to reason that it was the one invented by Kiril — other substantial considerations lead most scholars to believe that the Cyrillic alphabet was the one devised by St. Kiril. In any case we can be fairly certain that at least one of these alphabets was invented by him, whether or not it is the one that now bears his name.

Through their translations Sts. Kiril and Metodij elevated their Macedonian dialect into an ecclesiastical literary language, now commonly known as Old Church Slavic, used by all Orthodox Slavdom. Thus at its inception Old Church Slavic presumably coincided with a spoken dialect of old Bulgarian. Bulgarian, however, thereafter developed and changed as a living language, while Old Church Slavic, being primarily a written language, underwent little alteration over the centuries, although it does exist in different recensions incorporating features from the spoken languages of particular areas in which it was employed. Still, the early Bulgarian literary language remained quite close to Old Church Slavic for some time, and thus it is possible to use the terms 'old Bulgarian' and 'Old Church Slavic' nearly interchangeably in discussions of the language of the Golden Age.

St. Kiril contributed further to the history of Slavic literature proper as an author. Once, before the Moravian mission, he visited Kherson on the Black Sea, where he discovered what he thought were the relics of Clement of Rome (a first century pope) and took them back to Rome. He recounted the whole episode in a *Slovo* (literally 'word') which is still extant. Kiril also produced some of the earliest written Slavic poetry in a 'Prologue' — encouraging his readers to read on — to his translation of the Gospels. He composed theological works, for example the "Napisanie o pravei vere" (Tract on the True Faith¹), and polemical pieces, for instance one defending the Slavs' right to hear and read the Gospel in their own language and attacking the views of the 'three-tongue heretics', who held that since the inscription on Christ's cross had been written in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, none but these three languages could be used for sacred purposes. The dispute on this point was bitter and crucial, for the entire philosophical underpinning of the movement to bring Christian

¹ . Often the medieval author did not title his work, and pieces may be known by slightly varying titles given them by later copyists or editors. In this chapter I shall try to use the most widespread old Bulgarian title by which a work is known. If no widely accepted title exists, I shall refer to it in English.

culture to the Slavs in their own language would be wrecked if the 'three-tongue heresy' were accepted.

When Metodij's disciples returned to Bulgaria they founded two cultural 'schools'. One, centered in Ohrid (Macedonia), consisted chiefly of Kliment Oxridski and Naum. The other was located in Preslav, the capital of the First Bulgarian Empire, and included such figures as Konstantin Preslavski, Ioan Ekzarx bŕgarski (John Exarch of Bulgaria), Czar Simeon, Černorizec Xrabŕ, and Černorizec Doks. It was in these two centers that old Bulgarian literature in the strict sense first developed.

St. Kliment Oxridski (the Sofia University of today is still named in his honor, although the 'St.' is dropped) was perhaps the most significant writer of those who had had direct contact with Kiril and Metodij. As he died at an advanced age in 916, he was presumably born sometime around 840. His parents, who were almost certainly of Slavic stock, probably lived in Macedonia. He went to Moravia with Kiril and Metodij and was ordained priest in Rome while accompanying them there in 867-869. After Kiril's death Kliment actively supported Metodij; when Metodij died he became a leader in the continuing struggle for the cause of Slavic enlightenment in Moravia. When he was forced to return to Bulgaria he eventually based himself in the no longer extant town of Devol, probably located somewhere in southwestern Macedonia. After the accession of Czar Simeon (reigned 893-927) Kliment was appointed the first Slavic bishop, his see in all likelihood encompassing the southwestern part of Macedonia. Beyond his ecclesiastical duties, Kliment assumed an enormous educational responsibility. According to the author of his *žitie*, in the approximately thirty years he lived in Macedonia he trained 3500 students, which works out to about 120 students per year, assuming that each student spent three years with him. Even if one supposes that Kliment had several assistants, it was still quite a task to educate so many young men. And even if the total figure is inflated, it is clear that St. Kliment made an immense contribution to the spread of ecclesiastical culture in Bulgaria.

Aside from his teaching, Kliment Oxridski also wrote, his translations of Scripture and liturgical service books being of especial importance. About fifty *slova* have been attributed to him, of which roughly a quarter seem actually to be his. These *slova* — small sermons to be delivered on special occasions — may be considered the foundation of original Bulgarian literature. Kliment produced an all-purpose sermon, a text suitable for commemorating saints into which the name of the particular saint being remembered could be inserted by a preacher unskilled at

writing his own sermons. Kliment's *slova* may be divided into homilies and eulogies, the first offering rhetorical instruction and the second rhetorical praise. His eulogies could be especially flowery and replete with Pauline rhetoric; for instance his "Eulogy to Sts. Michael and Gabriel" contains a long passage based on alternate addresses to the archangels, each beginning with "Rejoice!" and similar syntactic patterns: "Rejoice, archangel Michael, leader and first head of the disembodied powers; rejoice, archangel Gabriel, first annunciator of all joys; rejoice, archangel Michael, first sceptrebearer of the Trinity, one in essence and indivisible; rejoice, archangel Gabriel, true servant of the thrice uncreated light." Kliment was also among the very first in Slavic literature to employ the device of apostrophizing the parts of a saint's body, in his "Eulogy of St. Kiril": "I envy thy blessed lips, through which flowed spiritual sweetness for all peoples. I envy thy many-voiced tongue, which thundered like thunder and, gleaming with the dawn of the thrice-uncreated Divinity, dispersed the darkness of our sins." His use of compounded words ('many-voiced', 'thrice-uncreated') and his repetition of roots ('thundered like thunder') are among the means by which Kliment attained powerful rhetorical effects.

Naum (ca. 820-910), a disciple of Metodij and Kliment from their Moravian days, was the other principal member of the Ohrid school. In 894 he accompanied Kliment to his see in Macedonia, where he presumably assisted him actively. If Naum ever wrote anything it has not come down to us.

The Preslav school was the richer of the two early centers of old Bulgarian culture. That city, the capital of a flourishing state, was at one time very grand, although today nothing remains of it but low-lying ruins. One of its citizens (Ioan Ekzarx in his *Šestodnev* [Hexaemeron]) described the effect wrought upon the foreign visitor by the magnificence of the Czar's palace and Czar Simeon himself: according to Ioan, the impression made by the expensive woods, stone, fabrics and adornments was so overwhelming that, upon returning home, the foreigner was often at such a loss for words to describe what he had seen that he could only urge his compatriots to visit it for themselves.

In its day the capital's cultural life was no less remarkable than its appearance. A prime mover in Preslav's literary and intellectual development was Konstantin Preslavski, also a member of the Kiril-Metodij school. Since he seems to have known Metodij, we may infer that he was born around the middle of the ninth century. For roughly the last two decades of the century he resided in Bulgaria, working for a while as a

prezviter (priest). At some point before 906 he was appointed bishop, with his seat in Preslav, and set about organizing the Bulgarian church. We do not know when he died because, since he was never canonized, no official *žitie* of him was written.

Konstantin Preslavski's best known work was the *Didactic Gospel*. In a foreword he wrote that he had compiled it at Naum's urging, and since Naum went to Macedonia in 894, the *Didactic Gospel* must date from about 890-893. The compilation consisted of: the famous "Alphabet Prayer", a foreword, an introduction, *besedi*, or talks, on Gospel subjects, the *Čerkovno skazanie* (Ecclesiastical Legend), and the *Istorikii*, a skeletal chronology of Creation beginning with Adam and coming down to 893-894.

The "Alphabet Prayer", usually considered the first poem written in Slavic, has been attributed to both Konstantin Preslavski and Konstantin-Kiril, as identical names are a frequent cause of confusion in the attribution of medieval literary works. The prayer is a meditational poem, with the first letters of each line yielding an acrostic which reads as the alphabet. While the form of the "Alphabet Prayer" is thus of some interest, its content is quite orthodox. The *besedi* are not particularly original either in form or in content, for each is a commentary on a gospel text constructed upon the same pattern. There are fifty-one of them, one for each Sunday from Easter to Palm Sunday. Of these fifty-one it appears that thirty-eight are free adaptations of sermons by St. John Chrysostom, twelve by Cyril of Alexandria, and only one (no. 42) was composed by Konstantin Preslavski himself. Even this lone original among the *besedi* relies heavily upon Scriptural quotations and consists of straightforward exegesis of Christian doctrine.

Konstantin Preslavski also did some direct translation and compilation. He is credited with a "Service in Honor of Metodij", and rendered into Bulgarian a work on church organization and a tract, "Four Sermons Against the Arians", which stands near the source of the polemical tradition in old Bulgarian literature.

Another major figure of the Preslav school — an especially interesting one, whom a Russian scholar investigated as early as 1824 — was Ioan Ekzarx bŕlgarski. We know even less about Ioan's career than we do about Konstantin Preslavski's. Indeed scholars disagree over the meaning of his title "Exarch": it might have designated a very high church official, but it might also have meant that he was merely the abbot of a leading monastery. In view of his erudition, though, it seems likely that he stood reasonably high in the church hierarchy. It is probable, though still con-

jectural, that Ioan was roughly a contemporary of Czar Simeon and that he served as a court writer. Born very likely around the middle of the ninth century, he somewhere — perhaps in Constantinople or else the former Bulgarian capital at Pliska — acquired a good command of Greek and encyclopedic knowledge for his day. Ioan himself remarks that he was not a student of Metodij's. We have as little information about Ioan's death as we do about his life, but it is usually assumed, for no apparent reason, that he died about the same time as Czar Simeon (927).

In the history of Bulgarian literature Ioan is remembered as an erudite translator and a compiler who added certain interesting elements of his own to his compilations. He first appears in 891 or 892 with a translation of "On the Orthodox Faith" by the eighth century Byzantine theologian St. John of Damascus. He prefaced his translation with a foreword in which he made the traditional disclaimers about his unworthiness to undertake it as well as dispirited comments upon the difficulties of translating from Greek into a language which was so unready to express St. John's ideas that he himself had been compelled to devise a great deal of the vocabulary. But Ioan overcame these hindrances, and the entire encyclopedic work in its Slavic form, which later acquired the title *Nebesa* (The Heavens), served the medieval reader as a valuable source of information not only about the Orthodox faith, but on natural phenomena as well.

Of greater importance than *Nebesa* was Ioan's more original *Šestodnev*, the account of the six days of Creation. Byzantine literature provided several works of this type, and Ioan's was based upon the *Hexaemeron* of Basil the Great (fourth century) and St. John Chrysostom (fifth century) and others, supplemented by some original material. Ioan's *Šestodnev*, the most famous book of its kind in medieval Slavic literature, resembled an encyclopedia of natural history. The author equipped it with a foreword eulogizing Czar Simeon as a promoter of scholarship and expounding his own view of the nature of God's creative act. Theological polemics make their way into the main body of the text as the Exarch combats heretical doctrines and pagan survivals, while simultaneously he popularizes certain pagan philosophers of antiquity. For example, he draws upon Aristotle for detailed descriptions of the human body: "At the edge of the forehead, in front, there are two eyebrows. If straight, they indicate that the person is good, humble and merciful; but if they angle toward the nose, they indicate that the person is irritable, crotchety and fearful." In addition to essays on the human body and the descriptions of Preslav and Czar Simeon mentioned above, the medieval reader could discover

geographical and miscellaneous information in the *Šestodnev*. As a piece of literature the *Šestodnev* is a lively work, full of its author's sense of wonder at the marvels of creation. "I am amazed", he wrote, "that the quantity of air in existence does not decrease with so many humans and animals breathing it.... And yet we should not be amazed at God who has made all, but rather thank and praise Him." Ioan's rhetorical devices — e.g. the piling up of similar roots and words — are not nearly so stylized as with many medieval authors. The reader's feeling that he is always being directly addressed by the author helped give the *Šestodnev* great immediacy and interest.

A few sermons of an ordinary sort, such as a "Sermon on Our Lord's Ascension", are attributed to Ioan, though not with great certainty. His reputation as a leading figure of the Golden Age of old Bulgarian literature rests upon the *Šestodnev* and the *Nebesa*, which were indeed considerable achievements.

Another member of the Preslav school, about whom next to nothing is known, was Černorizec Xrabər (Monk Xrabər), author of the very brief "O pismenex" (On Letters). We are sure of nothing more than Xrabər's name, and some scholars have declared even that a pseudonym, possibly one used by Czar Simeon before his ascension of the throne. There is, however, no reason to consider the name false except for an instinctive reluctance on the part of scholars to admit they know nothing more about him than his name, which has led them to identify him with some more famous figure. In fact, this approach impoverishes the history of medieval Bulgarian literature by diminishing the number of identifiable authors. It seems quite justifiable to add Černorizec Xrabər's name to the list of medieval Bulgarian writers of independent standing.

"O pismenex" was probably composed at the end of the ninth or the beginning of the tenth century, since in one copy it is stated that people who had known Kiril and Metodij were still alive at the time of writing. Xrabər sets out to defend Kiril and Metodij's life work and the idea that the Slavs were entitled to their own culture and their own alphabet. He rails at those who maintained that the sacred books should exist only in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, terming them 'madmen', and argues that all languages have come of God. Furthermore, he says, it was impossible for the Slavs to write their language properly using the Greek alphabet, and so it was quite essential that a Slavic alphabet be invented. Xrabər then switches to the offensive, maintaining that not only is Slavic not inferior to Greek, it is superior to it. To prove this he points out that the Greek alphabet evolved gradually over many years and that the Holy

Scriptures were translated from Hebrew into Greek by 70 scholars, whereas the Slavic alphabet was devised and the Holy Scriptures rendered into Slavic by just one man, St. Kiril. "Therefore", Xrabər concludes triumphantly, "the Slavic letters are more holy and more to be respected, because a holy man created them, but the Greek letters were invented by pagan Hellenes." By thus moving from the defensive to the offensive Xrabər very effectively achieved his polemical end and placed his opposition in what the Slavs would have considered an awkward position. It is probably for this reason that "O pismenex", despite its brevity (approximately a page), has always occupied a prominent place in medieval Bulgarian literature.

Two other members of the Preslav school evidently wrote nothing themselves but instead acted as catalysts upon their more productive colleagues. One was Černorizec Doks, whom Ioan Ekzarx bēlgarski mentions in the foreword to *Nebesa* as the person who urged him to embark upon the scholarly life in the first place. The other mentor of Bulgarian letters was Czar Simeon, who during his reign encouraged cultural activity as only he was in a position to do. The chief evidence for this is the *Compilation of Svjatoslav of 1073*, which has reached us in only one copy made in Kievan Russia for prince Svjatoslav of Kiev. The compilation, containing selections from the Byzantine church fathers, was originally put together at Simeon's behest. Other, similar collections now extant only in Russian versions further buttress the conclusion that Simeon was an important patron of culture at a critical time.

Thus far we have discussed the creation of a more or less original literature in the older period; the translations mentioned have in most cases been the work of identifiable individuals. But there also existed an anonymously translated literature whose spread was not particularly encouraged by the church. This was the situation with apocryphal literature — books rejected by the church as non-canonical and excluded from the approved text of the Bible, such as the Gospel of Nicodemus and the Gospel of Thomas, which purported to describe Christ's childhood — as well as a number of shorter legends likewise denied the church's sanction. Apocryphal literature penetrated Bulgaria in the tenth century, along with the canonical books that legitimately accompanied the land's Christianization. From there it spread to other Slavic countries.

Some apocryphal legends are fascinating. The "Tale of the Wood of the Cross", for instance, links the trees from which the crosses were made (upon which Christ and the two thieves were crucified), to the three trunks of a single tree which grew in the Garden of Eden: one trunk was Adam's,

one Eve's, and one the Lord's. Another apocryphal legend widely known among the medieval Slavs was the "Virgin's Visit to Hell". In this tale the Virgin, accompanied by the archangel Michael, observes the various more or less inventive tortures inflicted upon sinners in Hell: one woman is hanging by a tooth, "and all sorts of serpents were issuing from her mouth and eating her". Upon inquiring, the Virgin learns that the woman is being punished for gossiping and stimulating strife during her lifetime. Finally the Virgin, distressed by what she has seen and moved by the sufferers' pleas for surcease, intercedes with her Divine Son and obtains for them respite from Maundy Thursday until Pentecost every year.

Another category of anonymous translated literature in Bulgaria consisted of stories of a secular and on the whole non-ideological nature from the international fund of 'literature of entertainment'. Some were imbued with Christianity, but others were more worldly and described secular heroes. Among the religiously oriented works was "Aleksii, čelovek Božii" (Alexis the Man of God), rendered into Bulgarian during the tenth century. Alexis is a young man who abandons all, including his recent bride, for the sake of his religion and departs for a foreign land to live in utter poverty. When he returns home years later his family does not recognize him until shortly before his death. Though cast largely in the traditional hagiographic form, "Aleksii čelovek Božii" does contain elements of secularized adventure literature, especially in the description of Aleksii's wanderings. Other stories of a similar nature include the "Tale of Akir the Wise", in which the hero solves tricky problems in no less tricky fashion in order to prove that he has been slandered by an ill-wisher; and anecdotes about King Solomon, that embodiment of wisdom, whose personality so attracted the medieval reader.

The popular "Aleksandrija", an account of the life and military adventures of Alexander the Great, is an example of a more secular tale. It was frequently thought a trustworthy biographical work and included in serious historical compilations. Stories about the heroes of the Trojan War were akin to the "Aleksandrija". A more artistic tale was "Varlaam and Ioasaf", which entered the mythology of Christendom from the East. Ioasaf's father, a king, in order to insulate him from any contact with Christianity, kept him in strict isolation from the world. One day, however, Ioasaf manages to get out and discovers, to his horror, the existence of sorrow, suffering and death in the world. Thereafter he is converted to Christianity by the hermit Varlaam and eventually brings his father and then the entire kingdom to the true faith.

The inquisitive medieval Bulgarian could satisfy his curiosity about

history through translations of Byzantine chronicles by Georgios Hamartolos or Sinkellos. He could find information, much of it fantastic, about the natural world in such compilations as the *Fiziolog*, in which descriptions of animals, birds and minerals were accompanied by didactic interpretations. From the *Fiziolog* he could learn, for instance, that the unicorn could be captured only by a virgin. For devotional reading he could obtain compilations of the works of the Byzantine church fathers, especially St. John Chrysostom. These collections had varying titles and were composed in various ways, so that books under the same title often had widely differing contents in different copies.

Following the abrupt outburst of literary and cultural activity during Czar Simeon's reign, Bulgarian culture almost ceased to exist for several centuries, but certain isolated works which appeared between Simeon's death and the late fourteenth century should be mentioned. The most extensive and interesting monument of that period, Prezviter Kozma's *Beseda protiv bogomilite* (Discourse Against the Bogomils), was directed against Bogomilism, a powerful heretical movement of medieval Bulgaria.

So far as we can tell, the Bogomil movement gathered strength after the end of Czar Simeon's reign and remained a prominent component of Bulgarian intellectual life until the fifteenth century; indeed in the thirteenth century it became so powerful that a special church council was convened to condemn it in 1211. Despite opposition, the movement spread over the Balkan peninsula and reached northern Italy and southern France.

The origins of the Bogomil movement in Bulgaria are uncertain. Prezviter Kozma claimed that it was begun by a certain *pop* Bogomil (priest Bogomil: the name literally translated means 'pleasing to God' and was probably adopted by him for publicity purposes), who lived during the time of Czar Petar (reigned 927-969). Since we read in Kliment Oxridski's *žitie* that after the saint's death in 916 an 'evil heresy' spread throughout the land, we may conjecture that there existed a priest under this name in the 920's who worked in southwestern Bulgaria.² The movement, whose doctrines were rather clearly defined, was connected with the dualistic heresies of Manichaeism and Paulicianism. The heretics believed in a dualistic interpretation of the cosmos, according to which the entire visible world was created, not by God, but by the Devil, who was as much the son of God as Christ. If all things visible and material

² In recent years the Bulgarian medievalist Vasil Kiselkov has argued that *pop* Bogomil was a mythical figure, but other medievalists have rebutted his arguments, and on balance it seems likely, though not certain, that such a person did exist.

were the creation of the Evil One (Bogomilism did hold that, though Good and Evil might have independent existences and struggle ferociously, Good would overcome Evil in the final accounting), they reasoned, then it followed that they should negate the things of this world as far as possible. Therefore the Bogomils preached — as an ideal, anyway — abstention from marriage, meat and wine. Furthermore, the Bogomils quite logically denied that material things could be God's instruments, so they rejected the sacrament of the Eucharist, which used bread and wine as a channel of grace, icons as an aid to worship, crosses (in this case they further argued that it was blasphemous to venerate the instrument through which the Son of God met His death), and church buildings. In addition, they felt an insuperable aversion to the established church hierarchy, a settled liturgy, and ecclesiastical discipline, although they replaced the latter with a rigid Protestant discipline of their own. Moreover, they soon had to organize their own movement, for without organization of some type it could not have survived. In the beginning at least, the Bogomils adhered to high standards of personal morality, for they were consciously reacting against the laxity and corruption of the official church. Whatever may have been the reasons for the heresy's appeal — its adherents' exemplary lives, the insufficient time which orthodox Christian doctrine had had to establish itself, its rebellion against the Establishment, its popular nature — its challenge and the church's response furnished the framework for the primary literary monuments preserved from the period of its ascendancy.

As the Bogomils opposed the church and the church saw to the copying of most written literature in medieval Bulgaria, it is not astonishing that very little written by the heretics themselves should have survived. Traces of Bogomil doctrine appear in certain apocryphal works, however. Bogomil views are set forth at length in the *Tajna kniga* (Secret Book), which, though originally written in Slavic, has come down to us only in Latin translation. Cast in the form of Christ's answers to questions by John, "your brother", at the Last Supper, the *Tajna kniga* expounds Bogomil notions of the origin of Satan, the Creation, the Second Coming and the Last Judgment; it also incorporates other elements of Bogomil doctrine, such as opposition to baptism as a sacrament. Literarily the *Tajna kniga* has a certain biblical power, especially in its description of the Second Coming, even though ideologically it is a handbook for heresy.

Tracts by the defenders of orthodoxy have reached us in greater quantity, since their wide distribution was in the church's interest. The best known of these is Prezviter Kozma's *Beseda protiv bogomilite*. As with

Černorizec Xrabər, we can say nothing for certain about Kozma beyond what is to be gleaned from his own work. Scholars have advanced wildly divergent hypotheses as to when Kozma lived, placing him anywhere from the early tenth century to the thirteenth century. It appears most probable that he worked in the last third of the tenth century — after Bogomilism had become successfully entrenched but before its origins were totally forgotten.

While the *Beseda protiv bogomilite* is squarely in the tradition of polemical medieval literature, its concrete character and vivid reflection of contemporary life give it a novel, almost journalistic tinge. The *Beseda* is composed in the form of a first-person monologue interspersed with dramatic dialogues and polemics framed as prayers and appeals. In his introduction Kozma wrathfully unmasks his ideological opponents: "Externally the heretics are like sheep: meek, humble and quiet. To all external eyes their faces are pale from hypocritical fasting.... Externally they do everything in order to remain indistinguishable from Orthodox Christians, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, as the Lord has said." He then summarizes the chief bogomil doctrines in order to deride and refute them. In one ferocious passage he pronounces anathemas against all those (i.e. the Bogomils) who reject certain basic tenets of Christian doctrine: "He who does not love our Lord Jesus Christ, may he be accursed! He who does not believe in the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, may he be accursed! He who does not pray with hope to the Holy Virgin Mary, may he be accursed!" and so on through a considerable series which takes on the aspect of a perverse litany.

Vigorously though Kozma condemns the bogomil heresies, as a man of intellectual honesty he is compelled to admit that the established church is not perfect. Monks, who have withdrawn from the world and should be ideal representatives of the Orthodox faith, all too often are unworthy men not only insufficiently cognizant of the seriousness of their calling but also very subject to that most heinous of sins, spiritual pride. At one point Kozma even comes close to wondering how the monastic ideal differs from the bogomil belief that the Christian should abandon the things of this world, such as wife and family, and retire to the wilderness, but he manages to sidestep the problem. In terms little less powerful than those he employs polemically against the Bogomils, Kozma adjures Orthodox Christians to adhere to the highest ideals. Though he anathematized the heretics, then, he also saw the beam in his own eye and attacked his unworthy allies quite sharply. In the process he wrote one of the liveliest works of the medieval period.

After Prezviter Kozma (if we assume he wrote in the latter part of the tenth century), the literary vineyards bore meager fruit for centuries. What writings of the period we do possess are of little esthetic worth and sometimes were not even composed in Bulgarian. In the eleventh century a Greek prelate, Archbishop Teofilakt, memorialized Ohrid's ancient traditions with a *žitie* of Kliment Oxridski. The *žitie* supplies some information on Kliment's life, but it was written in Greek and its author does not conceal his low opinion of the Bulgarian people and their language. A monument dating from the twelfth century is the folk *žitie* of Ivan Rilski. St. Ivan Rilski (ca. 876-946) was one of the earliest and greatest of the native saints, and his relics were perhaps the most peripatetic in Bulgarian ecclesiastical history. After his death they were deposited in Sofia. Subsequently, in 1183, they were exhibited as far away as Hungary before being returned to Sofia. Later they were moved to Tŕnovo before they finally came to rest in the Rila Monastery south of Sofia, the most famous monastery of medieval and modern Bulgaria. A *žitie* of Ivan Rilski was presumably composed soon after his demise, but it has not been preserved. However, it must have been used as a source for the folk *žitie*, written by an anonymous author in the twelfth century sometime before 1183, since he says nothing about the display of the saint's relics in that year. The *žitie* was intended to be widely read, and evidently was, for it has come down to us in multiple copies. It is an apotheosis of a simple man, a shepherd, who attained sanctity while dwelling in the very midst of the Bulgarian people (places and things associated with him may still be seen, according to the author) and who serves as a powerful intercessor for Bulgarian believers.

Another popular work of the twelfth century is the so-called "Solunska legenda" (Legend of Salonika), a brief account of the life of Konstantin-Kiril which patriotically sets the Bulgarian nation above even the Greek, much as Černorizec Xrabŕ had done some centuries before. Both the "Solunska legenda" and the *žitie* of Ivan Rilski bear witness to a revived interest in the nation's halcyon days during the discouraging period of Byzantine overlordship. The memory of better times has often been a source of comfort for the Bulgarians in years of trial.

A totally fantastic species of history is presented in another monument of this time, the *Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle*, written after the middle of the eleventh century. The apocalyptic first part contains bogomil ideas in the description of Isaiah's ascension into Heaven and his mission to inform people of the Day of Judgment. The second portion promotes mostly an idealized version of Bulgarian history, and although much of it

is fictional, it did make the reader realize that the Bulgarian state at one point had been a mighty entity, especially under Czar Petar, who was asserted to have ruled for twelve years, during which time the land enjoyed great prosperity.

By the thirteenth century Bulgaria had long since freed itself from Byzantium and commenced the formation of the Second Empire, with its capital at Tarnovo, the city which in modern historical tradition embodies the quintessence of the Bulgarian national spirit. And yet literature did not revive. A no more than semi-literary work of the early part of the century is the *Borilovijat sinodik*, produced by the special church council called in 1211 by Czar Boril to condemn Bogomilism. Much of the *Sinodik* is merely a translation of Byzantine imprecations against heretics with some original anathemas against Bulgarian heretics added, the sort of curses Prezviter Kozma utilized and which were common in medieval church practice: "On those who say that Satan created Adam and Eve, anathema.... On those who do not confess that the Son of God is the creator of Heaven and Earth, threefold anathema...". Though the *Borilovijat sinodik* can only with some indulgence be regarded as literature, after it the thirteenth century saw almost nothing written. But this was the prelude to a more fruitful period.

B. THE SILVER AGE OF OLD BULGARIAN LITERATURE AND ITS SUBSEQUENT DECLINE (FOURTEENTH TO EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES)

In 1185 the boyar brothers Asen and Petar headed a successful rebellion against the Byzantines, which resulted in the establishment of the Second Bulgarian Empire. During the Second Empire Bulgaria reached the apogee of her political might and territorial expansion, stretching from the Black Sea in the east to the Adriatic in the west, almost reaching Belgrade. Disunifying tendencies inevitably developed, however, and in the second half of the fourteenth century, for dynastic reasons, the country was divided into the Tarnovo and Vidin kingdoms. The Bulgarian rulers' shortsightedness combined with the ruthlessness of the Ottoman onslaught led to the greatest catastrophe in Bulgarian history, the fall of Tarnovo in 1393 (Vidin resisted until 1396). But the very imminence of political disaster, it seems, stimulated Bulgarian culture to produce the Silver Age of old Bulgarian literature.

The literature of the Golden Age had exuded confidence in the future,

for at the time it was produced a newly introduced Christian church was bent upon consolidating its position and eradicating all remnants of the old pagan beliefs. Authors were men of a practical turn of mind who wrote about their faith in a matter-of-fact manner. They were not plagued by doubts or, before the rise of Bogomilism, unsettled by effective opposition. Consequently the tone of the literary monuments of Czar Simeon's time had been one of healthy assertion and firm belief.

By the fourteenth century the intellectual atmosphere in Bulgaria had been considerably altered. At that point Christianity had been long established in the land and events and personalities were always viewed in a religious context. But the reigning ideology no longer displayed its youthful exuberance, and even when it was reformed it was modified in a deeply conservative spirit. The literary tone, no more healthy and firm, was set by an ill-defined, mystical movement: Hesychasm.

It is difficult to analyze Hesychastic doctrine with any precision, for the adherents of a mystical outlook always find it hard to describe their experiences and theories in words. Originating in the fourteenth century in the monasteries of Mt. Athos in Greece, the Holy Mount of Eastern Orthodoxy, Hesychasm soon spread to Bulgaria, Russia and other Slavic countries. Its adepts strove to cultivate the eternal and uncreated divine light through intensive contemplation and sought tranquility through silence. As a form of discipline the Hesychasts evidently meditated on their navels, something their opponents made fun of by terming them *umbilis animi*, or people with their souls in their navels. The Hesychastic movement proved not nearly so viable as Bogomilism, but it appeared at a highly strategic time for medieval Slavic literature.

Paradoxically enough, though Hesychasm encouraged contemplative silence, the Hesychasts who were writers became absorbed in questions of form rather than content, concerned with the word *qua* word and the interpretation of texts. Where form is involved, the literature of the period is interesting and elegant, while at the same time its content is stagnant. The era also saw a flowering of the graphic arts, as witness the miniatures provided for a Slavic translation of the Byzantine chronicle of Constantin Manasses made in the mid-fourteenth century and now preserved in the Vatican library. Another point about the Silver Age is that several of its representatives worked in emigration: after the Turkish conquest some made their way to Russia; others settled in Rumania and Serbia. The Silver Age was an exotic development of Bulgarian culture which managed to survive for a time in scattered areas even after the collapse of the state which gave it birth.

The central figure of the Silver Age was Patriarch Evtimij, who, in addition to being a prominent literary man, is also remembered as a great leader of the Bulgarian people in adversity. His followers revered him and sought to preserve his memory, so we know a great deal about his life from such sources as Grigorij Camblak's eulogy of him and writings by other contemporaries of his (Ioasaf Bdinski, Konstantin Kostenečki). Evtimij was born in Tǎrnovo, presumably sometime between 1325 and 1330, and almost certainly was educated in monasteries located in and around the capital. When Teodosij, the first great preacher of Hesychasm in Bulgaria, came to Tǎrnovo in 1350 to found a monastery there, Evtimij, by then already a monk, hastened to receive instruction from him. In 1363 Evtimij accompanied his mentor to Constantinople; subsequently he spent some time at Mt. Athos, imbibing Hesychasm at its source. About 1371 Evtimij returned to Tǎrnovo, where he settled in the Holy Trinity Monastery and laid the foundations of the 'Tǎrnovo literary school', which saw to such projects as the translation of service books. It was apparently at this point that Evtimij began the campaign to correct the errors which had crept into the church books over the years, a campaign with which his name has been linked ever since.

So far as we can judge from the writings of Evtimij's disciples — we have none of his own on the subject — he compared the Slavic service books with their Greek originals in order to eliminate corrupt readings which could give rise to heresy. He advocated a return to the standards of Kiril and Metodij because he believed antiquity should furnish the standard for modernity. The Word was of the utmost importance because it was thought equivalent to the concept, and therefore some order had to be brought into the use of words if one were to maintain seriously that the articles of the Christian faith were known and certain. On the more strictly linguistic level, Evtimij's concern for precision went beyond phrases and words all the way to individual letters: he was deeply interested in orthographical reform. On the literary level, he developed an ornate style which he transmitted to his followers. The elaboration of this style and the orthographical reform were the two major facets of the Evtimian linguistic revolution, which had a profound effect upon old Russian as well as old Bulgarian culture.

Evtimij did not limit his activities to the areas just discussed: he also played an active role in ecclesiastical politics. After his election to the Bulgarian patriarchate around 1375, he worked to reform his church and defended its independence from Constantinople. In 1379 he led the populace in greeting the Metropolitan of Kiev, Kiprian, when the latter

passed through Tŕnovo on his way to the Byzantine capital. After Tŕnovo's fall Evtimij retained the moral leadership of his flock. He was imprisoned for a period in Thrace, and probably lived out his last years in the Bačkovŕ Monastery before dying around the turn of the century. He is now one of the most universally respected figures in Bulgarian history.

Patriarch Evtimij was the author of a number of extant literary works. Aside from his translations of church books and four epistles which deal with questions of narrowly theological interest (for example the problem of why God created the angels when in His foreknowledge He was aware they would fall from grace), his legacy consists primarily of *žitija* of saints and of eulogies. We now have four works in each of these genres: *žitija* of Ivan Rilski, Petka (Paraskeva) Tŕnovska, Ilarion Mŕglenski and Filoteja Temniška; and eulogies addressed to Constantine and Elena (the Roman Emperor and his mother), Nedelja, Mixail Voin and Ivan Polivotski.

In writing his *žitija* Evtimij followed the established hagiographical tradition but at the same time embroidered upon it. For instance, he prefaced his *žitie* of St. Ivan Rilski, based on the earlier folk *žitie*, with a treatise on asceticism. He lauded Ilarion Mŕglenski, a twelfth-century bishop, as an ideal ecclesiastical statesman and a defender of orthodoxy against heresy. The *žitie* of St. Petka, who lived probably in the tenth to eleventh centuries, is worth considering at slightly greater length as an example of Patriarch Evtimij's hagiographical style. He commences his account of Petka's life, not with the established disclaimer as to his unworthiness to undertake her biography, but rather with a lyrical introduction comparing the joy afforded by meditation upon saints' lives to the freshness engendered by the warm rays of the spring sun and proclaiming the spiritual benefits to be derived from reading the lives of such saints as Petka. Evtimij begins the *žitie* proper with the expected comments on the piety of Petka's parents. After telling of her feats in life, he recounts in detail a miracle attendant upon her death, when she appeared in a vision to a certain poor man, complaining that a sailor's stinking corpse had been buried near her incorruptible remains and demanding that they be transferred to a more suitable place. The request was granted with alacrity. Although Petka was reputed to have accomplished many miracles for others after her death, Evtimij avoids describing them, treating instead the removal of her relics from her native town to Tŕnovo. Evtimij also composed a litany of blessing for parts of the saint's body reminiscent of the one in the Eulogy of Konstantin-Kiril: "I envy thy hands, which

were ever constant in labor and never tired! I envy thy feet as well, for they never grew fatigued during night-long vigils!" He concluded the *žitie* with a sequence of elaborate rhetorical apostrophes of his subject.

Evtimij's eulogies, though similar to his *žitija*, are more lyrical and contain less biographical information as well as a more prominent panegyric element in the introduction and conclusion. Evtimij's eulogies were detailed, lengthy and flowery by comparison with those of the Golden Age. They were also widely read.

Patriarch Evtimij's immediate literary following consisted of Metropolitan Kiprian, Grigorij Camblak, Konstantin Kostenečki and Ioasaf Bdinski. As most of them worked in some place other than Tǎrnovo, the influence of the Tǎrnovo literary school spread far beyond the capital's confines.

Kiprian, for instance, carried the Evtimian tradition to Russia. For some time he was thought to have been a Serb, but now it has been reasonably well established that he belonged to the wealthy merchant family of the Camblaks of Tǎrnovo, where he was born sometime in the 1330s. In 1364 he accompanied Evtimij to Mt. Athos and remained there for ten years before moving on to Constantinople in 1374 instead of returning to his native land. In Constantinople he so impressed the patriarch that he was dispatched on a special mission to mediate an ecclesiastical dispute in Russia. Once there he made himself such a prominent personage that in 1390 he was elected Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia. From then until his death in 1406 he played a key role in the early stages of Muscovite political consolidation. Chronologically he was the first to bring the Evtimian linguistic reforms to Russia: he put together service books, revised existing ones on the basis of the Greek originals, compiled an index of forbidden books, and introduced a conservative orthographical reform of the Russian language. He also did some writing of his own, but his literary activity properly belongs to the history of old Russian literature.

Another member of the Camblak family, Grigorij Camblak, remained nearer home than Kiprian. Grigorij recalled that in his boyhood he had seen his kinsman Kiprian during his visit of 1379, so he must have been born around 1365, presumably in the capital. He studied with Evtimij and also at Mt. Athos, turning up toward the end of the century as a refugee in Constantinople. Thereafter he went to Serbia, where he became abbot of a monastery and produced some important literary works. Around 1402 he traveled to Rumania and continued his scholarly activity there.

Later on he set out to visit Kiprian in Moscow but turned aside to Constantinople upon learning of the latter's death. Eventually, in 1414, he was elected Metropolitan of Kiev and had to deal with some difficult political and ecclesiastical problems before his death in 1420. Grigorij Camblak's career was truly international: his literary production belongs to the history of Serbian and Russian as well as Bulgarian literature.

Aside from several sermons, well known in Russia, the prime segment of Grigorij Camblak's legacy are *žitija* and eulogies, which, moreover, are valuable as historical sources since several of them were written about people whom Grigorij knew personally. His most significant work is a biography of the Serbian king Stefan (Stevan) Dečanski (died 1331), whose relics were preserved in the monastery where Grigorij was residing at the time of writing. A species of *žitie* deriving from the Evtimian tradition is the "Tale of the Transfer of Petka's Relics from Tǎrnovo to Vidin and Serbia", composed sometime after 1402, an adjunct to Evtimij's life of St. Petka. Two works glorifying persons with whom Camblak had been acquainted were his eulogy of Kiprian, composed a few years after his death in 1406 and extant in a single Russian copy, and a eulogy of Evtimij, probably written in 1415-1418 during Camblak's tenure as Metropolitan of Kiev. The "Eulogy" of Evtimij is reasonably extensive and resembles a *žitie*. After a rhetorical foreword Camblak describes the patriarch's childhood, utilizing nature comparisons reminiscent of Evtimij: "Just as selected saplings, which from the very beginning appear with straight branches, by their external appearance foretell to the cultivator's eye how beautiful they will be later, in the same way did [Evtimij] appear [as a child]." Since Evtimij was never canonized, Camblak does not attribute posthumous miracles to his relics, but he does praise the efficacy of his intercessions in life, as for example when he broke a terrible drought by praying. Throughout his eulogy Camblak employs a rhetoric of pathos: he says that "even the very stones of the city wept" at Evtimij's exile to Thrace by the Turkish conquerors. The "Eulogy" also exhibits the beginnings of an interest in character and personal psychology.

A third follower of Evtimij's was Ioasaf Bdinski, appointed Metropolitan of Vidin in 1392, shortly before that capital of a separatist state in medieval Bulgaria fell to the Turks in 1396. We know nothing of his fate after this, but in 1394 he journeyed to Tǎrnovo to bring St. Filoteja's relics back to Vidin. His sole literary work still extant is a eulogy of this same Filoteja, based on her *žitie* by Evtimij. The piece is quite derivative, although Ioasaf does add some original passages, especially a pathetic description of the devastation wrought by the Turks upon Tǎrnovo and

its lands. The "Eulogy" is of some value both as an historical and an ecclesiastical document.

The last important member of the Evtimian school, a student of a student of Evtimij's, was Konstantin Kostenečki, one of the more intriguing personages in old Bulgarian literature (he is usually treated in the history of Bulgarian letters even though he spent most of his life in Serbian exile). It is uncertain where Konstantin was born, though if we judge by the epithet "Kostenečki" it would seem likely that he came into the world in the village of Kostenec, sometime around 1380. About the turn of the century he sought refuge in the Bačkovó Monastery, where he remained until approximately 1410, when further Turkish incursions compelled him to flee to Serbia. There he was kindly received by King Stefan Lazarević (reigned 1389-1427) and eventually settled in Belgrade. After 1431 we lose sight of him entirely.

Konstantin Kostenečki is credited with one translation and three original works. The latter are: an account of a journey to Palestine, which may possibly have been translated from the Greek after all; a *žitie* of Stefan Lazarević; and the *Skazanie izjavlenno o pismenex* (Treatise on Letters).

The Palestinian travelogue is of little interest for the reader of modern times. Konstantin's literary talent is most apparent in his *žitie* of Stefan Lazarević, written in 1431 after the death of the man who had done so much for Serbian culture. Konstantin sets the subject of his biography in the context of his time, for this purpose including in his work considerable geographical and historical material. However, his convoluted style makes the reading of the *žitie* a philological feat and diminishes its esthetic value. Furthermore, since strictly speaking the *žitie* belongs to the history of Serbian literature, there is no need to dwell upon it here.

The *Skazanie izjavlenno o pismenex*, on the other hand, is an original and interesting work which deserves greater attention, although it too is more closely linked with the history of Serbian than Bulgarian literature. When the reader succeeds in penetrating the thickets of Konstantin's syntax he usually obtains something worthwhile. Dedicated to Stefan Lazarević, the work consists of four parts: a short introduction; a table of contents; the body of the treatise, divided into 40 chapters; and an encoded inscription at the conclusion made up of the first letters of each of the forty chapters.

Being something of an internationalist, Konstantin expounds the view that Russian is the most nearly perfect Slavic language and that Kiril and

Metodij translated the Scriptures into Russian with an admixture of other Slavic tongues. But this question is not crucial for him, since he places greatest stress upon orthography and the formal, external appearance of language: for him, to understand a thing is to be able to name it correctly. He even links what he considers the low state of morality in contemporary Serbia to the fact that insufficient attention had been given to orthography, thus emerging with a rather unusual explanation for the breakdown of law and order in society. Not that the graphic form of the word is so vital in and of itself, but as the word and the essence of the thing denoted are equivalent, incorrect language may lead at best to misunderstandings, at worst to heresies. It follows that faultless orthography and correct texts are of the utmost importance, and that variant readings in the Scriptures must be eliminated at any cost. Konstantin recognizes that the existence of different languages, each with a different word denoting the same thing, undermines his argument. He attempts to resolve the difficulty at least partially by adopting an anthropomorphic approach and holding that languages occur in families. The Hebrew language is a paternal one, he wrote, the Greek language is a maternal one, and the various Slavic languages are as children, who must obey their progenitors when conflicts arise.

Konstantin extended his theories down to individual letters. He believed that each letter possessed its own special significance and contended, for example, that it was no chance matter that certain letters never began a word. He wished to preserve all the differences between various letters and retain some odd letters even though they had first appeared only in the fifteenth century. He also applied the anthropomorphic approach to letters. The consonants, Konstantin said, are like men, the vowels like women: the former command and the latter obey. The diacritical marks inserted in manuscripts over vowels (their significance is not always clear to us now) are analogous to women's hats, which it is improper for men to wear. Just as women may remove their hats when at home and in the presence of men, so vowels accompanied by consonants may be written without diacritical marks. It will be obvious from this summary that Konstantin's theories are of little use as serious explanations of anything, but they are frequently entertaining, and some of the information on the language of his day which he throws out in the course of elaborating his hypotheses is of value to historical linguists.

After 1393, then, Bulgarian culture survived for a time in scattered areas. Following the Turkish invasion literary life centered in the churches

and monasteries, especially those in the western part of Bulgaria, which were farthest from the center of Turkish power. Serbia granted refuge to such men of letters as Konstantin Kostenečki, Grigorij Camblak and — possibly at the end of his life — Ioasaf Bdinski, in addition to extending its general influence into western Bulgaria and Macedonia. This could occur because the Serbian state continued to exist until 1459, because portions of western Bulgaria and Macedonia were under the archbishop of Ohrid, and because in the sixteenth century books suitable for distribution in Bulgarian areas began to be printed in Serbia.

After Konstantin Kostenečki passed from the scene in the early part of the fifteenth century, Bulgarian literature almost ceased to exist, just as it had following the Golden Age. In what remained of the fifteenth century only two men attained any literary prominence: Vladislav Gramatik and Dimitar Kantakuzin, both of whom flourished in the decades between 1460 and 1480.

Vladislav Gramatik is a shadowy figure. It is not even certain that he was ethnically a Bulgarian, as he was born in a Serbian town in the 1420s, but he is nonetheless usually claimed as one by historians of Bulgarian literature. After his native town was sacked by the Turks in 1455 he moved on to the Žegligovo Monastery, where he probably resided until his death, sometime after 1480. It is likely that he visited the Rila Monastery, where he learned something of the life of St. Ivan Rilski.

Vladislav Gramatik was more nearly a scholarly compiler than an original litterateur. His production includes a *Šestodnev* (Hexaameron, probably a translation of that by St. John Chrysostom); a more original "Rilska povest" (Tale of Rila), describing the translation of St. Ivan Rilski's relics from Tarnovo to the Rila Monastery in 1469 and extant in both a long and short redaction; and four compilations: one written in 1455-1456 containing a detailed autobiographical note and displaying an anti-Catholic bias, as the Roman church was then attempting to increase its influence in Vladislav's area; the Zagreb compilation of 1469, a standard collection of *vitae*, sermons by church fathers, articles on Christian doctrine, eulogies and historical tales; a compilation of 1473 containing thirty-one sermons; and the Rila compilation of 1479. The collections are mainly of scholarly or ecclesiastical interest, for Vladislav Gramatik rarely included anything of his own in them.

The other major writer of the period, Dimitar Kantakuzin, probably came from a prominent Byzantine family which had settled in the Balkans. He was connected with Vladislav Gramatik and the Rila Monastery: in 1466 he commissioned a 'panegyric' collection put together

by Vladislav Gramatik, which he then donated to the Rila Monastery in 1469. In all likelihood he died toward the end of the fifteenth century.

Kantakuzin, who was evidently a man of means, not only subsidized Vladislav Gramatik's labors, but himself wrote original works of greater literary value than Gramatik's. He is best remembered for three items: a service in honor of Ivan Rilski; a *žitie* of the same saint; and the verse "Prayer to the Holy Virgin". It has recently been discovered that two further eulogies and an epistle belong to him.

The *žitie* of Ivan Rilski was probably written around 1 July, 1469, the day when the saint's relics were transferred to the newly revived Rila Monastery; it was perhaps read at the monastery itself. Unfortunately for Bulgarian national sensitivities, Kantakuzin's *žitie* may have been first composed in Greek, and if not it certainly followed ornate Byzantine models. Like Ioasaf Bdinski, Kantakuzin painted a melancholy picture of Bulgaria's lot under Turkish rule in the *žitie*.

Kantakuzin's best work is the "Prayer", which has survived in variants of 250 and 312 lines. A strong Byzantine influence is detectible in this work as well as the *žitie* of Ivan Rilski. Except for its concluding portion, the poem's organizing principle is repetition of the first word of each line: ordinarily four, occasionally two, consecutive lines will begin with the same word. The prayer is a highly rhetorical but still sincere plea to the Virgin for her aid in combatting sins:

Thou, oh Virgin, art my hope,
Thou art my faith and refuge,
Thou art my intercessor and salvation,
Thou art my protection, advocate and aid.

Kantakuzin's moving supplication is among the most impressive prayers in old Bulgarian literature.

After Vladislav Gramatik and Dimitar Kantakuzin, Bulgarian literature of the late fifteenth century and the sixteenth century had little to offer. The cultural center of gravity shifted from Tarnovo to Sofia, at that time called Sredec. What literature was produced was less aristocratic than the writing of the Silver Age, more involved with the cruel reality of Turkish oppression. Although the two chief surviving works of the sixteenth century were cast in the traditional hagiographic form, in each instance the author was chronicling the life of a martyr who had been his own spiritual son. Consequently the hagiographers were writing not of some vague saint who had lived perhaps centuries before, as did Evtimij, but rather of men whose martyrdom they themselves had witnessed.

Their *žitija* therefore possess an immediacy unprecedented in Bulgarian literature.

The first member of the sixteenth century 'Sofia school' is known only as *pop* Pejo (priest Pejo). We have almost no information about him, although it may be surmised that he lived at the end of the fifteenth century and during the first decades of the sixteenth century, that he was a priest, most likely an important one, in a Sofia church, that he traveled extensively, and that he was reasonably well off financially, since the Turks criticized him for being excessively concerned with money and the things of this world. *Pop* Pejo's contribution to literature was a *žitie* of St. Georgi Novi (the adjective 'New' distinguishes him from the better-known St. George), martyred in Sofia in February 1515, and a liturgy in Georgi's honor. The *žitie*, composed soon after Georgi's death at the age of only eighteen, was designed to encourage the Bulgarians to resist forcible conversion by the Turks. Georgi was born into a quite ordinary family in the village of Kratovo and learned goldworking. As he was endowed with extraordinary physical and spiritual beauty, the Turks attempted to lure him from the true faith by both persuasion and deceit. When Georgi, with *pop* Pejo's support, rebuffed their efforts, the enraged Turks executed him by burning near the historic church of St. Sofia. Afterwards *pop* Pejo was permitted to give the martyr a solemn burial in another Sofia church. The point the hagiographer wishes to make in his *žitie* of Georgi Novi is clear: the martyr furnished a shining example of faithfulness to Christianity even unto death. In order to emphasize his message, Pejo occasionally puts long speeches into Georgi's mouth which the latter surely never dreamed of making and markedly idealizes his character. In other areas, however, Pejo is a typically matter-of-fact Bulgarian: for instance he neglects to describe any miracles connected with Georgi's martyrdom. In general old Bulgarian saints' lives exhibit much less interest in miracles, especially posthumous ones, than the *vitae* of old Russian hagiographers. *Pop* Pejo participated too directly in the events he chronicled to be tempted to describe miracles which never occurred. The miracle of Georgi's steadfastness was sufficient for him.

The second major work of sixteenth-century Bulgarian literature, Matej Gramatik's *žitie* of Nikola Novi the martyr, resembles the *žitie* of Georgi Novi and was written for much the same reasons. Presumably a native of Sofia, Matej Gramatik probably lived during the middle decades of the century and held an important ecclesiastical post in the capital. He was a very cultured man by the standards of his time.

The *žitie* of Nikola Novi was written soon after the subject's martyrdom

in 1555 in Sofia. Like Georgi, Nikola was a son of the common people, a cobbler; but he was older than his predecessor, a man with a family who had traveled and who knew something of the world. For a while in 1554, it seemed that the Turks had succeeded in converting him, but after a period of brooding, at Easter of the following year he announced publicly that he was a Christian. The Turks thereupon brought him to trial and executed him by stoning outside the city. Matej's *žitie*, the longest one in Bulgarian literature, follows the old Byzantine and Bulgarian models, with extensive introduction and theological digressions. It is of historical interest not only because of the author's intimate knowledge of the events he recounts but also because he is a local patriot who describes the life and architectural monuments of Sofia, subjects not ordinarily treated in hagiographies. Thus the *žitie* of Nikola Novi represents a fusion of the traditional with the new: the old hagiographical forms are combined with an interest in the historical milieu, a focus upon a hero from the common people and — especially — attention to the critical question of the Islamization of the Bulgarian population.

In the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries Bulgarian literature, though it remained firmly under church control and consequently dealt largely with problems of religious doctrine and church life, all the same strove to reach an ever more extensive audience through the distribution of manuscript copies over a wide geographical area. A relatively large number of persons had access to the more popularized ecclesiastical literature of the last century and a half before the beginning of the Bulgarian Renaissance.

Though Sofia was the primary center of Bulgarian cultural life for a brief period in the sixteenth century, over the next two centuries most literary production issued from monasteries scattered all over the country. The main vehicles of literary expression were *sbornici*, or compilations, which differed from earlier ones in that they were intended for a broader reading public and were written in language closer to the vernacular. It is customary to distinguish two types of compilations: compilations of miscellaneous content (*sbornici sas smeseno sadaržanie*) and the so-called *damaskini*. In practice it is difficult to establish a clear line between the two, but the *damaskini* were composed of *vitae* and sermons by the Greek churchman Damaskin Studit (died 1580), who lived in Salonika. The miscellaneous compilations also included sermons by Damaskin, but in addition they contained a larger proportion of other items, such as apocrypha, *žitija*, sermons by church fathers, didactic stories and legends, and excerpts from chronicles.

Damaskin Studit's best-known collection, published under the title of *Thesaurus* (Treasure) about the middle of the sixteenth century, was eventually translated into Bulgarian at least ten different times. *Damaskini*, properly so called, began to appear at the end of that century and continued to be compiled as late as the nineteenth century; thus they survived for an extraordinarily long time and were an important part of the tradition from which emerged the pioneers of the Bulgarian Renaissance. Among the compilers, termed *damaskinari*, the most prominent was Iosif Bradati. Bradati was a monk attached to the Rila Monastery possibly from 1690 to 1757, which means that he must have reached an advanced age. He traveled extensively about the country collecting money for the monastery and also distributing his compilations, of which at least six (some copied by others) have survived to this day. Iosif Bradati's *sbornici* circulated widely partly as a result of the circumstance that he could establish personal acquaintances with leading churchmen because of his position at the Rila Monastery, partly because he wrote in the vernacular and not only translated sermons but adapted them in a lively, colloquial manner. He discussed problems of immediate concern to his readers: for example, he gave mothers advice on raising their daughters — girls, he says, should "have a sense of modesty, not laugh or tell jokes, and close their ears to evil words". The *damaskini* were in part a practical guide to the moral life.

A much less important literary genre of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is represented by the *letopisni beležki* (historical marginalia) written wherever convenient on the pages of books and compilations. The chief instance of such writing is a two-page note by *pop* Metodij Draginov, dating from 1657, describing the forced conversion to Islam of a group of Bulgarians.

These, then, are the gray-green hillocks in the wasteland of Bulgarian literature after the Turkish invasion. The Turkish occupation was long, arduous, and not at all conducive to literary activity. But culture still clung to life, and the Renaissance was approaching.

II

THE BULGARIAN RENAISSANCE (1762-1878)

In his stimulating essay on the beginnings of the Bulgarian Renaissance¹ the eminent literary historian Bojan Penev describes the conditions prevailing in his country before and during the Renaissance. Some sense of Bulgarian national identity survived, he comments, because the Turks differed too sharply from the Bulgarians in language, religion and culture to assimilate their subjects easily. Furthermore, as the Turkish population preferred to settle in the rural lowlands, many mountain areas and cities were granted privileges which helped them keep the Bulgarian spirit alive: thus the people of Gabrovo were not obliged to accept Turkish settlers at all, and that city later became an active center of Bulgarian nationalism. In addition, the mountains furnished a natural refuge for Bulgarian rebels waging partisan warfare against the occupier. Consequently, it is not astonishing that mountain towns supplied a remarkably large portion of the prominent revolutionaries and educators active during the Renaissance.

Greek influence, Penev goes on, was more subtle and in some respects more pernicious than Turkish oppression because the Greeks were on the whole culturally superior to the Bulgarians. This meant that those who wished to advance their fortunes were strongly tempted to hellenize themselves. A large portion of the Bulgarian church hierarchy was hellenized, and the urban population became thoroughly Grecophile. The adjective "Greek" was thought of by many as equivalent to "educated". Private and business correspondence was frequently conducted either in Greek or in Bulgarian written in the Greek alphabet. From time

¹ Bojan Penev, *Načalo na bŭlgarskoto vŕzraždane*, Sofia, 1929. Although the Bulgarian word *vŕzraždane* is ordinarily translated by the English 'Renaissance', the term here is not what it is in the phrase 'Italian Renaissance', which denotes a blossoming of humane learning and a turn to the models of classical antiquity. The Bulgarian Renaissance not only began much later, it was also largely ecclesiastical, at least in its early stages, and effected chiefly a resuscitation of the Bulgarian national spirit, which had been stifled by centuries of Turkish and Greek oppression.

to time the Greek cause was promoted by native propagandists. For example, about 1760 a certain *pop* Daniil published a small dictionary and phrasebook covering Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian and Rumanian, in which could be found some verses beginning:

Albanians, Wallachians, foreigners, rejoice,
And prepare to become Greeks all.
Reject your barbarian language and customs
And shortly your descendants will forget all about them.

The hellenizing pressure was so great that some convinced Bulgarian nationalists of the nineteenth century even preached their doctrines in Greek (the pure Bulgarian language was best preserved in the rural areas, especially among women). For a time the Hellenistic threat to Bulgarian nationhood was such that the Bulgarians are said to have endured a 'double yoke', Turkish and Greek.

Some western influences did reach Bulgaria, in the eighteenth century mostly by way of Serbia. A prime channel of western ideas was Dubrovnik, a major link during that era between western Europe and the South Slavs generally. In Bulgarian cities like Ruse, Varna, Šumen, Tarnovo and Plovdiv Dubrovnik maintained colonies which served not only to advance Dubrovnik's commercial interests, but to disseminate notions of constitutional government and legality as well. Serbs and Bulgarians also met in Austrian Serbia and at Mt. Athos, where monks from the various Orthodox Slavic countries congregated. Indeed in the eighteenth century and earlier it was often difficult to tell whether an individual born in a border area was a Serb or a Bulgarian. Consequently, in the early days books were published for the South Slavs as a whole. Thus in 1741 in Vienna, a center of South Slavic émigré cultural activity, was printed the *Stematografija* by Xristofor Žefarovič. It is uncertain whether Žefarovič was a Serb or a Bulgarian, for in his book he refers to both countries as his fatherland. The volume contained pictures of Bulgarian and Serbian czars and saints, together with coats of arms of all the Slavic countries, each coat of arms accompanied by a poem of an historical nature. Another book intended for the South Slavs generally was one by the Serbian historian Jovan Rajić (his father was a Bulgarian) entitled *Istorija raznih slavyanskix narodov, najpače bolgar, xorvatov i serbov* (*History of Various Slavic Peoples, Principally the Bulgarians, Croats and Serbs*, 1794-1795). Finally, as we shall see, toward the end of the Renaissance Serbia was quite important in the plans of Bulgarian revolutionaries.

Russian influence in Bulgaria during the first three or four centuries of

the Turkish occupation was significant. Later, when Russia and Turkey fought a series of wars during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Bulgarians looked with alternating hope and despair to the Russian Empire as their liberator. With each war Russia came closer to freeing Bulgaria, and when the deed was finally done Russia laid claim to a debt of gratitude which has not been completely paid to this day. In the final decades preceding the liberation a number of Bulgarian intellectuals studied or at least lived for a time in Russia. Many Bulgarian students were brought to Russian universities, especially Moscow University, by the 'Slavic Benevolent Committees' formed by Russian Slavophiles; Odessa became a major center of the Bulgarian emigration. In the closing phases of the Renaissance Russian influence was paramount in Bulgaria.

In passing, one may note an interesting contrast between the beginnings of modern Russian literature, starting from about 1730, and the early period of the Bulgarian Renaissance, from 1762 to around 1840. Under Turkish rule Bulgarian society was much more egalitarian than Russian society of the eighteenth century. At that time Russia possessed a hereditary aristocracy widely separated from the common people, and the rapid development of eighteenth century Russian literature was in great measure — though not entirely — the work of those either born to the aristocracy or actively supported by it. Usually, well-educated Russian writers were familiar with some non-Slavic foreign culture, especially French or German. They could therefore import contemporary western literary modes into Russia and in this fashion quickly bring her abreast of the West. In Bulgaria, on the other hand, the hereditary aristocracy had been eradicated by the Turks, and the aristocracy of wealth (the *čorbadžii*) remained comparatively close to the people, especially in their unconcern for matters cultural. As a result Bulgaria required a long time to accumulate the 'cultural capital' to invest in a modern literature. Moreover, Russian literature passed almost entirely from ecclesiastical keeping to that of the secular aristocracy around 1730; but in Bulgaria, where there was no secular aristocracy, literature and culture remained for years — almost entirely to the beginning of the nineteenth century, to a lesser extent until about 1840, in significant measure even down to the liberation — in the care of monks, bishops and other churchmen. The secular intelligentsia did not really begin to emerge until around 1840. Thus the aristocratic period of Russian literature which filled the space between the ecclesiastical writing of old Russia and the 'democratic' era of nineteenth-century realism did not exist in Bulgaria. The ecclesiastical

and 'democratic' periods in Bulgarian literature overlapped, and churchmen contributed to the secularization of Bulgarian culture.

Finally, Rumania also played a part in the Bulgarian Renaissance. The Rumanian language is of Romance origin — though it has borrowed many Slavic words in the course of the centuries and has lent some of its own to Bulgarian — and Rumanian culture was not sufficiently superior to the Bulgarian to affect it strongly. Still, the two countries were joined by their common Orthodox faith and geographical propinquity. In the decades immediately preceding the liberation, Rumania, as it enjoyed a more autonomous status than Bulgaria within the Turkish Empire, sheltered Bulgarian refugees, who gathered in cities like Braila, located near the Danube which separates the two countries, and Bucharest, situated in the southern part of Rumania. Such revolutionaries as Xristo Botev, Ljuben Karavelov and Vasil Levski used Rumania as a sanctuary from which to mount forays into Bulgaria and even, during the 1876 uprising, as a staging ground for the formation of armed insurgent bands to be sent into Bulgaria. But Bulgarian revolutionaries in Rumania always felt like foreigners, as the title of Ivan Vazov's story about them, "Nemili-nedragi" (Unloved and Unwanted), more than implies. The Bulgarians could cultivate a certain affection for the Serbs and the Russians, for all that the latter lived under an oppressive regime some of the time; feelings toward the Greeks could range from toadying admiration for their power and culture to incandescent fury against them; the Turks could be universally hated; but between the Bulgarians and the Rumanians there was an invisible wall. The Rumanians could tolerate and assist their neighbors, but they could never genuinely take them in.

If it be understood that, as with all similar chronological breakdowns, one phase does not end abruptly in a certain year to yield place to another, but that a sizeable overlap is involved, the history of the Bulgarian Renaissance may be conveniently divided into three segments: from 1762 to 1825, from 1825 to the Crimean War (1853-1856), and from the Crimean War to the liberation of Bulgaria through the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. It is universally agreed that the Renaissance was initiated by the monk Paisij Xilendarski, of whom little is known with certainty. Paisij was in effect an *émigré* for much of his life: his appellation is derived from the Hilendar Monastery, one of those inhibited by Bulgarian monks on Mt. Athos in Greece. The question of his birthplace has long been a matter of dispute, but it is now commonly believed that

he was born in the village of Bansko. Paisij himself wrote that he arrived at Mt. Athos in 1745, which would mean that he must have been born about 1722 in order to have been of an age to travel to Greece and enter a monastery then. At Mt. Athos Paisij first took up residence in the Hilendar Monastery, where his elder brother was abbot; then in 1762 he moved to the Zograf Monastery, where he remained until 1791. In these years he occasionally toured Bulgaria, visiting such areas as Loveč and Pirot, in the capacity of a *taksidiot*, or a monk who solicited funds for the support of his monastery. He apparently also journeyed to Jerusalem in 1777-1780, thus earning the title of *xadži* (hadji). Paisij died perhaps around 1798, although the monastery records are so scanty and unreliable that we cannot be entirely certain of this.

We know something of the way in which Paisij prepared his epoch-making *Slavjano-bŭlgarska istorija* (History of the Bulgarian Slavs) from an autobiographical note appended by the author to the text when he completed it in 1762. Here the monk writes of his having been "gradually consumed by zeal and pity for my Bulgarian people, as there was no history collected of the glorious deeds of the earliest days of our people, saints and czars. Furthermore, the Serbs and the Greeks have twitted us many times because we did not have our own history." No people could maintain a sense of nationhood without a history, so when Paisij once traveled to the *nemska zemja* (Austria) and there discovered a quantity of information on Bulgarian history, his patriotism was aroused and he became so absorbed in his investigations as to forget the "headaches" and "stomach trouble" from which he had suffered theretofore. He worked mostly in the Hilendar Monastery, but also in the Zograf Monastery. He evidently required about two years for his research; he made no secret of the fact that he was primarily collecting information from various sources while adding little of his own, a circumstance which links his *Istorija* to such earlier compilations as the *Damaskini*. His chief sources were the *Annales ecclesiastici* of Cesare Baronio (1538-1607), published in Rome from 1588 to 1607, consulted in a Russian translation of 1687; and *Il Regno degli Slavi* (1601) by Mauro Orbini (died 1614 in Dubrovnik), read in a Russian translation of 1722. Paisij sometimes incorporated whole segments from these books into his history, sometimes revised passages from them so as to make them more interesting for the Bulgarian reader. Paisij justified this method in his introductory remarks by saying that "although one can find a little bit written briefly in many books about the Bulgarians, not everyone can own these books so as to read and remember them, so I took thought and gathered everything in one

place." Under the circumstances the derivative character of Paisij's *Istorija* was of no significance; its importance derives, not from its interpretation of preceding history, but from its impact upon subsequent history.

The *Istorija* is divided into several sections of unequal length, some with signpost headings in which the author addresses his reader directly: "Pay Attention Here, Reader, And We Shall Tell You Something About the Serbian Kings." It begins with a disquisition, taken from Baronio, on the value of the study of history for an understanding of the human situation. Next comes a foreword of Paisij's own in which he expounds his objectives in undertaking his labor. The third and longest part presents an overview of Bulgarian history with a surprising amount of attention given to the history of the Bulgarian state before its Christianization, an imbalance attributable to the nature of Paisij's sources. Though fundamentally concerned with the Bulgarians, for the sake of South Slavic solidarity Paisij then inserts a brief section on the Serbs. Finally he concludes with something resembling old Bulgarian thumbnail eulogies of czars and saints, particularly Kiril and Metodij. The entire work is capped by an autobiographical note, which was also in the old Bulgarian tradition.

For Paisij history had publicistic uses. His objective was to arouse the Bulgarian national consciousness, even if he had to idealize Bulgarian history in the process. He heatedly berated those contemporaries of his who held that the Bulgarian state never even had a past: "Do you mean to say that the Bulgarians never had a kingdom and a state? ... The Bulgarians were the most glorious of all the Slavic nations, they were the first to have czars, they were the first to have a patriarch, they were the first to be Christianized, they ruled over the greatest area." In short, the Bulgarians had every reason to be proud of their history. And if at that particular point in time they were a nation of simple people, shepherds and farmers and such, why Christ himself had come of a poor family and descended to earth precisely for the salvation of the common man, Paisij reminded his readers. The Greeks, he said, might have been wise and cultured, they might have disdained the crude Bulgarians, but even they had to admit that the Bulgarians were brave in battle and possessed an elemental energy denied the Greeks. The tragedy of Balkan history was that two peoples with such complementary characteristics should have fought each other instead of cooperating to prevent the Turks from conquering both. Paisij was no fanatic Grecophobe, although he did not especially like the Greeks either: he wished merely to convince his

Bulgarian readers that they were not inferior to the Greeks in the overall view.

Paisij was fully aware that a national language is a major ingredient of national consciousness. Consequently he heaped scorn ("stupid man", "madman") upon those countrymen of his who became hellenized to the extent of forgetting their native language. His concern for Bulgarian linguistic independence was expressed in the most frequently quoted sentence from the *Istoriija*: "Oh Bulgarian, don't be deceived, know your own nation and language and study in your own language!"

The monk of Hilendar realized that in order for his *Istoriija* to have its intended effect it should be reproduced by hand and distributed throughout Bulgaria. In 1765 the man who would later become Sofronij Vračanski, bishop of Vraca and the most important figure after Paisij in the first period of the Renaissance, made an early copy in response to Paisij's plea: "Copy this history and pay for it to be copied by those who can write and preserve it so that it will not vanish!" It is known that a second copy was made in Samokov in 1771, and still others appeared in the eighteenth century. In addition, there surely existed more which have not survived, dating from both the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Unhappily this was insufficient, for though Bulgarian books began to be published in 1806, no printed version of Paisij's work came out until 1844, and Bulgarian society did not become wholly cognizant of its debt to him until the scholar Marin Drinov published a major article on him in 1871. Since then, however, Paisij has been given full credit for his key role in initiating the Bulgarian Renaissance.

One of Paisij's few immediate disciples at Mt. Athos was the monk Spiridon (died 1812), who evidently busied himself with historical investigations in the monastic libraries there. Like Paisij, Spiridon wished to rescue the Bulgarian past from the mists of oblivion, but he took his time about completing his *Istoriija vo kratce o bolgarskom narode slaven-skom* (Short history of the Slavic Bulgarian People). When it finally did appear in 1792 it turned out not to have been particularly worth waiting for.

Paisij Xilendarski's most eminent follower was Sofronij Vračanski (1739-1813). Born Stojko Vladislavov in the mountain village of Kotel, Sofronij was left an orphan at the age of eleven and taken in by an uncle. In the landmark year of 1762 he was ordained priest; three years later, in 1765, Paisij and Sofronij met in Kotel. In the late eighteenth century life in Bulgaria was disrupted by a series of Russo-Turkish wars, and eventually Sofronij abandoned Kotel to wander about the country. In 1794, largely

at his children's insistence, he accepted consecration as the bishop of Vraca, one of the more impoverished dioceses in an impoverished land, and took the name of Sofronij. After that time he also began to write. In 1802 he completed a collection of sermons and other pieces under the general title *Poučenija i slovoskazanija na praznikov Gospodnix* (Sermons and Homilies for Holy Days). Very similar to the *Damaskini* in conception, like them the *Poučenija* were never published. Two years later there followed Sofronij's most important work and the first autobiography in Bulgarian literature, *Žitie i stradanija grešnago Sofronija* (Life and Sufferings of the Sinful Sofronij, 1804). It is from this source that we obtain most of the information on the author's life until 1804 which we possess. In 1806 appeared his only published work, the first book to be printed in the modern Bulgarian language, the *Kiriakodromion, sireč nedelnik*, a collection of sermons and homilies issued in Rumania (all Bulgarian books printed before the liberation were published outside Bulgaria). Sofronij's other writings, which are of no literary interest, include the *Ispovedanie pravoslavnoj very*, a book expounding the fundamentals of the Orthodox, Jewish and Moslem faiths. Toward the end of his life we lose sight of Sofronij almost completely. As the last information we have on him dates from 1813, it is generally thought that he died in that year, but this is nothing more than an assumption. Nor do we know where he is buried, although he was an important figure in his day.

The popularity of Sofronij's *Nedelnik* of 1806 is demonstrated by the fact that it came out in four editions before the liberation (1806, 1856, 1865, 1868) and even more clearly by the fact that though the first edition was printed in 1000 copies, a large number for the time, before the appearance of the second edition demand for the *Nedelnik* was so great that the printed book was copied by hand. For a long time scholars thought that the *Nedelnik* was a straightforward translation of a *Kiriakodromion* published in Moscow in 1796, but more recent investigations have established that it is instead a collection of fifty-six sermons by a certain Ioann Kaleka, 10 others translated from Greek sources, and twenty-eight drawn from older Bulgarian collections. Be that as it may, the *Nedelnik's* popularity caused a similar volume by another compiler to be published in Bucharest in 1816.

Sofronij's niche in the history of Bulgarian literature, however, is secured not by the *Nedelnik*, but by his brief autobiography. As a work of art the latter is unimpressive: it is diffuse and rambling and written in very unsettled language (of course this latter was not the author's fault, as he had only the chaotic language of his time with which to work).

Nevertheless, in the absence of competition it is considered an outstanding monument of the period. Sofronij's models among Slavic autobiographies were presumably *protopop* Avvakum's Russian *Žitie* of the 1670's and also the autobiography published in 1783 by the Serb Dositej Obradović. Unlike Avvakum, Sofronij does not present himself as a martyr for a great cause; his *Žitie* merely chronicles the events of his life for the edification or entertainment of the reading public without placing them in any larger historical context. Sofronij does not refer at all to important contemporaries: most especially, he does not mention his meeting with Paisij in 1765. Instead he concentrates on personal matters, such as descriptions of his illnesses and what he thought about things as they were happening to him. Being a man of some intellectual honesty, he refuses to idealize himself or his associates. Thus he relates that after his mother died his father married a "ferocious and envious" woman with whom he, Sofronij, was very unhappy. When he was only eighteen, young and inexperienced, his relatives compelled him to marry and go into debt for the sake of his wife, who then made life miserable for him because of their poverty: "she was a little prideful", he comments wryly. Sofronij's life was an ordinary one, of minimal intrinsic interest. He was no hero. When a Turk once aimed a rifle at him and threatened to kill him if he did not embrace Islam, Sofronij, his mouth dry from fear, attempted to turn away wrath with a soft answer: "Why should you want to kill a priest?" When the Turk thereupon required of him something less drastic than the abandonment of the Christian faith, Sofronij hastened to comply with his wishes. Stylistically Sofronij's autobiography is not remarkable. It continues the conversational tradition followed in Paisij's *Istorija*: for instance the author addresses the reader directly and also employs rhetorical questions and exclamations. Occasionally a glint of humor shows through.

In addition to Paisij and Sofronij, the not very numerous group of prominent cultural and literary figures over the period 1762-1825 included Dr. Petar Beron (ca. 1795-1871): although he lived almost until the liberation, he did his most important work early in life. Dr. Beron was born in Kotel, like Sofronij, of a family ruined by the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812. He studied medicine in Heidelberg and Munich, lived in Germany, France and England, and wrote in French, German, Greek and Latin in addition to Bulgarian. He was thus Bulgaria's first genuine European, the first Bulgarian broadly acquainted with modern European culture. His reputation rests upon the famous *Bukvar s različni poučenija* (Primer With Various Instructions), published in Rumania in 1824 and

generally known as the *Riben bukvar* (Fish Primer) because it was adorned with pictures of fish. In his foreword to the *Bukvar* Beron advocated the Lancasterian system of teaching (teachers teach students, who in turn teach other students) and the phonetic method of reading. In addition to the alphabet, which we would expect a primer to contain, the *Bukvar* offered simple prayers for children, advice ("Better a faithful friend than a precious stone"), anecdotes drawn from the classical philosophers, fables and tales, the principles of elementary arithmetic, and other such material. In short, the *Bukvar* was a sort of general textbook for beginners, one which, it has been claimed, will stand comparison with Russian books of the same type and same era. At any rate, it certainly assisted in the early development of secular education in Bulgaria.

After publishing the *Riben bukvar* Dr. Beron branched out into a wild variety of fields, producing such items as the *Système d'atmosphérologie* (Paris, 1846), a book on geology, a book on the Flood, and the *Slawische Philosophie* (Prague, 1855), his most important work of the later period, in which he elaborated a philosophical system based on the notion of Slavdom and hostility toward the West. Most of Dr. Beron's later books smack of the at least faintly ridiculous and seem to have been the fruit of an unbalanced intellect. Late in life Dr. Beron became a prosperous merchant. In 1871 he was murdered under mysterious circumstances.

Dr. Beron's *Bukvar* signaled the end of the ecclesiastical phase of the Bulgarian Renaissance and the beginning of a new period when clerical influence mingled with secular currents and the first stirrings of something which may be unequivocally termed literature could be detected. The age took its direction from Beron's *Bukvar*, for this was a time of expansion in elementary education, whose efficacy was believed in more fanatically than it should have been, since it was thought that in some arcane way many of Bulgaria's problems would simply vanish if the level of popular education were raised sufficiently. The spirit of the epoch was very practical and did not furnish suitable soil for the cultivation of *belles-lettres* at the beginning. Authors could appear only when the rise of journalism provided them outlets for publication.

In the early days of this period education and scholarship were in the hands of both clergy and lay people. Two characteristic figures were the clergyman Neofit Rilski (1793-1881), who has been called the "patriarch of Bulgarian scholars and pedagogues", and Vasil Aprilov (1789-1847). Some further discussion of these two, even though strictly speaking they are not literary men, will give us a better notion of Bulgarian intellectual life from the 1820s into the 1840s.

Neofit Rilski was born in the village of Bansko. In 1808 he visited the Rila Monastery in the course of his studies in icon-painting. Attracted by the monastic way of life, he became a monk and scholar. After some time away from the Rila Monastery, he returned to it as a teacher in 1826. Following further sojourns in such places as Constantinople, Neofit Rilski as pedagogue decided that the Lancasterian system offered the best hope of lifting the Bulgarian masses out of their ignorance in the shortest possible time. He therefore spent the year 1834 in Bucharest studying the method and writing his *Vzaimoučitelni tablici* (Tables for Mutual Instruction) as well as his famous *Bolgarska gramatika* (Bulgarian Grammar), both of which appeared in 1835. The year 1835, a central one in his life, also witnessed the initiation of his greatest practical project, an elementary school in the mountain town of Gabrovo, which soon became a center for the diffusion of primary education throughout Bulgaria. After a time local frictions caused him to leave Gabrovo for Koprivštica, where he founded another school. The lure of the scholarly and monastic existence remained strong, however, and eventually he returned to the Rila Monastery, where he was provided an extra cell for his library. He spent the remainder of his life there, working on such projects as a Bulgarian dictionary, published in 1875. Several efforts were made to draw him into the hurly-burly of ecclesiastical politics, but he steadfastly preferred the calm of Rila, where he died in 1881.

Neofit Rilski's primary contribution to Bulgarian culture, aside from the purely practical *Vzaimoučitelni tablici*, was his grammar of Bulgarian, the first such book ever written. Lacking predecessors, he had to break near-virgin soil, though he could use as models a grammar of Church Slavic published more than two centuries earlier (1619), the grammar of the Serbian language of 1814 by Vuk Karadžić, and some modern Greek grammars. As a churchman, he oriented himself toward Church Slavic and disparaged the vernacular, but his original contribution to the study of modern Bulgarian was nevertheless immense. As he studied it, the grammarian sometimes flew into a rage at the vagaries of his native tongue: "Oh corrupt and immoderate language!" he once exclaimed. "Can there be so much corruption and illogicality in any other language!"

Vasil Aprilov was a native of that same Gabrovo in which Neofit Rilski and he later instituted their educational projects. At some point between 1809 and 1811 he moved to Odessa, where he made important contacts with Bulgarians, Russians and Greeks living there and became a Grecophile into the bargain. He remained a Grecophile as late as 1831 but was converted by Juriĭ Venelin (1802-1839), author of *Drevnie i*

nyněšnie bolgare (Ancient and Modern Bulgarians [in Russian], 1829), a book which did much to awaken the Bulgarian national consciousness. Certainly Aprilov's outlook was altered by it: a reading of it transformed him from Grecophile to Bulgarian patriot. Thereafter Aprilov began collecting the money used to open the Gabrovo school in 1835. Upon his death slightly more than a decade later he left most of his estate for the school's continued support.

Aprilov was fundamentally a scholar and a publicist rather than a literary man. Thus in 1841 he wrote a brochure defending Bulgarian claims to early Christianization against the aspersions of a Serb and also put out *Dennica novobolgarskago obrazovanija* (Morningstar of Modern Bulgarian Education, in Russian). The first relatively scholarly book written by a Bulgarian, the *Dennica* was designed to acquaint the Russian reader with the achievements of the Bulgarian people, especially in the area of culture. In 1845 Aprilov published a collection of Bulgarian documents from the older period. Eventually he attained such prominence as a Slavist that the Russian scholar I. I. Sreznevskij wanted to write a biography of him just as he had for the Serb Vuk Karadžić, but Aprilov modestly withheld his assent from the project. Nevertheless, the fact that Sreznevskij contemplated writing his biography underscores Aprilov's significance in the history of the middle Renaissance.

Yet another scholar and writer of prominence during the 1830s and 1840s was the churchman Neofit Bozveli (1785-1848). Born in Kotel, as a young man he withdrew to Mt. Athos and the Hilendar Monastery — for which reason the epithet "Xilendarski" is sometimes affixed to his name — where he worked in the monastery library. Eventually he concluded that he was unsuited for the monastic life and became a teacher. Toward the end of the 1830s he entered the arena of ecclesiastical politics. As a leader in the campaign for an independent Bulgarian church and against Greek intellectual and ecclesiastical oppression he was arrested in 1841 but escaped a few years later and resumed his agitation. Seized once again, he was tortured to death in June of 1848. By the end of the 1840s, then, with both Aprilov and Neofit Bozveli dead and Neofit Rilski retired within monastery walls, the middle phase of the Bulgarian Renaissance began drawing to a close.

Neofit Bozveli's first important publication was the *Slavenobolgarskoe detovodstvo za malkite deca*, a miscellany incorporating instruction in good manners, arithmetic, Church Slavic grammar, geography, etc., published in the same pivotal year of 1835 which marked the high point of Neofit Rilski's career. In addition, Neofit Bozveli left in manuscript

several 'dialogues', of which the most significant was the *Plač bednyja Mati Bolgarii* (Lament of Poor Mother Bulgaria). The *Plač*, probably written in the mid-1840s, could not be printed until 1874, when the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate had freed the Bulgarian church from Greek control. This is understandable, for the work contained an attack upon Greek hegemony in matters spiritual in Bulgaria as well as a summons to intellectual liberation. The *Plač* is more publicistic and political than literary, and as its author was devoid of literary talent and wrote involved and impure Bulgarian, it is now of historical interest only. Still, from this point of view it is important as a concentrated expression of anti-Greek sentiment among the Bulgarians.

Just at the time when the movement for popular education began temporarily to lose momentum, Bulgarian intellectual life was refreshed by new, literary currents. Thus in its initial phase a backward culture often derives sustenance from more advanced literatures, especially through translations. It is noteworthy that many of the authors selected for translation into Bulgarian were either major writers of an earlier period or else second-rate contemporaries. Though there are exceptions to this generalization, on the whole a minor literature like the Bulgarian will have a greater affinity for the second-rank achievements of a major literature, since it is this level which it may hope to attain. Thus the Russian A. F. Vel'tman and the Ukrainian Marko Vovčok were among the most popular foreign authors in Bulgaria at one time even though in their native lands they were not terribly well-known. True, there was a nationalistic reason for Vel'tman's renown: his principal translated work was *Rajna bolgarska carkinja* (Rajna Czarina of Bulgaria, translated 1852), a piece which is now forgotten in the history of Russian literature but which aroused great interest in Bulgaria. Among other authors rendered into Bulgarian were: from the French, Lamartine and Fenelon; from the German, Jean-Paul Richter; from English and American, Defoe, Bulwer-Lytton, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Byron, Poe and Cooper; from the Russian, Karamzin, Puškin and Gogol'. Frequently translations were made, not directly from the original, but from an intermediate translation. A horrible example of this was a work originally written in German, rendered into French, then Greek; finally the Greek version was translated into Bulgarian.

Foreign works might not only be translated, but also 'Bulgarianized', or modified to fit Bulgarian *mores*. A translator would resort to 'Bulgarianization', say, when he wished to give a book a patriotic coloration or insert into it propaganda in favor of education. Joakim Gruev (1828-

1912), for instance, bulgarianized Karamzin's "Bednaja Liza" (Poor Liza) under the title "Sirota Cvetana" (Orphan Cvetana). Gruev may be excused for setting the story in Tŕrnovo rather than Moscow and altering the heroes' names, but he also modified the entire tone of the story, playing down its sentimentality, presenting the love tragedy in more realistic and sensual terms, transforming touching episodes in the original into gloomy and depressing ones in the translation. Gruev's reworking appreciably diminished the piece's value.

In order for the influx of translations from foreign literatures, not to mention native efforts, to exert full effect, it was essential that a Bulgarian periodical press should come into being, as in fact it did in the 1840s. The pioneer periodical publication appeared in Smyrna, Asia Minor, under the title *Ljuboslovie* (Lover of Literature). Published by Konstantin Fotinov (ca. 1790-1858), the journal was issued once experimentally in 1842; in April of 1844 it began to be published regularly for two years. Before *Ljuboslovie* ended its existence, the publisher Ivan Bogorov (1821-1892) started the first Bulgarian newspaper, *Bŕlgarski orel* (Bulgarian Eagle), in Leipzig. This enterprise having proved not viable — the paper lasted for only three issues in 1846 — Bogorov moved to Constantinople, which boasted a large Bulgarian population. There he founded the most successful of the pre-Liberation newspapers, *Carigradski vestnik* (Constantinople Herald), published for 14 years between 1848 and 1862. Although a total of only five or six Bulgarian periodicals sprang up before the Crimean War, and most of these were ephemeral, the foundations of a periodical press had been laid. Subsequently, in the years from 1856 to the liberation, many figures in Bulgarian literary history regarded journalism as a vital part of their activity.

Bulgarian literature of the modern period developed initially in the verse forms. Neofit Bozveli and Neofit Rilski tried their hands at poetry, though without notable success, and from time to time verse had been perpetrated by other churchmen, such as Dimitŕr Popski (dates uncertain) in his "Ode" to Sofronij Vraĉanski written in 1813. One of the more extensive poetic works to be published before Petko Slavejkov made his appearance was one by the Serb Konstantin Ognjanović (1798-1858). Drawing upon the legendary *vita* so widely read in medieval Bulgaria, in 1833 Ognjanović published a version of *Ŗitie svjatago Aleksija, ĉeloveka BoŖija* (Life of Aleksej the Man of God). A few years later, in 1845, Petko Slavejkov also drew upon medieval traditions in one of his first poetic attempts, a rendering of the *Ŗitie svjatago Teodora Tirona* (Life of St. Teodor Tiron). In such fashion did modern Bulgarian literature in its

formative stages receive sustenance from ancient native sources as well as contemporary foreign ones.

The first genuinely interesting and original Bulgarian poem, however, is usually considered to be "Stojan i Rada" (Stojan and Rada), published in Odessa in 1845 by Najden Gerov (1823-1900). Gerov, who had obtained an elementary education under Neofit Rilski, completed his studies in Odessa, where he participated actively in the life of the local Bulgarian colony. Many of the Odessa Bulgarians dabbled in verse, taking their inspiration from Russian poetry and folklore, but Gerov was appreciably superior to them. "Stojan i Rada" is a brief narrative poem about a couple deeply in love. Stojan's mother is set upon marrying him off to another girl, however, and on the wedding day Rada dies of grief in the church. When Stojan discovers her corpse, he promptly rejects his bride and also dies. From the graves of the lovers grow two trees which intertwine their branches overhead, a popular folklore motif. At approximately the time when "Stojan i Rada" was published, incidentally, its author was involved in a real-life romance with Elena Muteva (1824-1854), the first Bulgarian poetess.

In later life Gerov did not build upon his initial poetic success. Having become a Russian citizen, he served as Russian vice-consul in Plovdiv from 1857 to 1876. He then spent the last years of his life in his liberated homeland compiling a dictionary. Although he lived to see only part of it printed, it was completed by others and became the first extensive dictionary of the modern Bulgarian language, one still consulted today.

Aside from Gerov, a few other minor poets wrote in the 1840s and 1850s, but most of these have been deservedly forgotten. Included among them are the journalist Ivan Bogorov, the translator Joakim Gruev, and Nikolaj Katranov (1829-1853), who studied at Moscow University and whose claim to historical fame lies in his having been the ultimate prototype for the Bulgarian revolutionary Insarov in Ivan Turgenev's novel *Nakanune* (On the Eve, 1859). If we are to judge from a few sentimental and primitively lyrical verses of his published in *Carigradski vestnik* in 1853, the genuine Katranov must have been rather unlike Insarov, who was a man of iron resolve and quite devoid of poetic sensibility.

The first Bulgarian poet of some stature was Dobri Čintulov (1822-1886). Čintulov was a native of Sliven, an area devastated in the Russo-Turkish War of 1828-1829. His family was among the few which elected to remain in Sliven rather than emigrate at that time to Rumania or Russia. Later on Čintulov studied in the Odessa seminary, where he read such Russian poets as Puškin and the Slavophile A. S. Xomjakov and

composed a few poems himself. In 1850 Čintulov returned to Sliven, where he became a teacher, an anti-Hellenist, and the author of revolutionary poems circulated in manuscript. In 1857, denounced as a revolutionary by a Bulgarian priest, he was arrested by the Turkish police. However, Čintulov, a timid rebel, received sufficient warning to be able to destroy all his manuscripts; when detained for ten days or so he made no attempt to play the subversive, and since nothing had been found at his residence he was released. Disgusted by the whole episode, he moved to Jambol for a while but then returned to Sliven, where he served in various educational posts. Though he had to retire in 1875 for reasons of health, he lived long enough to welcome, in Russian in the name of Sliven's inhabitants, Bulgaria's liberators in 1878.

Dobri Čintulov's meager literary production may be sorted into three categories, each containing a small number of poems. His first (Odessa) period is represented by two lyrics published in *Carigradski vestnik* in 1849: "Stara majka sja proštava sės sinet si" (An Old Mother Bids Her Son Farewell) and "Izprovodjak na ednogo bēlgarina iz Odesa" (Seeing Off a Bulgarian from Odessa). The first poem is the lament of an aged mother parting with her son as he leaves for a foreign country. Conscious that she will probably never see him again, she bears up bravely under her grief and tries to think primarily of him: "Your spirit will not forget / All that I have told you. / Go, and fare thee well, / And remember us sometimes!" The second poem deals with a subject which is the obverse of the first: the departure of a member of the Odessa Bulgarian colony for the "dear mountains" of the fatherland. The personal sorrow of the first poem is replaced in the second by a diffuse melancholy over the fact that Bulgaria still lies under foreign domination ("our mutual brothers / live in darkness and shade"), but nevertheless the predominant note of "Izprovodjak" is one of joy over the anticipated homecoming.

The hardy patriotic theme which appears only momentarily in "Izprovodjak na ednogo bēlgarina iz Odesa", to be quickly submerged in rejoicing, is at the core of Čintulov's 'rebel songs', which were extensively hand-copied and memorized, especially during the period when it seemed that the Crimean War might lead to Bulgaria's liberation. The revolutionary spirit of "Stani, stani, junak balkanski" is obvious from the first stanza: "Arise, arise, young hero of the Balkans / awaken from your deep sleep / and lead the Bulgarians / against the Ottoman people." The motif of quasi-entranced sleep is common to many 'rebel songs' written by various hands at the time: their authors were convinced that once the Bulgarians roused themselves from an almost comfortable slumber, the

rest would be relatively easy. This was so because, as Čintulov thought with unwarranted optimism, help would arrive immediately from all sides: from the Montenegrins, the Serbs and especially the Russians. Victory was assured with only minimal sacrifice on the Bulgarians' part.

A conflict between Bulgaria and the Turkish Empire could also be interpreted as a holy war of Christendom against Islam. The religious element in Čintulov's revolutionary convictions is visible in the concluding portion of another of his revolutionary songs, "Kade si, vjarna ti ljubov narodna" (Where Art Thou, Faithful Love of Country), where he apostrophizes Christ: "Bless Thou our desire! / Our hope is in Thee: / that our feat may be sanctified, / confirmed in Thy faith, / and in Thy glorious name, / eternal Son of God!" This religious belief in the Bulgarian cause increased the popularity of Čintulov's rebel songs, for the spirit of the age necessarily rejected doubts and half-measures: unswerving optimism was required, and this Čintulov supplied.

After the Russian Empire's humiliating defeat in the Crimean War and the poet's ordeal at the hands of the Turkish police, Čintulov's outlook became blacker. In the primary poem of his last period, "Patriot", he outlines the psychological state of a revolutionary who has devoted his all to the cause only to find that his efforts have been in vain. What hope there is for the future seems now to lie in the gradual processes of education and evolution. These ideas locate Čintulov on the right wing of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement, among those who became discouraged and retreated to a philosophy of 'small deeds' when it appeared that the revolutionary struggle could not be successful in the foreseeable future. However, Čintulov is now remembered for his youthful revolutionary ardor, not for the sober wisdom of his later years.

Since Čintulov's poetic production was limited, Bulgarian poetry came into its own quantitatively as well as qualitatively only with the appearance upon the scene of Petko R. Slavejkov (1827-1895). Slavejkov was the grand old man of nineteenth-century Bulgarian literature: his life spanned the middle and late Renaissance and did not end until well into the post-liberation period. He was an important transitional figure who moved from the relatively humane era of the 1840s and early 1850s into the revolutionary period of the 1860s and 1870s. In the post-liberation epoch his work was, generally speaking, of less interest than it had been before. True, in 1892 he published his brief *Avtobiografija* (Autobiography), a classic in this sparse genre of Bulgarian literature, in which he recalls the formative days of his career. Also, in the later period he raised his son Penčo Slavejkov, the central figure of the modernist era at the end of

the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The Slavejkovs formed the only literary dynasty of any consequence in the history of Bulgarian letters, and even this one lasted but two generations, as Penčo Slavejkov had no children. Still, father and son together spanned the years from the 1840s to the eve of the First World War.

Petko Slavejkov was born in the ancient capital of Tŕnovo to an impecunious merchant family. The education offered at the schools he attended in Tŕnovo and Trjavna was on a low level, and only in Svištov, where he went in 1842, could he obtain better training. A year later, however, he abandoned the pursuit of formal education. For a while he read church books with avidity and considered entering a monastery. Though he did not follow through on this — he became a teacher instead — his religious inclinations may be seen from the fact that he attempted a poetic reworking of the life of St. Teodor Tiron at the end of 1844 or the beginning of 1845. Aside from this he produced songs and poems on historical themes and translated poems from Serbian, Turkish and Greek, as well as a prosaic Russian grammar for which he found no publisher.

During his early years Slavejkov wrote mostly for his private delectation, for there were no periodicals in which he could publish and books of poetry appeared infrequently. With the founding of *Carigradski vestnik* in 1848, however, the situation changed, and his initial printed works came out there in 1849. Further, in 1852 alone he published three collections of poems written over the preceding years: *Smesna kitka* (A Mixed Bouquet), *Pesnopoljka* (Songbook), and *Basenik* (Fables, a collection from Aesop). The nearly simultaneous appearance of three books brought Slavejkov renown as a writer, and after 1852 he was considered a well established younger poet.

Especially in his first creative years Slavejkov was influenced by the Bulgarian folklore tradition, in which he was interested all his life. In 1847 he collected a large number of folksongs, which left their mark upon his original compositions. Another powerful influence upon him was Russian literature: in 1849 he acquired a standard anthology of Russian literature, with selections from Russian poets from Puškin to Nekrasov, and copied out several of Puškin's poems. Later on he read further Russian poets and did translations from Puškin, Krylov, Lermontov, Pleščeev and others. Reading of this type probably exerted its most marked sway upon the main line of Slavejkov's poetic development in the early years, when he composed personal, nature and love lyrics, sometimes of a gentle ironic nature (the ironic strain found its clearest expres-

sion in his fables). His acquaintance with the Russian poets also spurred him to treat social themes in his work, but here a more immediate influence was a native one, that of Dobri Čintulov, to whom in 1850 Slavejkov wrote a letter of enthusiastic admiration.

The didactic current in Slavejkov's early writing emerges clearly in his abridged version of the fable of the grasshopper and the ants, reduced to only four lines plus a two-line moral in a version of 1852: "Children, work in your youth, / so that you will not go hungry in your old age." Lyrical nature descriptions occur in such pieces as "Nošt" (Night, 1852): "Look, the stars are glowing / with a clear light — / below there is silence / everywhere on the earth." Both Slavejkov and Čintulov experience nostalgia for their native land, but whereas in Čintulov such yearnings spring wholly from patriotic feeling (the love theme is almost absent from his work), with Slavejkov even homesickness is likely to be connected with longing for a beloved.

As one might surmise from this last observation, Slavejkov deals most often with his own subjective feelings, and in terms of them interprets more universal problems. For instance, romantic ruminations may be tied to nature description, as at the beginning of an unnamed poem of 1852: "You are the clear moon of the night, / you are the light of the day, / there is no other beauty / at all like yours, my sweet." Where the affections are concerned the poet is the soul of inconstancy: the notion of a permanent love does not appeal to him. Instead he prefers to survey a broad field of women, thinking of them as abstract types rather than individuals. In his "Ljubovni dumi po ime" (Love Thoughts by Name, 1852) the poet composes a litany of typical Bulgarian feminine names, associating each with certain spiritual or physical traits. He does a similar thing for women from different parts of Bulgaria, thus most intimately combining love of country with love of woman. In short, the center of gravity in Slavejkov's poetry of the period before 1856 is to be found in the personal, lyric and light-hearted. More serious moments do occur, but these are often associated with a passing disappointment in love, and social themes are swallowed up in personal ones.

After the work of such educators as Vasil Aprilov and Neofit Rilski, in the years between 1856 and 1878 education was generally accepted as desirable in Bulgarian society. Some argued that education should be continued beyond the elementary stages, a position which served as a rationale for the establishment in the mid-1850s of numerous *čitališta*, or

reading rooms, most bearing inspirational names like "Progress". In the *čitališta* newspapers, periodicals and books were kept for the use of local adults who wished to keep up with the world. From these reading rooms, which still exist, sprang the early Bulgarian theater, regarded by many of its pioneers as a 'school for adults' to keep them from vegetating for lack of cultural uplift.

For a time after the Crimean War, such endeavors as the founding of *čitališta* nearly sufficed to assuage the Bulgarians' craving for positive action. In the 1860s, however, the campaign for Bulgarian ecclesiastical independence from the Greeks, achieved in 1871, intensified; furthermore, the younger generation was resolved to cast off the Turkish yoke entirely, at whatever cost. Almost all elements of society yearned for the day when Bulgaria would be free, but the moderates were frightened by intemperate revolutionaries like Vasil Levski, Ljuben Karavelov and Xristo Botev, who thought the Bulgarians could expel the Turks by themselves and scorned those who held that the country could not be liberated without outside — more specifically, Russian — intervention. The moderates happened to be correct, for the greatest attempt at an internal rebellion, the April uprising of 1876, was easily quashed by the Turks, and even the powerful Russian state had difficulty in ousting the tottering Ottoman Empire from its Bulgarian domains. Nevertheless, the radicals set the tone of the late Renaissance period.

As we might expect during such a turbulent epoch, the most important figures and works of Bulgarian literature were enlisted in the national cause, and the greatest poetic gift of the time, Botev's, was placed unreservedly at the service of the revolution. Literature was perforce practical and publicistic, whether actually written in the form of journalism or not. It incited to direct action.

It was in such an atmosphere as this that the moderate Slavejkov found himself living in the 1860s and 1870s. By nature disinclined to produce propaganda, he wrote few revolutionary poems. By and large he disapproved of achieving Bulgaria's liberation through an armed uprising. His lyrical poetry continued to be sentimental and romantic. What indignation over social injustice he felt could usually be quelled through the composition of gently sardonic pieces attacking the bourgeois striving for the good life or outlining the power of money. In his "Pesen na paričkata mi" (Song of My Money, 1861) he wrote sarcastically: "Rejoice, money, / all-powerful Empress! / You proclaim patricians, / you elevate bishops, / you consecrate priests, / you make the mad wise, / you make the old young, / you even adorn the ugly." In poems of this type, however,

Slavejkov evinced no wish to do anything more than chide a society which made too many obeisances to the false gods of wealth and prestige. The poet was probably persuaded that the impulse to defer to wealth was so inbred in human beings that it would never be eradicated under any circumstances, although it still deserved to be condemned.

Slavejkov's outlook was usually healthily optimistic, but on occasion he became discouraged. Slavejkov voiced his pessimism in such poems as "Ne pej mi se" (I Cannot Sing, 1870): "How can you sing glorious songs of men of old / when today's men have fallen asleep", when your contemporaries are "heartless, indifferent, worthless". A still deeper pessimism pervades the brief "Ne sme narod" (We Are No People), written in 1875, during the dark night just preceding the revolutionary outburst of 1876. In this piece the writer too categorically declares that the Bulgarians are not a people, but "carriage", whose stock reply to every question or suggestion is "I don't know" or "I can't." Concluding that they are unredeemable, Slavejkov turns from his own people in disgust.

This same spiritual oscillation is evident in Slavejkov's poetry of the immediate post-liberation period. On the one hand he composed effusive odes to the Russian liberators ("There is no other nation / so powerful as Russia in the world") and exhorted his newly freed countrymen to awaken from their slumber and begin to be worthy of themselves, but on the other hand he realized that they too often fell short of the ideal, and this saddened him. His personal experiences in post-liberation Bulgaria gave him cause for pessimism. Being a famous and popular figure, he served for a time as chairman of the national parliament established to govern the independent northern half of Bulgaria, but then when the constitution was suspended by the Prince in 1881 he was confined in Trjavna. From there he made his way to Plovdiv to join the campaign for the reunification of northern and southern Bulgaria. But neither liberation nor unification brought about the renewal of the national spirit Slavejkov had dreamed of, so he decided the Bulgarians were unworthy of their political independence.

Aside from his lyric verse, in the years 1873-1874 Slavejkov produced three short narrative poems, "Izvorët na belonogata" (The Spring of the White-footed Girl, 1873), "Bojka vojvoda" (1873, the story of a woman who goes off to wage partisan warfare against the Turks), and "Krakra Perniški" (Krakra of Pernik, 1874). This last is a historical ballad based on folklore motifs; the influence of folklore is noticeable in the other two poems as well.

Petko Slavejkov also made his mark in Bulgarian journalism. In the

course of his career he put out several newspapers, of which the first important one was *Gajda* (Bagpipe, 1863-1867), an organ of humorous satire appearing from 1863 to 1867. Slavejkov was its editor and its main contributor of prose and verse. *Gajda* provided scope for his bent for social satire, an attitude linked with his advocacy of gradual and general enlightenment as a cure for Bulgaria's woes. His subsequent periodicals included the newspaper *Makedonija* (Macedonia, 1866-1872), devoted to the Macedonian question which has vexed the Balkan peninsula far into the twentieth century; *Ružica* (Peony, 1870), a ladies' magazine; *Čitalište* (Reading Room, 1872-1873); and several other political newspapers published for short periods after the liberation. As with *Gajda*, Slavejkov filled these periodicals mostly with his own work.

In addition to journalism Slavejkov also wrote some critical articles, but these were carelessly composed and of little consequence in the development of Bulgarian literary criticism. Finally, he made a few insignificant dabs at the drama, with such pieces as the one-act comedy of morals *Malakova* (The Fancy Skirt, 1864).

Another representative of journalism and poetry at this time, though he moved in a completely differently milieu than did Slavejkov, was the quintessential Slavophile² Rajko Žinzifov (1839-1877). The question of Žinzifov's rightful niche in the history of Bulgarian literature has long been debated. He has not lacked for detractors, including two such dissimilar figures as Ivan Vazov and Penčo Slavejkov, who both denied vigorously that his work had any value. But then other eminent people — Anton Strašimirov, Stefan Mladenov — have defended him over the years, and his poetry has been republished several times in this century. It appears probable that the ranking eventually assigned him in the gallery of Bulgarian poets will be higher than it has been up to now.

A native of Macedonia, Žinzifov was born in Veles. In 1855, at the age of sixteen, he moved to Prilep, where he met the outstanding folklorist and national martyr Dimitar Miladinov, at whose urging he changed his name from the Greek Ksenofon to the Slavic Rajko. After teaching for a time, he decided to continue his studies in Russia and arrived under the sponsorship of the Moscow Slavophiles in Odessa in the summer of 1858. Here he studied at a famous local *gymnasium* and also made the acquaint-

² The Slavophiles preached the innate supremacy of Slavic, and especially Orthodox Slavic, culture over the corrupt cultures of western Europe, arguing that the former was cemented by bonds of love rather than the threat of force. The Pan-Slavs, offshoots of the Slavophiles, sought to unite the Slavic world under Russian hegemony.

tance of the author and revolutionary Georgi Rakovski. Later Žinzifov moved on to Moscow, where he established close contact with the Slavophiles, especially Ivan Aksakov, editor of the newspaper *Den'* (Day). The Slavophiles regarded him as one of their chief "South Slavs in residence", and Žinzifov wrote many articles for their press on Bulgarian literature and related topics. Žinzifov was politically a conservative and thus a man after the Slavophiles' heart, a fact which caused the revolutionary Ljuben Karavelov, who also studied in Moscow under Slavophile auspices, to denigrate him. But though Žinzifov accepted the Russian Slavophile viewpoint in broad terms, he remained a Bulgarian and Macedonian patriot who would have rejected Russian Pan-Slav doctrine when and if it served merely to justify the extension of Russian hegemony over all the Slavs. In any case Žinzifov never returned to his native land for any length of time. Instead he remained in Moscow, where he died an untimely death in 1877.

The small corpus of Žinzifov's poetry, strongly influenced by the work of the Ukrainian national poet Taras Ševčenko, does have its unattractive facets. Prominent among them is the language in which he wrote: he relied too heavily on his native western dialects, adding a quantity of Serbian and Russian words and forms. As a result his writing probably hindered the evolution of a standard Bulgarian literary language instead of helping it. Furthermore Žinzifov's poetic gift was uneven: he was capable of writing beautiful lyric passages closely juxtaposed with pedestrian ones. Nevertheless, there is something curiously modern about the main tenor of Žinzifov's verse, permeated as it is with the pessimistic despair characteristic of his individual psychology.

A leading theme of his verse is the aching loneliness of a sojourner in a foreign land who is not accepted by those among whom he lives. On a more intimate level, the horror of his personal situation is deepened by his conviction that he cannot terminate his misery even if he wishes: "As soon as I raise my hand, at that instant it is dead" ("Sam sebe si" [To Myself]). Another negative attitude, but now a narrower one which derives from his positive patriotism, is his hatred for everything Greek, particularly the Greek clergy, who are interested only in women and alcohol in the hours except those few they must hypocritically spend in church. The patriotic viewpoint proper is elaborated most extensively in the longer work "Kǎrvava košulja" (The Bloody Shirt, 1870). Žinzifov's patriotism is of a peculiar sort, however, since he views his native region at a remove in space or time or both. Thus in "Son" (Dream) he conjures up a vision of the glorious days of ancient Bulgarian spiritual might under

Czar Simeon; in other poems he describes, through the prism of recollection, the cradle of the Macedonian idea — Ohrid — or else the simple but touching sight of Macedonian girls returning from the well or from the fields with their scythes. The dream quality of these descriptions lends a modern flavor to Žinzifov's poetry.

If the 1840s and 1850s saw the first significant development of original Bulgarian poetry, the 1860s witnessed the birth of prose fiction. The rise of prose fiction is associated with the name of a churchman who later (1884) became metropolitan of Tarnovo: Vasil Drumev (ca. 1840-1901). A native of Šumen, Drumev, like Žinzifov and Karavelov, journeyed to Russia to study at the end of the 1850s. In 1858 he entered the Seminary in Odessa, where he was largely isolated from contemporary radical literary and intellectual currents. In 1860, as yet hardly twenty, Drumev published two minor stories; in that same year he printed the book which was to bring him renown as the author of the "first original Bulgarian novelette", *Neštastna familija* (The Unfortunate Family). This juvenile work would hardly have survived as a literary classic were it not for its historical importance. Drumev was a man of little culture, nourished mostly on adventure books by writers like Eugène Sue and Jacques Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and *Neštastna familija* exhibits faults that one might expect in a work by an inexperienced writer: the plot abounds in improbabilities, the characters may be too easily identified as positive or negative, the approach is excessively sentimental, the author's own viewpoint is too clear. Still, the popularity which this tale of the Bulgarians' anguish under Turkish oppression enjoyed was justified by some positive features, for instance its absorbing story line and its dramatic structure. But then the author did not intend to write — and the public did not require of him — a piece which would meet the demands of present-day literary criticism. In a foreword Drumev informed his readers that he had been moved to take up his pen by love for his homeland, so any need for literary expression seems to have had little to do with the story's composition. *Neštastna familija* conformed to the spirit of the times in being designed more as a publicistic work than anything else.

Drumev is remembered as the writer of the second, as well as the first, major prose fiction of modern Bulgarian literature, "Učenik i blagodeteli" (The Student and the Benefactors), the initial part of which appeared in 1864. This story, a largely autobiographical account of the author's search for education and enlightenment, is now little read.

Drumev did not limit himself to writing fiction and studying in Russian seminaries. For a time in the 1860s he was associated with Rakovski's revolutionary organizations in Serbia, but as he favored evolutionary enlightenment over violent revolution, he eventually found a more comfortable place as a founder, together with Marin Drinov and Vasil Stojanov, of the *Balgarsko knižovno društvo* (Bulgarian Literary Society) in the Rumanian town of Braila. This society was the ancestor of today's Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Though Drumev was not the formal head of the society, for approximately four years after its establishment in 1869 he guided its affairs and edited its scholarly organ, the *Periodičesko spisanie* (Periodical Journal). After the liberation Drumev participated in both secular and church politics. For the literary historian, however, only the Drumev of the period from 1860 to about 1875 is of interest.

Other men soon continued the prose tradition which Drumev had initiated. Ilija R. Blaskov (1839-1913) holds a definite if modest place in the assemblage of early Bulgarian prose-writers, as the author of the third (after Drumev's two stories) important prose work of the 1860s, *Izgubena Stanka* (Lost Stanka). This piece, which Blaskov's father possibly co-authored in a familial cooperative effort, came out in 1866 but failed to gain recognition until its appearance in a revised edition the following year. The story describes the adventures of a girl kidnapped by the Tartars (for which read Turks) and then rescued. *Izgubena Stanka* contains many of the same themes, approaches and defects as *Neštastna familija*. For instance, the author wrote it because of his distress over the sufferings of his people, the story is markedly sentimental, and the characters are easily identifiable as heroes or villains. Like *Neštastna familija*, *Izgubena Stanka* responded to a great demand on the part of the Bulgarian reader for literature of a rather simple-minded sort, but unlike *Neštastna familija* it attained its greatest popularity in a dramatization done by Bogdan Minčev in 1870. The play was staged before enthusiastic audiences prior to the liberation, and a reference to *Izgubena Stanka* in contemporary publications is more likely to be to the play than to the story on which it was based.

Blaskov published several other works subsequently, but none of them approached the popularity of *Izgubena Stanka*. In 1870, evidently trying to exploit a proven vein, he published *Zločesta Krastinka* (Unfortunate Krastinka), an attempt at a psychological analysis which was much more imbued with a sentimental and religious outlook than his first story. Afterwards Blaskov published a journal, *Gradinka* (The Garden, begun in 1874), did translations from the Russian, and tried his hand at fiction

with such tales as *Pijan bašta, ubiec na decata si. Povest čisto bəlgarska iz narodnija ni život* (A Drunken Father, Murderer of His Children. A Purely Bulgarian Story from the Life of Our People, 1879-1880). These enterprises were not particularly successful. The only other thing of his worth mentioning here are his memoirs, published in 1907.

The initial sproutings of a Bulgarian theater appeared immediately after the conclusion of the Crimean War, when translated plays were staged in Šumen and Lom in 1856. Theatrical troupes were first founded in these cities because they were in the vanguard of the *čitalište* movement, which nurtured the Bulgarian theater at its inception, and because they had contact with more advanced foreign cultures: Šumen had sheltered Polish and Hungarian refugees after the revolutions of 1848 and Lom was situated on important commercial routes. At first, because of a strong prejudice against actresses, feminine roles had to be played by men, and afterwards for some time women could only with difficulty be persuaded to set foot upon the stage.

The person most closely connected with the Bulgarian theater in its infancy was Dobri Vojnikov (1833-1878). After studying in Constantinople Vojnikov returned to his native Šumen to launch upon a teaching career and while at it encourage amateur theatricals there. For this latter purpose he coached students in simple 'dialogues' presented at the school on special occasions: these were the seeds from which full-blown plays in the native repertoire eventually sprang. Vojnikov soon became more ambitious and in the early 1860s put out full-length plays in addition to dialogues. The powers that were in Šumen, however, did not approve of his cultural initiatives, and he found it expedient to leave, ending up in Braila. There, in 1865, he founded a formal theatrical troupe which included women. The next year he began touring Rumanian towns with such offerings as a dramatized version of Vel'tman's *Rajna carkinja*. Others thereafter took up the cause: plays were presented in Tərnovo in 1871 and by the Bulgarian colony in Constantinople in 1872; *čitališta* in such places as Pleven and Sliven gave theatrical performances to raise money for books. These activities did not enjoy universal support, though. For example Petko Slavejkov, though a playwright himself, was of the opinion that Bulgaria, with her limited resources, might invest them more profitably in some other fashion. On the other hand, the extremist wing of the Bulgarian intelligentsia regarded the theater as a powerful propaganda weapon.

No self-respecting theater could long subsist on translated plays only, so Vojnikov functioned as playwright as well as director and producer in the Bulgarian theatrical world. His plays are not staged any more, but at the beginning they were crucial for a theater with scanty resources. Vojnikov's first major play, published in Braila in 1866, was the already mentioned *Rajna carkinja*. Though enthusiastically received by the public, *Rajna carkinja* was far from an artistic success: it lacked both dramatic unity and a central heroic figure, and the actions of its characters were poorly motivated. As was the case with many other literary works of the 1860s, its chief function was to arouse patriotic feeling among the spectators. Stereotyped characters and situations occur in profusion in this and others of Vojnikov's plays: the sly Greek, the valiant *boljarin* (member of the ancient nobility), the clearcut division of the personages into heroes and villains, the excessive reliance upon coincidence and sensational surprises. Most of Vojnikov's dramas subsequent to *Rajna carkinja* were also on historical subjects: *Pokræštenie na Preslavskij dvor* (The Christianization of the Court at Preslav, 1868); *Velislava, bælgarska knjaginja* (Velislava Princess of Bulgaria, 1870); *Væzcarjaveneto na Kruma Strašnyj* (The Enthronement of Krum the Terrible, 1871). Finally, Vojnikov wrote one significant comedy, *Krivorazbranata civilizacija* (Civilization Wrongly Understood, 1871). *Krivorazbranata civilizacija* harks back to the Russian stage of nearly a century before with its good-natured but seriously intended attack on Gallomania. The heroes try to speak mostly French because they think that only through conversing in French and living in France can one be truly civilized. An inevitable corollary to the admiration of all things French is contempt for all things Bulgarian: as one of the female characters says in her moral blindness, expressing a notion calculated to raise the hackles of all good nationalists in the audience: "[I hate] the name of Bulgarian; which is why I want to marry a European foreigner, so as to cleanse myself of this simple-minded name. I don't want to be a Bulgarian because there is nothing lower than a Bulgarian." Eventually, of course, the wayward innocents are brought to their senses.

Vojnikov's production for the theater was more important quantitatively than qualitatively. This fact was plain enough to his contemporaries, but he was understandably sensitive on the subject. One day in Braila, furious at Drumev's sharp criticism of his *Velislava*, Vojnikov challenged him to write a better play if he could. The challenge apparently crystallized a plan which had been forming in Drumev's mind for some time, and in short order he composed the masterpiece of pre-liberation

drama, *Ivanko ubiecăt na Asenja I* (Ivanko the Assassin of Asen I, 1872), thereby thoroughly discomfiting Vojnikov. Like Vojnikov, Drumev worked with historical material, setting his play in Bulgaria after its liberation from the Byzantine yoke by the brothers Asen and Petăr in 1185-1187. Isak, a Byzantine ruler defeated by Asen and living in the Bulgarian capital, seeks to weaken the Bulgarians through internal strife by urging Asen's general Ivanko to seize the throne. A forged document causes Asen to believe that Petăr has been plotting against him and Petăr leaves the capital. Ivanko then carries his plot through, murdering Asen, not entirely willingly, in the process, only to fall prey to remorse over his crime. When Ivanko begins oppressing the people, Petăr reluctantly — for he does not wish to plunge the country into civil war — returns to oust the usurper and be acclaimed czar.

Ivanko is a complex study of emotional impulses motivating highly placed people. None of the characters is wholly evil, and some are quite good, but they are driven by forces beyond their control. A lust for power is Ivanko's primary motivation: he schemes against Asen though he knows Asen has trusted him, and he defends his power ferociously once he has gained it: he is even willing to give up half his kingdom for the Byzantine assistance which alone can save him. By way of contrast, the admirable Asen at one point says he would be willing to yield power voluntarily to Petăr if it were for the country's good. Love for Ivanko moves both Isak's daughter Todorka and Asen's daughter Marija: indeed the latter unwittingly makes her father's murder possible by giving Ivanko the key to his chambers. Other motives, including Isak's desire for revenge and Petăr's inclination to forgive Ivanko despite everything, are skillfully interwoven with these. *Ivanko* displays some Shakespearean elements: Marija's madness after her father's assassination, the occasional use of servants for comic relief, the high seriousness of the entire situation. Drumev overworks the devices of overheard conversations and monologues in which a character bares his soul, but these things make the play more dramatic if not more realistic. In any case, the play's excellence was immediately recognized by contemporary critics: both Ljuben Karavelov and Petko Slavejkov published very positive reviews of it in 1873. Vojnikov reviewed the play unfavorably, emphasizing with some justification the distinction between an excellent poetic work and a fine dramatic piece, which were not necessarily the same. Later audiences have disagreed with Vojnikov, however, and *Ivanko* has a charm for the Bulgarian viewer which has enabled it, alone of all pre-liberation plays, to remain a staple of the repertory to this day.

Thus far in our discussion of the final period of the Bulgarian Renaissance we have dealt primarily with politically moderate literary men. They longed as much as any other Bulgarian for an end to nearly five centuries of Turkish overlordship, but they hesitated to undertake or even to discuss the violent measures which were a necessity if the Turks were to be driven out at any time in the foreseeable future. They confined themselves to unventuresome cultural activities — the composing of lyric poems on personal subjects, the writing of plays set in the glorious Bulgarian past, the production of stories chronicling the horrors of the current situation but adulterated with a great dose of sentimentalism, the nurturing of journalism, the diffusion of enlightenment through schools and reading rooms. Most of these men felt vaguely that in some mysterious way Bulgaria's political situation would be improved by their efforts. They avoided considering the question of just how this laboring in the cultural vineyards could effect Bulgaria's liberation except possibly as the result of a very gradual evolution over many decades. Had they meditated seriously on this problem — which most did not — they could have perceived that no matter how valuable their program of popular enlightenment might be, under current circumstances Bulgaria's liberation in the near future could be accomplished only through some form of violence. Although it is true that individual shifts in position in the 1860s and 1870s, at least down to the uprisings of 1875 and 1876, were usually from the revolutionary to the evolutionary camp, the period belonged most of all to the revolutionaries.

During much of their five centuries of rule over Bulgaria the Turks had had to deal with bands of *xajduti*, or partisans, who took advantage of the natural cover afforded by the Balkan mountains to harass them and retaliate for their outrages against the Bulgarian population. These activities were spontaneous and relatively unorganized, as were the more widespread occasional rebellions of a populace driven to desperation, and were therefore not so effective as they might have been. In the middle of the nineteenth century, however, the Turks faced men totally dedicated to the cause of Bulgarian liberation and aware of the importance of organization. More significant for our purposes, these people frequently possessed a literary gift which they placed at the service of the revolution. The first outstanding individual of this type was Georgi Rakovski (1821-1867), whose niches in the history of the Bulgarian revolutionary movement and in the development of Bulgarian literature are of nearly equal importance.

Rakovski was born in the Balkan village of Kotel, into a family with a

tradition of anti-Turkish bravery and Bulgarian patriotism. He was educated in Karlovo and later in a famous Greek *gymnasium* in Constantinople, where he learned Greek very well but nonetheless remained a firm nationalist. In 1841, at the age of twenty, Rakovski appeared in Braila, where he engaged in preparations for a rebellion which was averted through the vigilance of the Rumanian police. Rakovski was arrested and sentenced to death for his part in the project, but as he had had the foresight to equip himself with a Greek passport, he had to be handed over to the Greek authorities, who indulgently released him. Afterwards he returned to Kotel, only to be denounced by the local *čorbadžii* and sent to jail in Constantinople for seven years. During the Crimean War he again tried his hand at conspiracy, forming a secret society which had as its aim the penetration of the Turkish bureaucracy for the purpose of hindering the Turkish war effort. Caught at this, he was once more miraculously saved from execution through an administrative technicality; what is more, while being transferred to Bulgaria he escaped from his captors and went into hiding in Kotel. When after a time it became unsafe for him to remain there, he removed to Serbia. Further wanderings took him in 1858 to Odessa, where he came into contact with such people as Vasil Drumev and Rajko Žinzifov and in general exerted great influence over the sizeable Bulgarian colony in that city. In addition he was granted Russian citizenship.

Since he could not engage in open revolutionary activity while in Russia, Rakovski cultivated an interest in Bulgarian history which he had first developed during the Crimean War. He collected materials on national history and folklore; in particular, he took up the cause of Paisij Xilendarski's *Istoriija*, and to him must be given much of the credit for bringing the Bulgarian public to a proper understanding of Paisij's historical importance. As he was a publicist with a revolutionary axe to grind, however, Rakovski was not always very objective in his scholarly works. Thus, in the posthumously published *Ključ bəlgarskago jazyka* (Key to the Bulgarian Language) he announced his "discovery" that the ancient Bulgarians (the non-Slavic people who had conquered the local Slavs in present-day Bulgaria, merged with them and left them their name) had spoken Sanskrit and that their culture was related to old Indian culture. In support of this contention he offered parallels between Sanskrit literature and Bulgarian folklore. Rakovski had advanced many similarly improbable ideas earlier in his *Pokazalec* (Index, published in Odessa in 1859), a book purporting to be a guide to the proper methods of analyzing ancient Bulgarian culture. During his Odessa period Rakovski

also wrote brochures on the Bulgarian church problem and questions of Bulgaria's historical rights.

With the passage of time Rakovski realized that he could be of little use to Bulgaria while in Russia, so he moved to Belgrade in 1860. There, on 1 September, he began issuing the newspaper *Dunavski lebed* (Danube Swan), which, though it survived for only sixty-two issues, was a major periodical of the decade. In its pages Rakovski expounded his views on current political topics and published literary and historical materials, for instance Sofronij Vračanski's *Žitie*. After this shortlived journalistic venture Rakovski embarked upon the organization of the famous "Bulgarian legion" in Belgrade and the drawing up of his "Plan" for Bulgarian liberation. The "Plan" rested upon the theory that Bulgaria could best be freed through the formation on foreign soil of armed bands which would be sent into Bulgaria at the proper moment. For a time Rakovski's legion was equipped by the Serbian government, but when the latter's relations with Turkey improved, the legion was dissolved. The disbandment was effected the more easily because Rakovski had succeeded in alienating many of his followers by his arrogation of authority and his flaunting of the perquisites of office which were his to enjoy as head of the legion.

His immediate revolutionary plans having thus been frustrated, Rakovski settled in Bucharest, where he published other tenuous periodicals, for instance the journal *Balgarska starina* (Bulgarian Antiquities), of which one number appeared. He continued to disseminate his views on Bulgarian national greatness, anathematize all who disagreed with him, and summon his countrymen to the struggle against the Greeks and the Turks. He once more began organizing armed bands to be dispatched to Bulgaria from foreign soil, but these projects were disrupted by his death of tuberculosis in October of 1867. His remains were transferred to Sofia in 1885, where they lay until their removal to Kotel in 1942. Thus, appropriately enough, after his death Rakovski continued the ancient Bulgarian tradition of the frequent translation of relics, which we have already noted in connection with Saints Ivan Rilski and Petka.

Though Rakovski's literary production exclusive of his journalism was not extensive, his major work, *Gorski p̃atnik* (The Forest Traveler), is a central document of the Renaissance. Rakovski was influenced by the rebel songs of Dobri Ćintulov, Petko Slavejkov's poetry (especially the volume *Smesna kitka* of 1852), and Neofit Bozveli, with whom he had been personally acquainted. Rakovski's first important literary effort, though one which remained unknown to the public, was the autobio-

graphical *Nepovinen bŕlgarin* (The Innocent Bulgarian), memoirs of his life as a *xajdutin* written during an enforced idleness of 1854, at about which time he also composed some individual poems. The initial version of *Gorski pŕtnik* was also written in 1854, but it underwent many modifications before its publication in Novi Sad in 1857 (the date given on the title page; actually it appeared in 1858). In 1856, as a means of stimulating interest in the piece, Rakovski published a brochure of seventeen pages, entitled "Predvestnik Gorskago pŕtnika" (Harbinger of the *Forest Traveler*), containing three articles, three poems and a few caricatures. The "Predvestnik" was accompanied by a broadside announcing the poem's advent and urging support for it.

In many respects *Gorski pŕtnik*'s place in Bulgarian literature is similar to that of Černyševskij's *Čto delat'?* (What Is To Be Done?) in Russian literature. Their literary merit is small, but their historical and ideological significance is so immense that they continue to be read today. Each work contained a stirring message: *Čto delat'?* called for the transformation of society along communal lines; *Gorski pŕtnik* exhorted its readers to armed struggle against the Turks. In each case readers responded enthusiastically to the challenge, at least in the abstract. Rakovski's propaganda was couched in the form of a narrative poem chronicling the activities of a *xajdutin* band led by a *vojvoda*, who serves as the author's mouthpiece. A large portion of the poem is given over to descriptions by the band's members of the circumstances which had impelled them to take to the mountains to fight the Turks. By means of these accounts Rakovski succeeds in painting a heart-rending picture of the sufferings of the Bulgarian population. Through the *vojvoda* the author proclaims his conviction that the revolutionary movement must overcome its anarchic character and submit to strong central direction. Rakovski urges not only opposition to the foreign oppressor, but also social revolution against native exploiters, although this latter element is not so prominent as it was later to be in Xristo Botev's thinking. The author indulges in a fair amount of nature description of an idealized sort, displaying a strong tendency toward the sentimentalism so prevalent in the literature of the 1860s. *Gorski pŕtnik* is usually cited as the chief example of 'revolutionary romanticism' in Bulgarian literature because of its author's idealization of the Bulgarian landscape, the Bulgarian nation and its past (Rakovski's interest in history was so keen that he supplied his poem with extensive notes on historical points touched upon in the text).

From the esthetic point of view *Gorski pŕtnik* is not attractive. Because Rakovski had no idea of how to organize the poem, it rambles on dis-

jointedly. As he made no attempt to individualize his characters, it is impossible to distinguish one from another in memory, but he did create a memorable emotional atmosphere. As poetry *Gorski pǎtnik* is primitive. It is written in syllabic verse, in which each line has the same number of syllables, a system which was archaic for Bulgaria by the time of the poem's composition; the results are unimpressive, for in order to maintain the proper number of syllables per line Rakovski sometimes resorted to awkward contractions. His use of rhyme is peculiar. Employing a four-line stanza with the rhyme-scheme abab, Rakovski bothers to make only the last sound, whether consonant or vowel, or sometimes the last two sounds in a line correspond to those at the end of the rhyming line. But the most serious defect of this influential work was its pseudo-archaic language — here an analogy might be drawn with Radiščev's *Putešestvie iz Peterburga v Moskvu* (Journey from St. Petersburg to Moscow) in Russian literature — which the author employed because he supposed it would give his readers a better sense of history. It emerged as an unprecedented mixture of modern with old Bulgarian. His choice of such an artificial tongue for *Gorski pǎtnik* undoubtedly retarded the Bulgarian language's progress, which was dilatory enough as it was. And yet despite these justifiable criticisms, *Gorski pǎtnik* remains a landmark in the history of Bulgarian literature. It was the right work appearing at the right time even though not composed in the right language.

In 1866, aware that his life was running out, Rakovski once more turned to the genre of autobiography, with a work entitled *Žitie*. One can judge from the surviving fragments of the *Žitie* that Rakovski had by then developed a more satisfactory literary style and that a completed *Žitie* might have been well worth having.

Georgi Rakovski's revolutionary activity and the revolutionary tradition in Bulgarian literature which he exemplified were continued by another wanderer through Russia, Serbia and Rumania, Ljuben Karavelov (1834 or 1835-1879). In addition to being an active revolutionary in the 1860s and 1870s, Karavelov was the leading prose writer of the period, an energetic journalist, and a composer of verse.

Karavelov was born in the mountain town of Koprivštica, where he lived until the age of eighteen or so, possibly studying under Najden Gerov and Joakim Gruev. By 1854 he had moved to Plovdiv, where numbers of Greeks and Turks as well as Bulgarians resided. There the young Karavelov lived with a Greek family and learned much about the oppression of the Bulgarians by both Greeks and Turks. In 1856 he returned home, but then, after a trip to Constantinople, proceeded to

Russia in 1857 to continue his studies under the sponsorship of the Moscow Slavophiles. After a sojourn in Odessa he ended up at Moscow University, where he attended classes at the Philological faculty. Not being particularly scholarly by inclination, he led a bohemian existence, which he justified to himself by arguing that the majority of the professors at the university were boring and out of date anyway.

During his Moscow years Karavelov was closely associated with the Russian Slavophiles, including Ivan Aksakov and M. P. Pogodin, who furnished him scholarship support and funds for the publication of his *Pamjatniki narodnago byta bolgar* (Monuments of the Folk Culture of the Bulgarians [in Russian], 1861) and who for a time at least looked upon him as a reliable if recalcitrant representative of Russia's South Slavic brethren. This fact has spawned controversy among contemporary Soviet and Bulgarian scholars over the extent to which Karavelov accepted the Slavophile viewpoint. It would seem that he was quite willing to promote those aspects of Slavophile teaching which suited his interests. Thus as a Bulgarian patriot who desired the liberation of his homeland, Karavelov made common cause with the Slavophiles and especially the Pan-Slavs, the major groupings within Russia which argued consistently — though not disinterestedly — for the liberation of all Slavs under foreign domination and whose propaganda at least contributed to the Russian government's decision to declare war on Turkey in 1877. On the other hand, he could hardly approve of their schemes for Russian domination in the area once it was freed. Karavelov was also fascinated by the folklore of his native land, another field in which the Slavophiles encouraged him. As a result of these factors, Karavelov published in certain Slavophile journals and also in the important periodical *Russkij vestnik* (Russian Herald), an organ which Russian radicals shunned because of its conservative, nationalistic outlook. In short, where it suited Karavelov was prepared to co-operate with relatively rightist elements in Russian society of the 1860s and — something which is at least as surprising — they were ready to assist him.

Other elements of Karavelov's philosophical viewpoint, however, were drawn from the radical socialist movement in the Russia of the 1860s, and these were more basic than the links between him and the Slavophiles. His social opinions were in broad accord with the teachings of Russian radicals like Nikolaj Černyševskij, Nikolaj Dobroljubov and Dmitrij Pisarev; he was personally acquainted, apparently, with Alexander Herzen, the anarchist Mixail Bakunin and Herzen's colleague, the poet Nikolaj Ogarev. Karavelov's general concept of the ideal society was

taken not from the Slavophiles, but from the radical socialists.

Karavelov began his literary career by publishing in a small journal managed by Bulgarian students in Moscow under the title *Bratski trud* (Fraternal Labor) in 1861. In that same year he issued his *Pamjatniki narodnago byta bolgar*. A few years later (1867) he published his memoirs *Iz zapisok bolgarina* (From a Bulgarian's Notes) in the journal *Russkij vestnik* and in 1868 a collection of shorter pieces under the title *Stranicy iz knigi stradanij bolgarskago plemeni* (Pages from the Book of Bulgarian Sufferings). All these last works were written in Russian.

By 1867 Karavelov, spurred by rumors of an impending Balkan uprising, had left Moscow for Serbia. The uprising failed to materialize, but the young writer joined Bulgarian revolutionary organizations in Serbia, established himself as a prominent representative of the Bulgarian intelligentsia there, married a Serbian woman and began turning out journalism and *belles-lettres* in Serbian. He also acquired a reputation as a dangerous radical, which led to his arrest for seven months in 1868 after the assassination of prince Mihail Obrenović. Upon his release he wandered from Belgrade to Bucharest, back to Belgrade and back to Bucharest, where in 1869 he started issuing his revolutionary newspaper *Svoboda* (Freedom). Karavelov's Serbian period, though brief, was very significant, for his writings served as a vital channel for transmitting the rationalistic, scientific ideas of the Russian radical thinkers into the Balkans. Nor did his directly political activity there go unnoticed, as his arrest demonstrates.

In Bucharest Karavelov became ever more deeply involved in the Bulgarian revolutionary cause. In the spring of 1870 the left wing of the Bulgarian emigration in Rumania formed the *Balgarski revoljucionen centralen komitet* (Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee), under the principal leadership of Karavelov, Xristo Botev and Vasil Levski. Among other things, the committee worked for the establishment of a revolutionary organization inside Bulgaria — an advance over Rakovski's purely external organization — although its headquarters were to be located on foreign soil. In late 1872 disaster struck when an ill-advised attack on the Turks led to their discovering the organization. Vasil Levski crossed into Bulgaria to save what he could of its records but was captured by the Turks and hanged outside Sofia in February of 1873. This was a traumatic moment for the movement as a whole and for Karavelov and Botev in particular: as a result of it Karavelov's *Svoboda* suspended publication, though it was immediately resurrected in *Nezavisimost* (Independence).

Around 1874, for such personal reasons as poverty and overwork, and because of what at the time appeared to be the failure of the revolutionary movement, Karavelov shifted his allegiance to the camp of the 'enlighteners'. Deciding that he should promote the education of the common people for their long-term benefit, in January of 1875 he founded the journal *Znanie* (Knowledge). His ideological switch alienated him from Botev, who remained a convinced revolutionary.

During the War of Liberation Karavelov aided the Russians. After the struggle was over he moved his publishing enterprise first to Tŕnovo and then to Ruse, but his further plans for the enlightenment of his people were terminated by an early death, which occurred in Ruse in January of 1879.

If Karavelov is now ranked as the leading prose writer of the 1860s and 1870s in Bulgaria, this is not so much the result of his manifest talents as because he had so little competition and because he went along with the times in employing artistic literature as a propaganda instrument. Being naturally an author of modest gifts, he often fell under the influence of writers with stronger artistic personalities than his. His writing was not improved by his often hasty and careless composition: as a journalist he was forced to meet constant deadlines. Still, the primary reason for the artistic failure of most of Karavelov's prose works is that they were intended as vehicles for the preaching of social and political opinions and the description of the sufferings inflicted on the ordinary Bulgarian people by an assortment of oppressors (much of his writing is one prolonged imprecation against them). He too frequently wrote in order to prove something; indeed on at least one occasion he explicitly proclaimed this as his aim and then proceeded to carry it out as best he could. The reader may find it difficult to recall the plots of Karavelov's stories or analyze the psychological relationships between characters in them, but he does grasp their political message if only by virtue of its incessant repetition.

Karavelov's output falls into several categories. While in Russia during the early 1860s he wrote a number of works designed to acquaint the Russian public with conditions in his homeland. Most of these were gathered in the *Stranicy iz knigi stradanij bolgarskago plemeni* of 1868. The most important single contribution to this volume was *Bŕlgari ot staro vreme* (Bulgarians of the Old Days [the Bulgarian title], 1867), a chronicle of characteristic Bulgarian types sketched within the old patriarchal milieu. The Gogolian influence is obvious in *Bŕlgari ot staro vreme*, with its gently sardonic treatment of the foibles of such as *xadži*

Genčo, a well informed man, the author tells us, who knows where demons live, "how they eat, sleep and wash up and so forth". Genčo may be trapped occasionally in his boasting, he may commit gross errors out of stupidity, he may sometimes indulge in petty cruelty, but he is fundamentally harmless. Karavelov offered his Russian reading public a rather grimmer picture of Bulgarian life in stories like "Turski paša: zapiski na edna kalugerka" (The Turkish Pasha: Notes of a Nun, 1866), in which a strong, admirable Bulgarian woman recalls her horrible experiences as a member of a Turkish harem, describes the ghastly moral degradation prevalent there, and in general draws up a powerful bill of particulars against the Turks. The indictment of the rapine, terror and slaughter inflicted on the Bulgarian population by the Turkish occupiers was the core of such stories as "Vojvoda" (Partisan Leader, 1860), about the life of the *xajduti*; and "Məčenik" (The Martyr, 1870), which depicts the suffering and death of a *xajdutin* cast into a Turkish prison ("Məčenik" was especially influenced by Taras Ševčenko's poetry). The Turkish oppression pictured explicitly in stories like these formed the implicit background for nearly everything else Karavelov ever wrote.

When Karavelov moved to Serbia and began writing in Serbian, he became a propagandist for the Russian radical thinkers, as we have noted. His most famous work setting forth their ideas was "Kriva li e sodbata?", originally published in Serbian in 1869 as "Je li kriva sudbina?" (Is Fate to Blame?). Its hero, Ljubomir Kalmič, is an enlightened but impoverished young man who expounds the latest social doctrines to a girl named Caja, whom he would like to marry. Caja's family opposes the match, however, and by pulling the proper strings has Kalmič condemned as a political subversive and sentenced to two years in prison, essentially because of his 'progressive' views, elaborated at length in the story in a fashion reminiscent of the conversations in Černyševskij's *Čto delat'*? The lines of development embodied in "Kriva li e sodbata?" and "Məčenik" converge in the long story "Bogatijat siromax" (The Rich Poor Man, 1872-1873). The hero, Smil, a schoolteacher, hopes to marry the daughter of a local *čorbadžija* in order to rescue her from a life of ease. Frustrated in this good intention, he joins a secret revolutionary organization until it is discovered and he must flee to Rumania — though he does succeed in taking his beloved with him. Again, the conflict between the younger generation and their benighted parents is investigated in detail in "Decata ne priličat na baštite si" (Children Do Not Resemble Their Parents, 1876-1878).

In his 'critical realist' writings, then, Karavelov did not stop at attacking

Turks and Greeks. As a social revolutionary he was equally opposed to the native exploiters whose sole aim in life was the accumulation of capital and the exercise of almost despotic power over their countrymen. The story "*Xadži Ničo*" (1870) is a searing portrait of this type of person, the oppressor interested only in enriching himself, and so unfeeling as to be almost unconscious of his own moral turpitude. *Xadži Ničo* is related to the personages depicted in *Balgari ot staro vreme*, but now they are seen as much more sinister. The spiritual pride which can ruin even a man of the common people is the subject of one of Karavelov's more entertaining and touching stories, "Progresist" (The Progressive, 1875). The inhabitants of a certain village, needing a schoolmaster, with some difficulty collect funds to send one of their young men to Belgrade in pursuit of higher education. After finishing there he asks for and receives further support to continue his studies in Vienna. But then, after obtaining such a fine education, he cannot bear the thought of returning to the provinces and informs his fellow villagers that they will have to find another teacher. He goes on to become a thoroughgoing careerist, forgetting his national origins so far as to Rumanianize himself.

Certain major themes of Karavelov's writing have already been mentioned in this summary of his career. The anti-Turkish element in his fiction was understandably very strong: as he wrote at one point, "anybody who will not agree that a Turk is more inhuman than a mad dog is a Turkophile". At the same time Karavelov was a firm foe of the Greeks and also the native exploiters, the "people who, like parasites, eat others' sweat and drink others' blood and bite the world, not because they have to, but because they love to show their neighbors what strong, sharp teeth they have". In Karavelov's opinion many social evils spring from the iniquities of organized religion. One of his characters declares that he will never again allow a Greek clergyman inside his house because they are all libertines; and even Orthodox nuns, if we may believe one of Karavelov's sexually more adventurous characters, are little better than prostitutes: "One wants you to buy her some dress material, another wants another type of apparel, a third wants money, a fourth asks you to buy a protestant Bible for her, and the fifth doesn't want anything — just your love!" As for the Turks, the most religious among them are the greatest monsters. Devout Mohammedans think they are morally justified in forcibly compelling Christians to convert, or else selling them like cattle if they refuse to. For them Christians are sub-human. Karavelov seems to have felt that no society could maintain itself without some sort of religion, but that the religion of the future would be a "rational

religion", based on love of freedom and especially love of the people. One of his characters argues that the world needs a "populist" religion.

In fact it was precisely the distorted social order then existing in Bulgaria and elsewhere which generated individual immorality, Karavelov thought. Though by nature inclined to goodness, man was corrupted by evil institutions and faulty upbringing. Karavelov even extended this viewpoint to Turkish perpetrators of bestial cruelties: the individual Turk was not to blame for his actions, since he was conditioned by the milieu in which he was raised, and particularly by his religion. Once society was reformed and reason reigned on earth, all social problems would be eliminated. One of these social problems, incidentally, was that of the inferior position of women: there was, after all, "no difference" between men and women in this rationalist's eyes, so eventually the new woman would take her place in society as man's equal and no longer be treated as an "object" existing solely for the satisfaction of his baser appetites.

Aside from his fiction Karavelov wrote many journalistic *feuilletons*, often dealing with the same problems treated in his stories. He also produced literary criticism. His literary doctrine was based upon the theories of the Russian radical critics, who ignored questions of artistic form and emphasized the importance of the proper content in literature. Karavelov employed his authority as a critic to see to it so far as possible that other writers promoted the same political ends in their fiction as he did in his.

Finally, Karavelov wrote poetry. He was not a born poet, and one may surmise that it was largely his association with Botev which led him to compose even that small amount of poetry which he did leave to posterity. Lyric topics are almost nonexistent in his poems, the bulk of which are devoted to political questions or personal themes with political implications. The patriotic strain, for instance, emerges vividly in such poems as "Kirilu i Metodiju" (To Kiril and Metodij, 1875), in which Karavelov castigates a Czech Slavist for his theory that the Slavic preceptors were Greek by origin. Again, in the best Čintulovian style, Karavelov urges his people to rouse themselves from their shameful lethargy in "Njakoga i sega" (Then and Now, 1872). He scorns collaborators who hold that the Bulgarians must adapt to their situation since nothing can be done about it, as well as those "patriots" who only recall their duty to their people when they perceive they stand to gain financially from doing what duty dictates anyway. Though it may prove impossible to stir the Bulgarian people from its acquiescence in tyranny, at least the

poet feels that he has always been honorable in his actions and that his conscience is clear: "I am ready to shed my blood, / but I will not fall down before anyone as a humble slave, / and I shall preserve my honor sacred and spotless" ("Bratu D. Cenovič" [To Brother D. Cenovič, 1870: addressed to one of his fellow revolutionaries]). In a short poem of 1874 the poet summarized his career a trifle prematurely: his life, he said, had been totally without joy, but he could console himself with the memory of an honorable task honorably performed: "I have boldly defended the rights / of my nation / and have sown freedom's / precious seed" ("V života si ne sām vidjal"). And in fact it is Karavelov's moral fervor which makes his poems still worth reading today, despite their generally low esthetic value. They are rescued from becoming mere rhymed journalism by the intensity of the author's political conviction as well as occasional lyric touches which demonstrate that he was not utterly devoid of talent.

Rakovski's and Karavelov's attempts at verse pale, however, by comparison with the achievement of the supreme revolutionary litterateur in Bulgarian history, Xristo Botev. Botev, who was born on the extraordinarily appropriate date of 25 December 1848, left a considerable body of journalism, but his literary reputation is based upon a small number of exquisite poems. Poetically he had no predecessor who could approach him. Ideologically he was a radical socialist. Moreover, Botev had the good fortune — from the historical point of view — to be killed at almost precisely the right moment, in the aftermath of the April uprising of 1876, and so his image as the fighter against oppression may be held unsullied in historical memory. Botev was spared the fate of revolutionaries such as Stefan Stambolov and Zaxari Stojanov, whose reputations were blemished by their inability to function under a relatively free political system. For all these reasons Xristo Botev is the most deeply venerated literary precursor of the current regime: his portrait is everywhere and his words quoted incessantly in the Bulgaria of today.

Botev was born in Kalofer into the family of a schoolteacher who had studied in Russia and was a prominent local citizen. Even during his schooldays Botev commanded the respect of his fellows: his character combined introspection of the sort which a poet must possess with a fierce revolutionary spirit and the desire to dominate others. He supplemented his formal education by reading prodigiously, though not very systematically, from his father's library. In 1863, at the age of about 14, Botev completed elementary school and departed for Odessa to continue his studies. There his innately rebellious propensities were fortified by the radical spirit abroad in the Russian Empire. Botev could display his

radical arrogance before his fellow students and his teachers: for instance, one anecdote pictures him as violently contradicting an instructor who argued that all revolutions end in a tyranny worse than the one overthrown. All in all, Botev detested the Odessa *gymnasium* where he had been sent, writing to his father in characteristically intemperate fashion that one had to be an idiot to put up with his worthless professors at all. Since he felt this way, it is not surprising that Botev neglected his schoolwork to lead a bohemian existence and became involved in a Russian revolutionary circle, several members of which were arrested. Though he himself stayed out of trouble for a bit longer, one day he went too far and beat up some gendarmes, as a result of which he was compelled to resettle in the village of Znamenka. Here he worked as a teacher, espousing the most progressive doctrines: he liked to teach outdoors, tried to bring his students to "think for themselves", and refused to inflict physical punishment upon them. The local enmity aroused by his tirades against social injustice, however, eventually forced him to abandon Znamenka too.

Botev next went to his native Kalofer, where he remained for some six months, perhaps the happiest of his life. Teaching in place of his father, who was ill, Botev experimented with a more humane regime in the local school and introduced such subjects as geography, history and civil law. It was also at this juncture that he wrote his first poems, published them in Slavejkov's *Gajda*, and thus began his literary career. His political views kept him in constant difficulties, though, and he finally made his position in Kalofer untenable by delivering an intransigent speech on the feast of Kiril and Metodij, 11 May, 1867.

After Kalofer Botev was supposed to go to Russia, but instead he stopped in Rumania. He visited the dying Rakovski in Bucharest, joined Dobri Vojnikov's theatrical troupe for a time, taught in various towns, and made contact with his future colleagues Levski and Karavelov. Upon settling temporarily in Braila in 1871 he began his first independent journalistic enterprise, the *Duma na bŭlgarskite emigranti* (Word of the Bulgarian Émigrés), which, like many other periodicals of the time, lasted for only a few numbers. In mid-1872 Botev joined Karavelov in Bucharest, publishing in his older colleague's *Svoboda* and *Nezavisimost*. In May of 1873 he again undertook an abortive journalistic venture, the satirical paper *Budilnik* (Alarmclock). Botev printed some of his best poems in *Nezavisimost*, and when it ceased publication after Karavelov's evolution to the right, he began the journal *Zname* (Banner). The official organ of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee, *Zname* lasted into 1875 before it failed for lack of material support. It was also in the year 1875

that Botev assumed family responsibilities in addition to the task of caring for his own family which had devolved upon him following his father's death some five years before: he married a woman who had a son by a previous marriage, and by whom he soon had a daughter.

Though revolutionary spirit in the country was intensifying, the uprisings of 1875 in Bosnia and Herzegovina were suppressed, and the few rebellions in Bulgaria that same year gave the Turks little trouble. Botev and his allies nevertheless scheduled an uprising for the feast of Sts. Kiril and Metodij on 11 May 1876, but as a consequence of treachery it was begun prematurely, on 20 April. The April 1876 uprising is now justly considered one of the glorious events in Bulgarian history, but it too had effectively been put down by the time Botev gathered a band of some 200 men to cross the Danube into Bulgaria for the furthering of the revolution. Taking leave of his family, Botev led his men across the river and into Bulgaria on 17 May, but the Turks overtook them before they could traverse the plains and vanish in the mountains. Botev was shot and mortally wounded on the evening of 20 May. His band was destroyed.

Like most revolutionaries of literary inclination in Bulgaria, Botev wrote much journalism, but as it deals with topical problems it is of interest mainly to the historian making a detailed investigation of Botev's character and ideology. Botev's entire being was dedicated to the revolution, and he came closer than any other Bulgarian literary figure to ensuring that every word he wrote aided the revolutionary cause. This statement is true of his poetry as well as his journalism: although Botev was endowed with an extraordinary lyric gift, when the personal did appear in his verse it was always subordinated to the overriding revolutionary purpose which guided his life. Botev might succumb partially both in his writing and in real life to the hope of attaining personal happiness through love of wife, mother and family, but there was never any doubt that, if he had to choose between duty to country and duty to family, he would abandon his family, perhaps with unutterable sorrow, but without hesitation. One may argue that by his ability to do this he displayed even greater strength than the totally dedicated revolutionary who is never tempted by family life and who accepts no responsibility for parents, spouse or children.

The core of Botev's poetic legacy consists of some twenty lyrics, published for the most part between 1867 and 1873, collected in the volume *Pesni i stixotvorenija* (Songs and Poems) of 1875. Dr. Kræstju Kræstev, a prominent Bulgarian critic who was preparing an edition of Botev's poetry just before his death in 1919, advanced an interesting

hypothesis to explain why Botev wrote almost no verse in the last two and a half years of his life, after the publication in August 1873 of "*Xadži Dimitar*". In Krăstev's view, the four central concerns of Botev's poetry — defined as the dream of freedom, both personal and national; the depiction of national oppression; the poetry of the mountains; the theme of death — all find their most exquisite expression in the single poem "*Xadži Dimitar*". In order to surpass his achievement in this lyric, Botev would have had to discover new subjects for his verse, something he could not or would not do; and his inner honesty would not permit him simply to embroider upon the old topics which he had already treated so perfectly. Dr. Krăstev's theory may not account for absolutely all the facts, but it comes close to doing so if one believes that Botev's esthetic consciousness was a controlling element in his character. At the very least it furnishes a good point of departure for further discussion.

The reader of Botev's verse is struck most immediately by the raw force of his emotions, especially his feelings of love and hatred. He wrote in "*Na proštavane*" (Farewell) that he hoped his brothers, when they grew up, might receive as a legacy from him the capacity to "love and hate powerfully". It is common to find strong emotions of this type expressed in love lyrics, and one can, to be sure, discover them in Botev's love poetry: see, for instance, "*Nej*" (To Her), in which the poet threatens to murder his beloved's aged husband: "I see that a candle is burning inside, / you are sleeping — in my breast / burns a fierce flame, rage flares up / and anger will kill me." Such emotion kindled (the word is apt for Botev, since images of fire are common in his work) by sexual passion is rare, however. More frequently the poet's ire is aroused by social injustice, as when in "*Kam brata si*" (To His Brother) he confesses that "it is difficult, brother, to live / among such stupid morons". At the end of another poem ("*V mexanata*" [In the Tavern]) the poet exclaims to his servile audience, almost choking on his wrath: "But you ... you are idiots!" If he could have thought of a stronger printable expression he would have used it. Although in other poets such explosions might be felt as crass crudities, in Botev they are somehow redeemed by the depth of his commitment. His black rage attains its most cosmic expression in the famous and terrible stanza from "*Xadži Dimitar*" describing the great *xajdutin* wounded unto death: "To one side he has cast his rifle, / to the other his sword, snapped in two; / his eyes darken, his head rolls, / his lips curse the entire universe!" It is not only *xadži Dimitar*, but also Botev himself who would blast and shrivel all of existing creation had he only the power.

This same total negation appears on a more mundane level in Botev's epigrams and satires directed against individuals: they ordinarily left little room for reconciliation with their objects. As an example one may cite the acid epitaph: "Here rots a great patriot, / the editor of *The People* — / he was a famous idiot / and known only for his villainy." A poem entitled "Zašto ne sām? ..." (Why Am I Not? ...) attacks such contemporary literary figures as Vojnikov, Petko Slavejkov and Ivan Vazov for what Botev considered their erroneous approaches to literature and life: for example, he could not stomach Vazov's tendency to gloss over the antagonisms within Bulgarian society. Botev had no gift for compromise, and therefore the Bulgarian revolutionary movement was rent by dissension under his leadership.

If one read only Botev's negative verses, particularly such lines as *xadži* Dimitar's curse upon the universe, one might think Botev a thorough-going philosophical nihilist. In fact, however, his negation stemmed from an intense idealism and his unreserved attachment to causes and even people he considered worthy of his loyalty. In "Majce si" (To My Mother) Botev writes that although only his mother is left for him to love among humans, he is quite incapable of responding to her because "my heart has burned out", because of his sorrow over the sufferings of his native land. In "Na proštavane" the poet, who is leaving to become a *xajdutin*, comforts his mother in phrases deriving their inspiration from folklore, but he still must abandon her for the sake of an ideal. In the last analysis the poet's genuine mother is his homeland, as he proclaims in the opening lines of the elegy "Obesvaneto na Vasil Levski" (The Hanging of Vasil Levski): "Oh mother mine, dear native land, / why do you weep so piteously, so tenderly?" Even sexual love, ordinarily stronger than filial affection, is powerless to divert the poet from his political objective. In "Do moeto pərvo libe" (To My First Love) the poet recalls with chagrin his once having been a "slave" to a woman's charms: now anguish has overcome love in his breast, and the girl's voice, no matter how melodious, cannot compete with the song of the forest where the *xajduti* dwell or the heart-rending sound of the oppressed weeping. There is no place in Botev's soul for the purely personal.

The people with whom Botev sympathizes have been ground down by the Turks for centuries — slaughtered, raped, jailed — but he lays less emphasis upon this than one might expect. When he does speak of it he concentrates upon the agony of the sufferer rather than the cruelty of the torturer. But he is also sensitive to the problem of native Bulgarian exploiters, whom he hated quite as much as the Turks. For this reason he

was on the left wing of the revolutionary movement, most of whose members preferred to think of the Turk as the sole enemy. Botev did not agree, as may be seen from his description of a wealthy Bulgarian: "‘He is rich,’ they say — but don’t ask him / how many souls he’s burned alive, / how many poor beggars he has robbed / and deceived before God’s altar / with prayers, oaths and lying words" ("Borba" [Struggle]). Similar sentiments are expressed acidly in "Patriot", where Botev pens a withering description of the hypocritical exploiter-patriot: "He’s a patriot — gives a soul / for science and for freedom, / but not his own soul, brothers, / the soul of the people instead!" Such comments as these make it clear that if Botev had lived to see the liberation, and if he could have obtained total power, Bulgaria would have undergone both a political revolution and a social one along the lines of that preached by the organizers of the Paris Commune of 1871, which Botev welcomed.

The wealthy native exploiters were supported by the representatives of the established church, the body of what Botev thought an entirely imaginary God. Although the Bulgarians are not an especially religious people, the campaign for Bulgarian ecclesiastical autonomy was an important facet of the larger struggle for the country’s liberation, and some churchmen gave their lives for this cause. But that failed to impress Botev, who regarded the clergy as hypocrites and charlatans, unswerving backers of tyranny. In "Elegija" (Elegy) the poet scarifies that "son of Loyola and brother of Judas, / that loyal traitor", the churchman, who for so many years has preached longsuffering to the people, promising them that by this means they will save their souls. In "Borba" Botev goes further in analyzing the unholy alliance between the wealthy and the church, whose representatives he terms a "pack of wolves in sheep’s clothing" concerned only with expounding the "sacred stupidity" expressed in the phrase "Fear God, respect the Czar." Such ecclesiasts are not all weaklings, like the dissolute monks who fell short of the ideal and were often satirized in Bulgarian literature. Rather Botev slashes at those who live up to the ideal as well, because objectively they fortify the existing order, when "deceit and slavery / rule on this empty earth". Botev lays the axe to the very notion of a Divinity, especially in "Mojata molitva" (My Prayer), probably the most striking atheistic poem in Bulgarian literature. Here the poet berates the God to whom "Orthodox swine" light candles, the God who has "made man / a slave on earth", the God who is the "idol of morons". Botev’s prayer is not to this God, who has no objective being even though he may exist subjectively in men’s minds, but rather to his own God. To be sure, Botev’s ‘God’ exists

no more objectively than the Orthodox God, for he is located in the poet's heart: he is the God of reason, the defender of the downtrodden and lover of freedom. Botev prays that this God may strengthen his hand in the final struggle and ensure that, when he is dead, "his voice will not pass unheard, / as through a wasteland", as he phrases it in the poem's fine concluding lines. If in this piece Botev seems to admit the possibility of a God — though a genuinely righteous God — this may have been for tactical reasons, as most of his readers would have balked at an outright rejection of the Divinity. Moreover, a man like Botev did possess intense faith, but his faith was in a God who was a projection of his own fierce belief in the justice of the cause of the oppressed.

One source of Botev's poetic power was his conviction that he must voice the aspirations of a people so ground under as to have lost that most human of attributes, the power of speech. When the people are exhorted, the only response audible is "wailing": "the voice of God is the wailing of the people", as he recasts the saying "Vox populi vox Dei". In "Elegija" the people cannot respond even to this extent. After the poet's appeal they are silent: all that can be heard is the "dull and horrible clanking of fetters" as they point with their heads toward their oppressors. Though Botev's ordinary reaction to such scenes is one of infinite pity, he occasionally becomes enraged over the population's passive acceptance of indignity after indignity. He scorns the people as a "flock of sheep" for "rejoicing even when you are beaten" ("Gerg'ovden" [a spring holiday]). Such passivity, incomprehensible to the poet but too deeply ingrained to be easily eliminated, contributed to his moods of deep depression, when "my glance was gloomy, the mind couldn't see / whether good or evil were approaching ... / melancholy memories lie upon the soul" ("Borba"). In general, dejection is a prominent element in Botev's lyrics.

Fully as prominent is another strand connected with Botev's pessimism: a striking death-wish, which is expressed much too often to have been a mere passing fancy. It is treated most extensively in "Na proštavane". Here Botev foresaw rather accurately the circumstances of his own death. The concluding passage runs: "the group is starting out, going, / the path is terrible but glorious: / I perhaps may perish young ... / but ... this reward is enough for me — / that the people may someday say: / the poor fellow died for truth, / for truth and for freedom". From the deaths of his predecessors and colleagues Botev derived the inspiration for his gloomy but in the final accounting affirmative poems on the deaths of Vasil Levski and *xadži* Dimitar (the latter, incidentally, is pictured as wishing to die on the spot where he lies wounded because he can in this

fashion attain immortality in the hearts of the people and be commemorated by all of nature). Though Botev also claimed to desire the "cold grave" as a place of "sweet rest", a final haven after the feverish activity of his life ("Do moeto parvo libe"), and though his death-wish may be in part traceable to a nihilistic streak in his character, the striving for posthumous glory seems to have been the major single element in its development.

Other facets of Botev's poetry included nature description — nature is always shown as sympathetic to human suffering and animated by a spirit kindred to man's — and the employment of folklore motifs. As for the style and language of his poetry, despite occasional roughnesses Botev's genius enabled him to create poetic gems in which every word was precisely in place. Because of the generally unsettled state of the language in his day, his poetic idiom is now archaic to a degree, though not excessively so. In any case, the small body of Botev's verse is a bright jewel in the crown of Bulgarian poetry. His life and work brought the heroic decades of the Bulgarian Renaissance to an appropriate conclusion.

Down to the Crimean War there was so little original Bulgarian literature that native literary criticism would have had nothing to analyze had it existed. Serious and extensive literary commentary made its appearance only in the 1860s and 1870s. First written as a sideline by such figures as Petko Slavejkov, Ljuben Karavelov and Dobri Vojnikov, it was the chief activity of Nešo Bončev (1839-1878), the first Bulgarian critic.

Bončev was another of those Bulgarian intellectuals who spent much or all of their adult lives in Russia. Born and educated in Panagjurište, he also collected folk songs there. In the pivotal year of 1858 Bončev and his close friend Marin Drinov left Bulgaria for Kiev and then Moscow, in which latter city he graduated from the university in 1866. Thereafter he became a teacher of modern Greek in Russian schools. Intellectually Bončev was influenced by the Russian radicals but more deeply by the Slavophiles, since he was attracted to all aspects of Slavic history and culture and hoped to devote his life to research in this area. He dreamed of going back to Bulgaria, but as things worked out he visited there only twice, in 1869 and 1873, always returning to Russia because conditions in his homeland were too severe for his precarious health. In 1874 he fell ill with tuberculosis, which in the following year forced him to abandon teaching and travel to the Crimea for his health. But a better climate did not save him, and he died a premature death at the age of 39.

Bončev always worked to raise the general level of Bulgarian culture.

His critical career was largely confined to the years 1870-1873, for his first articles (on the protestants and on the proper curriculum to be followed by a *gymnasium* in Plovdiv) appeared in Slavejkov's *Makedonija* in 1870. Afterwards, at Drinov's urging, he published several pieces in the *Periodičesko spisanie* of the *Balgarsko knižovno društvo*, for instance further discussions of school curricula and — most interestingly for us — an article on classic European authors in Bulgarian translation and a sketch on Gogol' (both 1873). In such pieces as these Bončev attempted to set as high standards as feasible for a literature still in its infancy; indeed he sometimes made unreasonable demands upon it. Be that as it may, it is appropriate that this period of Bulgarian literature should have witnessed the appearance of a man who was primarily a literary critic, a harbinger of Bulgarian culture's approaching maturity.

BULGARIAN FOLKLORE

Scholarly interest in Bulgarian folklore was aroused in good earnest only in the initial decades of the nineteenth century, and even then the first to study it seriously were foreigners like the Czech Slavist Pavel Josef Šafařík (1795-1861) or Jurij Venelin (1802-1839). The latter, a man of Carpathoukrainian origin, in 1829 published a book in Russian of immense importance for the Bulgarian national awakening: *Drevnie i nyněšnie bolgare* (The Ancient and Modern Bulgarians). Venelin was an exponent of romantic Herderian notions in Bulgarian folklore studies; his work inspired a native Bulgarian, Vasil Aprilov, to undertake the collection of folk songs. Unfortunately, though Aprilov gathered quite a number of them, he never published any. Consequently the first significant expansion of Bulgarian folkloristics occurred only with the appearance of Petko Slavejkov and especially the Miladinov brothers.

In the 1840s Petko Slavejkov conceived a passion for what he called "*stari dumi*" (literally 'old words', i.e. proverbs). He traveled all over Bulgaria collecting folklore, including about 15,000 proverbs; later he published a collection of folklore with approximately 18,000 entries, largely proverbs. Slavejkov also utilized folklore in his original writing.

Two individuals closely identified with both folklore studies and the national cause in nineteenth-century Bulgaria were the Miladinov brothers, Dimitar (1810-1862) and Konstantin (1830-1862). The brothers were Macedonians and a trifle unsettled, both ethnically and personally. Dimitar worked for some time as a teacher in Albania and Ohrid, teaching

his own brother at one point. When the Russian Slavist Viktor Grigorovič visited Bulgaria in 1845, he was astonished to find that such a Slavic patriot as Dimitar Miladinov was incapable of using Bulgarian properly; he was entirely comfortable only in Greek. Grigorovič's amazement helped activate Dimitar's national conscience, and he subsequently became a vigorous opponent of Greek influence in his homeland.

After helping his brother make his way to Russia to study, Dimitar remained in Macedonia, teaching in Prilep, where he made the acquaintance of the poet Rajko Žinzifov. During these years Dimitar collected folk songs throughout Macedonia. In 1861 some illwishers denounced him to the Turks as a Russian agent; he was arrested and imprisoned in Constantinople. In the meantime Konstantin, after his stay in Moscow, visited Vienna and Zagreb, in which latter city he met the enlightened Croatian bishop Strossmayer. Strossmayer made it possible for the brothers to publish their collection *Balgarski narodni pesni* (Bulgarian Folk Songs) in Zagreb in 1861. Upon learning of Dimitar's incarceration Konstantin set out for Constantinople, where he was taken into custody upon arrival. The two brothers died of maltreatment in Turkish prison within four days of each other in January of 1862.

The Miladinov collection — a splendid monument to their memory — remains the greatest single work in the history of Bulgarian folklore studies and has been republished many times from its first appearance to the present. Many of the songs printed in it were more Macedonian than Bulgarian, but this did not diminish the collection's importance for the development of Bulgarian national consciousness as a whole.

Ljuben Karavelov and Georgi Rakovski also collected folklore and utilized it in their writings — Karavelov often inserted the texts of entire folk songs in his stories — but their careers were not so exclusively centered about this preoccupation as were the Miladinovs'. With the passage of time folklore studies more and more became the province of scholars as opposed to creative writers: two of the greatest scholarly names in modern folkloristics are those of Ivan Šišmanov and Mixail Arnaudov. Scholars in the Bulgaria of today have greatly expanded the investigation of folklore.

Up to now scholars have discovered no direct traces of folklore in Bulgaria before the fourteenth century, although indirect evidence indicates that it existed earlier. The first recorded folklore at our disposal comes only from the eighteenth century. Because of their very nature we are unable to date most works of folklore with any accuracy. To be sure, historical songs may be placed roughly on the basis of the historical

events they purport to describe, but other types of folk songs do not lend themselves even to this approximate dating. Folklore is as nearly a timeless literature as one can find. It is suspended in history, subject to primarily fortuitous modifications.

Bulgarian folk literature may be split down into several subdivisions. To begin with the most easily accessible, the brief genres of the riddle, the proverb and the anecdote or joke (the latter may be indistinguishable from the folk tale on occasion) possess no features which would set them off markedly from the same genres in other countries. But beyond these genres there are others which reflect the national spirit to a higher degree. Among the poetic genres are found the epic poem, usually broken down into heroic epics and *xajduški pesni*, or songs of the anti-Turkish partisans; historical songs; ritual songs; milieu songs (*bitovi pesni*); and mythical songs (*mitični* or *mitičeski pesni*). Two subdivisions of the prose genres are legends and folktales (*prikazki*).

The epic songs of the Serbs and Bulgarians were the genre which first attracted western attention to Balkan folklore in general. The so-called *junaški pesni*, describing the adventures of a *junak*, or folk hero, were the most fascinating of these from the western point of view. The Bulgarian *junaški pesni* are not ordinarily so long, poetically intricate, or fantastic as the Russian *byliny*. However, like the latter, they group themselves in cycles about the personality of the chief hero, who is often based upon a historical prototype. In this regard the *junaški pesni* are linked to historical songs, the difference between them being that the historical songs make an implicit claim to depict figures and events with a certain accuracy. The heroes of the *junaški pesni* include Momčil *junak*, a person who actually existed in the first half of the fourteenth century, Ljutica Bogdan, Stari Novak, Debeli Novak, Baba Novak, as well as several members of the reigning houses of medieval Bulgaria, for instance Ivan Šišman, the czar who presided over Bulgaria's defeat at Turkish hands, and Czar Jasen, a composite character based on two or three czars bearing the name Asen who ruled in the fourteenth century. The most famous *junak*, however, is Krali Marko. Claimed by both Serbs and Bulgarians, he may be considered a general South Slavic folk hero. Krali Marko's poetic image differs strikingly from what we know of his prototype: the historical Marko was a vassal prince of the Turks, with his capital at Prilep, who perished in battle while fighting on the Turkish side in 1394. Despite his besmirched historical reputation, the folklore Marko came to be regarded as the ruler of the entire Bulgarian land. Borne by his steed Šarkolija, a remarkable animal with the gift of speech, Krali Marko

performs various feats of valor. Although not always ethical in his tactics, he combats the Turks and individual opponents, especially the mythical *černijat Arapin*, or the Black Negro, a collective figure apparently conceived of as the embodiment of evil. Marko's other antagonists include such fantastic creatures as the *samovila*, of whom more below, and three-headed serpents. Evidently the folk created the Krali Marko sagas as a means of bolstering its morale when the land lay under Turkish domination.

Another category of anti-Turkish epic songs — one largely peculiar to Bulgaria because of its historical circumstances — were the *xajduški pesni*. The *xajduti* were never more than a local irritant, but they nevertheless represented the only conscious and continuing military opposition to the Turks. Consequently they and their exploits were celebrated by the folk in song cycles built around such leaders of *xajdutin* bands as Stojan *vojvoda* (*vojvoda* being the leader's title), Straxil *vojvoda*, Čavdar *vojvoda*, Indže *vojvoda*, and even in some cases women who had captured the popular imagination (Moma *vojvoda*). The *xajduški pesni* are usually melancholy because they reflect the essentially hopeless position of the *xajduti*: the new recruit laments that he will be unable to marry, as he must join his fellows; after battle he drags himself to his home and beseeches his mother to bind up his wounds. All the committed *xajdutin* had to look forward to was an earlier or later death at Turkish hands.

The less interesting though more widespread genre of 'ritual songs' in Bulgarian folklore is composed primarily of songs connected with yearly holidays, particularly Christian holy days. One cycle of these are the *koledni pesni*, or songs sung to accompany rituals at Christmas. In addition to their religious content the *koledni pesni* exhibit links with pagan fertility incantations. Other song cycles are associated with Easter and St. George's Day (May 6). Folk songs may also be used when the people pray for rain and on similar occasions.

The most common folk songs in the entire repertory are those classified as *bitovi pesni*, or songs of ordinary life. Included among the *bitovi pesni* are songs sung to children, such as lullabies; love songs describing the pains of reciprocated or unreciprocated love and sometimes dealing with openly sexual topics (variants of these are songs about a beautiful girl without family or dowry, love for a Bulgarian girl as opposed to one of another nationality, and love which survives death); songs to accompany wedding rites, holdovers from the old days when the bride had to be bought or, in extreme instances, abducted; songs having to do with domestic relationships after marriage, especially those between the bride

and her mother-in-law, who were obliged to live and work in close contact with each other; songs to be sung while laboring in the fields or elsewhere; and humorous songs for entertainment. Such numerous and variegated songs do not lend themselves easily to classification.

Mythical songs are an intriguing genre of Bulgarian folk literature. As the descriptive title suggests, fantastic and supernatural elements are contained in them. To be sure, such elements may occur in other folk genres, especially the *junaški pesni*, but the mythical songs are briefer and often deal unabashedly with odd subjects. The most improbable are the songs in which the sun, the moon or the stars figure, as when the sun marries a human girl. Another grouping treats animals as sentient beings, capable, say, of doing a favor for a human who has aided them in the past. Magical transformations may occur in the mythical songs. Some of them treat the plague, which long maintained a grip upon the imaginations of those subjected to its ravages. In other songs the dead are represented as communicating with the living from beyond the grave. Some utilize legendary motifs of specifically Christian content, as when God sends His angels to bestow a child upon a formerly barren woman. In general the Christian outlook is prominent in the mythical songs, although Marxist scholars prefer to deemphasize this fact, since it demonstrates how extensively the folk was influenced by Christianity. Two of the most interesting groupings among the mythical songs describe fantastic figures of purely folk origin: the *samovila* or *samodiva*, and Zmej. The *samodivi* are the Bulgarian variant of the woodsprite: ethereal feminine creatures, who, though they lack male counterparts, have children whose cradles they hang in trees. They are beautiful blondes with small wings who spend most of their time dancing the *xoro*, or round dance. They may occasionally be tempted to consort with shepherds, but eventually they return to the free life with their sisters in the forests. Zmej is a quite different sort of being. His name is related to the Bulgarian word for dragon, and the epithet *Ognjan* 'fiery' or *Gorjanin* 'forest-dweller' is usually attached to it. Zmej resembles a man and dwells in forest caves, from which he emerges when attracted by some particular human woman. Zmej is generally thought of as favorably disposed toward human beings, so that a girl whom he selects as his bride may well go with him voluntarily and bear him offspring although at the same time she may be terrified at his supernatural attributes. These two, then, the Zmej and the *samodiva*, are characteristically Bulgarian folklore personages.

Of the prose genres in Bulgarian folklore, legends are akin to mythical songs on the one hand and historical songs on the other. Since legends

are in prose, one might suppose them to be factually more reliable than the historical songs dealing with major events in Bulgarian history such as the fall of the Second Bulgarian Empire, but this turns out not to be true: they are at least as unreliable as the songs. Though legends may also resemble folk tales, they differ from them in that folk tales are never regarded as anything more than entertainment, whereas legends contain explanations, however fantastic, of natural and historical phenomena. Historical legends may treat subjects from the fourteenth century all the way down to the present century: they include tales of the fall of Constantinople, the Turkish conquest of Bulgaria, and the forcible Islamization of the Christian population under Turkish rule, in addition to predictions of the collapse of Turkish power and the country's liberation by Russia, which, although not historical, might have been given credence by their hearers. The actors in legends may be historical personages, both ecclesiastical — Sts. Kliment and Ivan Rilski, Naum — and political — Momčil, Ivan Šišman, Krali Marko. A number of legends have to do with settlements and localities: tales about the founding of villages, explanations of names given to churches, monasteries, lakes, rivers. Sometimes the attempts at explaining place names after the fact are amusingly ingenious. Finally, there are numerous legends purporting to account for natural phenomena (why is the raven black?), chronicling the activities of devils, angels or saints, or recounting miraculous happenings with a Christian coloration.

Bulgarian folk tales can be entertaining. Some are fantastic, others are closer to everyday life and so can supply information about the attitudes of the ordinary person toward priests, merchants and also individuals in authority. The best-known hero of the Bulgarian folk tale is Xitər Petər (Sly Peter), a character who, though perhaps dense at first, always finishes by discomfiting his enemies. For example, in one of the more complex Xitər Petər stories Petər manages to take revenge upon the priest, the shopkeeper and the innkeeper for their tricks. As Petər is on his way to market to sell his cow he meets each of the three in succession; accepting their designedly bad advice, he crops the animal's ears, horns and tail in order to increase its value. Of course when the cow gets to market in such condition it is worth nothing. Realizing that he has been duped, Petər returns to the village and pretends to have been fortunate in taking the counsel of his three illwishers, for he received a good price for the cow, he claims. He invites his three enemies to the house for dinner, supposedly out of gratitude. Before the guests arrive Petər secures two hares, leaves them with his wife in a basket after coaching her properly, and then

departs for the fields. When the guests are assembled but Petər has not yet returned, his wife takes out one hare and tells it to fetch Petər. It streaks out the door and Petər soon appears, having been "summoned" to dinner by the hare. The priest, astonished at this, insists on buying the errand-hare from Petər, who sells him the second hare for the same price he would have received for the cow in undamaged condition. Needless to say, the first time the priest dispatches his newly-acquired hare on an errand it vanishes in the woods. Thus by exploiting his enemies' greed Xitər Petər manages to repay them fully. Xitər Petər is the central character of many other stories in which he protects his own interests at the expense of others who have tried to deceive him or have exhibited excessive selfishness. Such tales as these were quite different from those featuring castles, dragons, handsome princes and fair maidens which furnished a literature of escape for the people, but they could be just as entertaining.

III

THE POST-LIBERATION EPOCH (1878-1896)

Bulgaria's release from Turkish rule through the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878 was a crucial event in Bulgarian and indeed Balkan history. The country was not freed at one blow, however. In March of 1878 Turkey agreed by the Treaty of San Stefano (a village near Constantinople) to the formation of an independent Bulgarian state, under a temporary Russian commissar, to embrace almost all the lands which had ever been seriously claimed as Bulgarian. The Turks further guaranteed the national independence of Rumania, Montenegro and Serbia. But then England and Austria-Hungary, becoming alarmed at the shift of power from the Ottomans to the Russians, mounted a diplomatic offensive against the Treaty of San Stefano which resulted in the Treaty of Berlin, signed in the summer of 1878. The latter agreement restored many of the sultan's ancient privileges in the Balkan peninsula. Northern Bulgaria was made a semi-independent principedom; most of southern Bulgaria was organized as an autonomous area under the sultan and named Eastern Rumelia; Macedonia and part of Thrace were returned to the Ottoman Empire outright. Bulgarian indignation at these arrangements may well be imagined, but the Russians, who could defeat Turkey alone but not Turkey backed by a European coalition, had no choice but to accede to the Great Powers' demands. Still, the entire patchwork arrangement provided for by the Treaty of Berlin was unstable and could not possibly have lasted long. With Russian sponsorship northern Bulgaria was incorporated as a Principedom under Alexander Battenberg, a relative of the Russian Czar; the new state adopted a constitution drawn up in, and named for, the historical capital of Tŕrnovo, although Sofia became the official capital. Eastern Rumelia likewise came into being temporarily, but the pressures for union between the two portions of the country were too powerful to be resisted. A bloodless revolution of 1885 fused Eastern Rumelia with the Bulgarian Principedom and also led to the brief and pointless war of that same year between Serbia and Bulgaria. Thereafter most

of Bulgaria existed as a single unit, the Principdom of Bulgaria, which, however, did not gain complete independence until 1909.

Unfortunately Macedonia, which remained under direct Ottoman control, was a constant bone of contention between Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria: each country wished to see the land wrested from the Turks but at the same time claimed it as its own. In the Bulgarian national folklore Macedonia sometimes assumed the aspect of a mysterious territory inhabited by downtrodden Bulgarians sighing for deliverance. Many prominent Bulgarian intellectuals and writers supported the Macedonian independence movement around the turn of the century, and Macedonia has been a disputed area in the Second Balkan War, the First World War and the Second World War. Especially during the 1920s Macedonian revolutionaries blackened the already unenviable reputation of Balkan politics by their terrorist tactics. Most of Macedonia is now a Yugoslav republic, but the Macedonian question cannot be considered settled even yet. However that may be, this troubled land has given Bulgaria several eminent sons and furnished material for poems, stories and novels which are an important constituent part of the Bulgarian literary heritage.

The other chief area disputed by the Balkan states is Dobrudža, a province lying in Rumania to the north of present-day Bulgaria along the Black Sea and encompassing the mouths of the Danube. The region has changed hands between Rumania and Bulgaria several times during this century and also — though to a lesser extent than Macedonia — has been viewed by the Bulgarians as a land of the legendary Bulgarian oppressed.

The liberation of 1877-1878, though incomplete, still bore a certain resemblance to the Bulgarian dream of so many centuries. It is therefore not astonishing that for roughly a decade afterwards it was the main topic of Bulgarian literature. Of course the events of the liberation have inspired literary works down to the present, but after 1890 it was reduced from *the* to merely *a* major theme of Bulgarian letters. At the same time, along with the heroic, larger-than-life motifs of the April 1876 uprising and the liberation itself, there appeared an undercurrent of disillusion and discontent with the state of Bulgarian politics and society. Often those who had fought heroically against the Turks turned out to be less than ideal leaders when entrusted with positive political power. This was true of Stefan Stambolov, a hero of the liberation who gave his name to the period of the Stambolov dictatorship (1887-1894). Nor did the ordinary individual prove to be quite so admirable as many before 1878 thought he would be once the country had attained independence. Instead he was

just as petty, grasping and short-sighted as the plain citizen of any other nation. It was a harsh blow for some Bulgarian writers to discover that their compatriots had so many failings, and they voiced their disappointed idealism in bitter social satire.

The years of the Russo-Turkish war witnessed a nearly complete changing of the literary guard. Rakovski had been long dead by the war's beginning; Botev had been killed early in the armed struggle; Karavelov survived the liberation for only a short time. Some writers who had made a name for themselves in the 1860s and 1870s did continue to function after the liberation, but since Bulgaria needed all the educated men she could muster to administer the new state, many of them found employment as politicians and bureaucrats, and in some instances abandoned literature altogether. Thus Blaskov wrote little after the liberation, Drumev became involved in ecclesiastical politics, Najden Gerov devoted himself to scholarship, and Petko Slavejkov entered politics and produced little of literary worth. Thus the authors in this chapter are almost entirely new: only one significant writer of the period, Ivan Vazov, had something of a reputation before the liberation. I select 1896 as an end-point for the period because in that year appeared Vazov's *Nova zemja* (New Land). *Nova zemja* was the culmination of that current which promoted what might be termed the 'conscious nationalization' of Bulgarian culture started during the Renaissance. After 1896 there came into prominence younger men, especially poets, who worked for the 'conscious internationalization' of Bulgarian life by strengthening public awareness of German and French culture, without, however, intentionally undermining its dependence upon Russian literature as a source of outside inspiration. The milieu which these younger literary men created will be treated in the following chapter.

An intriguing member of the 'nationalist' school in Bulgarian letters immediately following the liberation was Zaxari Stojanov (1851-1889), who in his youth spent several years in Dobrudža as a shepherd. While still relatively young he participated in conspiracies against the Turks: he had a hand in the abortive uprising of 1875, working with Botev and Stefan Stambolov, and also took part in the April uprising of 1876 as a close associate of one of its leaders, Georgi Benkovski. After the liberation Stojanov abandoned the active life for the relatively more contemplative existence of a journalist. As he had worked zealously to expose the political sins committed by Alexander Battenberg as Prince of the Bulgarian Principedom, in 1882 he felt it advisable to move to Plovdiv, capital of Eastern Rumelia, a move which several other writers made at

about that time for similar reasons. But then these very same writers agitated for the union of Eastern Rumelia with the Principedom of Bulgaria so that they would once again be in the power of the ruler whom they had escaped. Stojanov actively supported the movement for unification in addition to working with the Macedonian revolutionaries. After approximately 1886 he was taken into the ruling circles, editing the official Stambolovite newspaper *Svoboda* (Freedom) and being elected to high office, including the chairmanship of the national parliament. In his last years he seems to have become politically disreputable, and consequently a shadow has lain upon his name since.

Though he was poorly educated and always professed to detest scholars, Stojanov undertook several scholarly projects in the course of the 1880s, for example the writing of an early biography of Botev and the editing of Karavelov's works in eight volumes. He is primarily remembered, however, as a gifted memoirist with intimate knowledge of the great events of the liberation. He wrote various individual memoirs intended to strengthen or defend the reputations of his fallen comrades in arms, but his masterpiece in this genre was the massive *Zapiski po bŭlgarskite vŭstaniŭa* (Notes on the Bulgarian Uprisings). Published in three volumes of 1884, 1887 and 1892, this monumental description of the uprisings of 1875 and 1876 has been republished in full and in part many times since in Bulgaria and has been translated into foreign languages (an abridged English version appeared in 1913). The book is popular for several reasons. For one thing, it is written in lively and direct language, the sort which perhaps only a person with extraordinary native intelligence but little formal training could write. Then again Stojanov is a born reporter chronicling tremendous historical happenings. He captivates the reader by his objectivity, for he does not hesitate to describe his own failings. Further, even though he knew many of the leaders of the uprisings well and could doubtless have debunked them had he been so inclined, Stojanov never ceases to regard his subjects in a heroic light, to maintain an epic tone even, for instance, when describing the broken Benkovski after the uprising's failure. He recounts magnificent things magnificently, and on the strength of this book alone is deservedly considered one of the greatest masters of Bulgarian prose. Stojanov said he wrote it because he feared that contemporary society was in the process of forgetting those who gave their lives for Bulgaria's liberation. This was probably in any case a groundless apprehension, but certainly the literary power of his *Zapiski* has ensured that the heroes of the liberation will be long remembered.

Ivan Vazov, the man now termed the national Bulgarian writer, was in

some ways quite close to Stojanov during this period. Vazov led a long and productive life spanning the decades from the 1870s, when he was a member of the revolutionary movement, to the first years of the 1920s, so that he witnessed the disasters visited upon his homeland by the First World War and the Balkan conflicts immediately preceding it. He was a dominant figure in the Bulgarian literature of two epochs: from the liberation to century's end, and the first two decades of the twentieth century. As he can by no stretch of the imagination be relegated primarily to either of these periods, his work will be discussed in two chapters of this study. For the present we must consider his contributions to the glorification of the recent revolutionary past and his articulation of a view of the Bulgarian national character, as well as his role as conscience to a society forgetful of the ideals which had supposedly motivated the heroes of the liberation. Certainly most of Vazov's work of lasting value was created over this first period.

Vazov (1850-1921) was a native of Sopot, born into a family which adhered to the highest standards of religious morality and trained the children to respect their elders. He started to school at the usual time, after the age of about seven; at sixteen he moved to Kalofer, where he was a pupil of Xristo Botev's father (Vazov's early career illustrates the way in which, since Bulgarian intellectuals were so few, a bright young man could come into contact with a large proportion of the most famous contemporary native writers and thinkers). As a boy he read the works of such writers as Paisij Xilendarski, Vasil Drumev, Jurij Venelin and Petko Slavejkov; in foreign literatures his taste tended toward authors like Eugène Sue. But Russian literature supplied him with solid fare and even French literature yielded more sustenance later on, when he moved to Plovdiv to attend a school run by Joakim Gruev. His literary flair appeared early, when he wrote such items as a group of love poems inspired by his first affair, with a married woman of about thirty when he was roughly nineteen.

It was probably in 1870 that Vazov traveled to Rumania to visit an uncle and ended by becoming a semi-emigrant until 1877. He made contact with revolutionary circles, published poems in Karavelov's paper *Svoboda*, and in general collected impressions of the émigré milieu which he was later to utilize in his writing. The year 1872 was an important one for Vazov as author: it was then that he published his first good poems in Drumev's *Periodičesko spisanie*, visited Petko Slavejkov, and made the acquaintance of Konstantin Veličkov, who was to be one of his closest literary associates from then until Veličkov's death. By the time of the

uprisings of 1875-1876 Vazov was back in Sopot stirring up revolutionary ardor, but for all his efforts Sopot failed to rise at the crucial moment. Politics could not down literature entirely even in such days as these, and Vazov's first collection of verse came out in 1876 under the title *Prjaporec i gusla* (The Banner and the Gusla [a stringed musical instrument]). The poems in this volume as well as the one that followed it closely, *Tagite na Bŕlgarija* (Sorrows of Bulgaria, 1877), dealt primarily with the struggle for national liberation and displayed the influence of Victor Hugo, to whom Vazov the poet was indebted.

In the course of the Russo-Turkish war Vazov embarked upon the half literary and half bureaucratic career which was to be his lot off and on for more than twenty years — paradoxically, the bureaucrats wished him to be a poet, but he wanted to become a bureaucrat. In July of 1877 Vazov was appointed secretary to Najden Gerov, governor of Svišov, the first city to be liberated by the Russians. As the governor was quartered in the future humorist Aleko Konstantinov's home, Vazov had the opportunity to make Konstantinov's acquaintance very early. In 1878 Vazov moved on to Rusčuk, where he remained a bureaucrat with few duties whose superiors could not fathom why he objected to having abundant free time for writing. Despite these advantages, though, he did write, and his third collection of verse, *Izbavlenie* (Liberation), appeared in 1878, soon to be followed by another, *Majska kitka* (A May Bouquet). As the titles indicated, the first treated the subject of Bulgaria's liberation, while the second dealt with more intimate and lyrical topics. The same line — personal love and nature lyrics — was predominant in collections of subsequent years, for example *Gusla* (1881) and *Polja i gori* (Fields and Forests, 1884).

Vazov's political and bureaucratic career continued its zigzag course when in 1879 he was dispatched to Berkovica in a judicial capacity which gave him the opportunity to observe life in the raw. In this particular instance, however, the results were not wholly positive. He used the Berkovica material in the popular story "Mitrofan i Dormidolski" (1882), an account of a quarrel between two old friends. But then Zaxari Stojanov accused him of having plagiarized Nikolaj Gogol's famous play *Revizor* (The Inspector General) and more especially Gogol's short story "Povest' o tom, kak possorilsja Ivan Ivanovič s Ivanom Nikiforovičem" (Story of How Ivan Ivanovič Quarreled with Ivan Nikiforovič). Vazov heatedly denied any connection between his work and Gogol's, but there does seem to be a more than fortuitous similarity in plot between Vazov's piece and those of his Russian predecessor. In the end the whole episode did appreciable damage to Vazov's reputation in this period.

Vazov continued to write poetry at the end of the 1870s: one result of his efforts was the narrative poem *Gramada* (1880: the title refers to a pile of stones built up gradually by passers-by as a form of curse). His bureaucratic career was interrupted when he refused a transfer to Vidin, abandoned his judicial post altogether and moved to Plovdiv. Though he would dearly have loved to take a hand in the political organization of Eastern Rumelia, he was compelled to devote his talents to literary and cultural affairs instead. Thus he spent a year editing the newspaper *Narodnij glas* (The People's Voice) and later, together with Veličkov, took over the journal *Nauka* (Science), a short-lived but outstanding periodical of the day.

The Plovdiv period of Vazov's career (1880-1885), a time when his colleagues so wisely opposed his wish to convert himself into a functionary, was extraordinarily productive. He wrote the lyric verses gathered in *Gusla* and *Polja i gori*, adding to them *Italija* (Italy) in 1884, following a visit to that poetic country. He tried his hand at the short story genre and even the theater: his play *Mixalaki Čorbadži*, a comedy of 1882, brought him renown in the theatrical world of Plovdiv, which at that time was Bulgaria's principal cultural center. More significantly, in his Plovdiv years Vazov returned to the era of the Bulgarian uprisings and the liberation in search of literary inspiration. The long short story "Čičovci" (Uncles, 1884), told appealingly of the idyllic patriarchal milieu prevailing in Bulgaria before the liberation and described its disruption by revolutionary storms. Another long short story, "Nemili-nedragi" (Unloved and Unwanted, 1883), chronicled the adventures of Bulgarian revolutionaries in Rumania. Being in an autobiographical mood, Vazov inserted himself into the narrative in the person of Brăčkov, one of the milder and more naive of the revolutionaries. The peak of Vazov's achievement in commemorating the heroes of the Bulgarian Renaissance was reached in the cycle of narrative poems *Epopeja na zabravenite* (The Epic of the Forgotten), a worthy companion piece to Stojanov's *Zapiski po bəlgarskite vəstanija*. Indeed it was the appearance in 1881 of some of Stojanov's memoirs on the uprisings which moved Vazov to commence the writing of a series of poems to preserve the remembrance of certain great figures, who, he thought, were already beginning to fade from the national consciousness. After composing Bulgarian literature's most poignant tribute to Paisij Xilendarski, Vazov moved to the more immediate past to portray such figures as Levski, Benkovski, Rakovski, and the soldiers who fell in the crucial battle of the Šipka Pass. Today the *Epopeja na zabravenite* remains as Vazov's supreme poetic accomplishment from

both the artistic and nationalistic points of view.

In 1885 the union between the two artificially separated portions of Bulgaria — of which Vazov had dreamed for so long — became a reality. The dream was soon transformed into a nightmare when his political enemies came to power and forced him into exile. At the beginning of his wanderings Vazov dwelt briefly in Constantinople, but he soon made his way to Odessa, where he contemplated attending the university, read the populist critic N. K. Mixajlovskij with approbation, and visited Moscow and St. Petersburg. Though he did not care for everything he saw in Russia, his sojourn there strengthened his Russophile sympathies. At any rate his prose masterpiece *Pod igoto* (Under the Yoke) was incubated in Russia, and it was in Odessa that Vazov began writing it. Before it was completed Stambolov permitted him to return home in 1889. There he met Ivan D. Šišmanov, who was to become one of Bulgaria's greatest scholars and statesmen and his own closest confidant. Šišmanov printed *Pod igoto* in the first three volumes (1889-1890) of his newly founded *Sbornik za narodni umotvorenija, nauka i knižnina* (Journal of Folklore, Scholarship and Literature). The book subsequently came out in numerous editions, especially after 1894, and has been translated into many foreign languages. Foreign scholars compared its preeminence in Bulgarian literature to that of *Vojna i mir* (War and Peace) in Russian literature. The English critic Edmund Gosse, in a foreword written for the English translation of 1894, termed *Pod igoto* a remarkable product of a young literature but with great insight predicted that Vazov would never recapture the "freshness" of his first novel. At any rate, within a few years of its publication *Pod igoto* had established Vazov as the leading Bulgarian writer in both native and foreign eyes.

After his return from Russian exile and the publication of his first novel, Vazov again tried his hand at scholarly and literary journalism, founding the journal *Dennica* (Daystar) in 1890. Unfortunately, like his abortive marriage of the same year, the enterprise enjoyed little success. *Dennica* did last through 1891, and many of the established and budding authors of the time — Vazov himself, Veličkov, Penčo Slavejkov, Stojan Mixajlovski — appeared in its pages. However, the founding in 1892 of Dr. Kræstju Kræstev's *Misæl* (Thought), one of the two or three most important literary journals in Bulgarian history, provided an excess of competition, and Vazov was forced to liquidate *Dennica*. On the more purely literary side, he collected his short stories in *Povesti i razkazi* (Stories and Tales, three volumes, 1891-1893) and *Draski i šarki* (Sketches and Skits, two volumes, 1895).

Toward the end of the period 1878-1896 Vazov once more entered public life, this time as an elected official, when he ran for and won a seat in the national parliament from Kazanlak in 1894. Being a well-known Russophile, he was chosen as a member of a delegation sent to Russia in that same year to patch up relations with Bulgaria's liberator, relations which had deteriorated considerably during the rule of the Russophobe Stambolov.

Despite his heavy involvement in political and other affairs during these years, Vazov still managed to write a great deal. The chief product of his efforts, aside from *Draski i šarki*, was his second novel, *Nova zemja* (1896), a book which rounded out a literary epoch. "Čičovci" described the pre-liberation milieu and the mounting revolutionary enthusiasm, *Pod igoto* depicted the Bulgarians' efforts to free themselves unaided, and *Nova zemja* brought the story down to what Vazov regarded as a climax, the Union of 1885. The novel pictured Bulgarian society of the years between 1878 and 1885 in the large. It was not well received by the reviewers, however, who expected something more magnificent after *Pod igoto*, and this combined with the adverse reaction of the public greatly discouraged its creator. His depression undoubtedly contributed to his decision to accept the post of Minister of Education from 1897 to the beginning of 1899, replacing his friend Veličkov. Vazov accomplished nothing noteworthy during his term of office, and when the time came to resign he was content to do so and cast himself into the literary wars of the early twentieth century.

The scope of Vazov's activity from the 1870s through the 1890s was amazingly broad; indeed it is only a slight exaggeration to say that in the 1880s the phrases "the works of Ivan Vazov" and "Bulgarian literature" were synonymous. Vazov was Bulgaria's foremost poet, novelist, short story writer, critic and dramatist as well as journalist and travel writer. In all his writings he elaborated a national and nationalistic point of view in the best sense of those words.

Patriotism is the backbone of all Vazov's writing, both in prose and in verse. The existence of *Pod igoto* alone is sufficient witness to this. In verse Vazov published not only certain collections with patriotic titles in the final years of the 1870s, but also the *Epopeja na zabravenite*. Beyond that his patriotism is exhibited in a multitude of specific details. It appears in its crudest form — verging on the chauvinism which he displayed during the First World War — in a poem like "Bolgarskijat vojniki" (The Bulgarian Soldier), a paean to Bulgaria's military exploits during the war with Serbia of 1885. Though at first contemptuous of the Bulgarian

fighting man, according to Vazov, the enemy quickly learns to retreat at first sight of his righteously wrathful opponent. Vazov's patriotism was not blind, though, for in an earlier poem of 1876, "Južnoslavjanska solidarnost" (South Slavic Solidarity), he had spoken eloquently of the necessity for cooperation between Serbs and Bulgarians; he had discovered no reason to alter this viewpoint after the passage of another decade. That this is so may be discerned from a poem written after 1885, the overdone "V okopa" (In the Trenches). Here the poet pictures a Bulgarian and a Serbian soldier who have just wounded each other mortally and who realize before they die that ten years previously they had fought side by side in the war of 1876 between Serbia and Turkey, when Bulgarian volunteers came to the aid of their neighbors. The thought of strife between the two Orthodox South Slavic nations grieves Vazov, although of course if he must choose between them he will unhesitatingly support his own country. His implacable wrath — to the extent that he was capable of such an emotion, for unlike Botev he was very mild-mannered (compare the stanza from "Ne sëm borec" [1888-1889]: "I am no fighter, no hero glorious, / but I have never crawled humbly on the ground, / I have never begged for mercy in unequal conflict / and I have not trampled a fallen enemy") — was reserved for the Catholics, those natural enemies of Eastern Orthodoxy, and for the English. Vazov rarely mentions the Turks specifically as the enemy in his poetry, but he brands the English perfidious traitors because of their role in partially undoing the Bulgarian liberation. As for the Catholic church, after visiting the Vatican during his Italian journey of 1884 the poet wrote a not entirely original poem attacking it for having sought to suppress men like Galileo, Hus, Gutenberg and Voltaire. Once anathematized by Catholicism as "devils", they are now revered by the whole world, Vazov exults.

Vazov greatly admired the Russians. The strong pro-Russian strain in his work is clear in the poem "Rusija" (Russia, 1876), where the writer recalls that when he was a small child his mother would show him a portrait of Nicholas I and tell him that he was the "Czar of Bulgaria". Doubtless many Russians of Nicholas' time would have been dumbfounded to learn of the esteem in which he was held by the Bulgarians, but for Vazov the might of the Russian people was embodied in the monarch.

Vazov's interest in history and geography blended well with his desire to define and foster the national spirit. This aim was served most plainly in his travel impressions, composed in prose and in verse, for his best work in this genre was inspired by visits to historic sites associated with

stirring events or notable people of the national past. Thus once when he passed near Mt. Athos he wrote a sonnet, included in the "Makedonski soneti" (Macedonian Sonnets), evoking the shade of Paisij Xilendarski, who had lived and worked there. Vazov reverently avoided naming Paisij outright in the text, instead referring to him as "he" and elucidating the reference for his less informed readers in a footnote. Again, while visiting the spot where Botev fell mortally wounded, the poet entered a trancelike state and reconstructed the entire scene in his mind. Viewing historic sites powerfully stimulated Vazov's poetic imagination.

Finally, Vazov also used the Bulgarian language to sharpen the national consciousness, as Paisij had done more than a century before him. In "Bēlgarskijat ezik" (The Bulgarian Language) he lauds the "beauty and power" of his native tongue, castigates those who maintain that elevated thoughts cannot be expressed in Bulgarian, and declares that he will seek poetic inspiration in his language's "black shame". And Vazov did contribute to the creation of a standard modern Bulgarian literary language despite the contamination of his own style by Russian forms and words. Through the quantity and quality of his writing he raised his native tongue to a level of subtlety it had not known theretofore.

Although Vazov did not get along personally with Zaxari Stojanov for several years, the two shared some important characteristics. Both were fervent patriots; both were also anti-intellectual. Neither had received much formal education, and both reacted defensively in the presence of a "scholar". Though each would certainly have agreed with the "Enlighteners" of the Renaissance on the necessity for elementary and secondary schools, both regarded anything more advanced with distrust. This attitude surely contributed to the later bitter dispute between Vazov and the thoroughly educated critic Krēstju Krēstev, who always prefaced his name with a "Dr." For instance, the poet began his poem "Diplomiranite" (The Ones with Diplomas) by declaring with false humility: "Yes, gentlemen, it's true, I am uneducated! / I know that I am unworthy to be among you", but then went on to satirize the scholar who demanded untoward deference from others. Vazov held that one must have a good heart whether or not one had a good head, and pointed out that the heroes of recent Bulgarian history like Levski and Botev were uneducated: the latter "died as a fighter in the Balkans without even a diploma". Thus did Vazov second the anti-intellectual strain of Stojanov's *Zapiski*.

Like many others, Vazov anticipated a moral regeneration of the Bulgarian people after the liberation; consequently he participated in the general lamentation which arose when it eventually became clear that the

Bulgarians freed feel short of being an ideal nation. As early as September of 1876, in "Vekət" (The Age), written after the April uprising's failure, Vazov expressed Botevian, pessimistic views on the unshakeable rule of evil, deceit and falsehood on earth. But then he drove such thoughts from his mind and endeavored to persuade himself that the evils he perceived in embryo about him would shrivel in the furnace of the revolution. After the revolution, though, he could not conceal the true state of affairs from himself. Furthermore, it seemed that there was really little hope for any Bulgarian spiritual revival if such a stupendous event as the liberation had not brought it about. The angry Vazov upbraided his contemporaries, the unworthy descendants of heroic ancestors, some of them even the ancestors who had survived only to demonstrate that they were made of base stuff. In Bulgarian society, the poet complained, one could all too easily observe how "honor is cruelly downgraded, / impudence assumes an appearance of innocence, / proud stupidity is elevated, / nameless talent perishes in the mud" ("Na deteto" [To a Child], 1880). Some three years later he commented: "Our generation is weakening, / everywhere there is stagnation and killing frost; / not a single ray of warmth, not a single inspiration / descends upon us" ("Linee našto pokolenie" [Our Generation is Weakening, 1883]). To be sure, since he was basically an optimist Vazov ended even this discouraged piece with a summons to reform so that future generations would not have to hang their heads in shame when they recalled their immediate ancestors. The campaign against the evils of Bulgarian society was difficult, the more so as many of those evils were quiet ones, so easily overlooked that it was nearly impossible to generate popular indignation over them. Would-be reformers were depressed when they saw that the broad public seemed not to care that it was being exploited. Vazov's feelings on this score are expressed in "Apatijata" (Apathy, about 1881): "You could be the great genius of the earth, / holy as Christ, righteous as Socrates; / but you need neither poison nor cross / in order to die in our land: / we have an even more evil weapon at our command: / apathy!"

Vazov's disillusion with Bulgarian society was probably blackest in the years between 1878 and 1885. Disappointed idealism remained a vital component of his work after 1885 as well, but then it was muted and more often than not aroused by life's pettier phenomena. A deeper pessimism is evident in certain poems written in his Russian exile at the end of the 1880s, when he felt alone and unwanted, living a "bitter life" in a foreign land. Simultaneously, the social content of his writing became shallower. This may be demonstrated by several stories from *Draski i šarki* of 1895, where

he treated serious subjects in almost frivolous fashion. In "Obiknovena istorija" (A Common Story) the narrator, riding in a streetcar, catches sight of an old friend with his attractive young wife and mother-in-law as they get on. He indulges in pleasant but envious ruminations on his friend's domestic happiness. The husband gets off before his wife and mother-in-law, however, and as the narrator watches the young woman leave a few stops later he realizes with horror that she is on her way to an assignation. All the narrator's illusions are shattered. And the most dreadful thing of all is that the entire situation is so ordinary, as the author emphasizes by his choice of title.

The sins widespread in society ranged from adultery to less important but still bothersome shortcomings. Vazov satirizes Bulgarians' tendency to seek bureaucratic sinecures in "Toj e mlad, zdrav, inteligenten" (He Is Young, Healthy, Cultured), a prose sketch about a young man with every advantage who refuses to consider any employment outside the bureaucracy, where he will enjoy a maximum of security. In "Bedeštij literaturen 'kružok'" (The Future Literary 'Circle') he makes mock of a group of would-be and pseudo-writers. As long as they are together they pay one another extravagant compliments, but as soon as some leave those remaining deride both them and what there is of their work, in this way exposing their hideously petty jealousies. Finally, Vazov sometimes trains his guns on quite insignificant foibles, for example the stock phrases with which people greet their acquaintances upon chance meetings. In "Prijetelski srešti" (Meetings with Friends) the narrator takes a stroll and predicts, as he sees various friends approaching, the course each brief exchange will take. "What's new?" asks one. "Nothing much", I reply. "What's new with you?" "Nothing much." Whereupon the conversation ends and the friends continue upon their ways. Though some of the themes treated in *Draski i šarki* may seem unworthy of Vazov's pen, he wrote the sketches because he wanted his people to adhere to the highest standards in both important and unimportant things. His satire is not embittered. It is gentle and suffused by the hope, however faint, that his countrymen will change their ways. He was too sane an individual and too great a patriot ever to feel totally alienated from his society.

On the other hand, Vazov's disillusion with many things Bulgarian probably reinforced his tendency to produce asocial poetry. He was attracted by the beauties of nature and wrote many nature lyrics quite devoid of social or philosophical content. The philosophy he saved mostly for autobiographical poems on his personal role as a poet — as in "Poet i vdəxnovenie" (Poet and Inspiration, 1880) — or ruminations on the

nature of poets and poetry in general: "There may be no more poets — / but poetry will remain eternally" ("Gete" [Goethe], not later than 1893). One might not expect it in view of his verse's generally practical orientation, but the problem of what the poet was and did frequently occupied Vazov's thoughts.

The *Epopėja na zabravenite*, in which the theme of the liberation received its most superlative expression, was not composed all at once. The poems on Levski, Benkovski, Kočo, the Žekovi, and Kableškov appeared in the collection *Gusla* of 1881, the remaining seven poems in *Polja i gori* of 1884. These pieces are written in a tone of almost religious awe at their subjects' feats. Such an attitude is prominent in a passage near the end of "Levski" describing the revolutionary's martyrdom: "He was hanged. Oh glorious gallows! / In shame and grandeur equal to the cross!" The anti-Turkish revolutionaries sacrificed themselves so that their people might be resurrected and they themselves might live on in the nation's heart; the gallows was the instrument of their sanctification. Most of the poems in *Epopėja na zabravenite* are dedicated to individuals, but they are always depicted against the background of the Bulgarian nation. And the last poem of the sequence, "Opəlčencite na Šipka" (Volunteers at Šipka), which Vazov later considered the work's high point and one of his greatest poetic achievements in general, is a poem with a collective hero: the group of Bulgarian volunteers who fought furiously at the battle of the Šipka Pass to expunge with blood the shame of their nation's slavery. Individuals like Levski and Benkovski concentrated in themselves that which was finest in the spirit of the Bulgarian nation as a whole.

What *Epopėja na zabravenite* was in poetry, *Pod igoto* was in prose. Although the novel suffers from centrifugal, kaleidoscopic tendencies inevitable in any attempt to paint a broad picture of the national movement of 1876, it is held together by the figure of the revolutionary Bojčo Ognjanov, who arrives in a town after escaping from a Turkish prison. The book recounts his tender and oversentimentalized love affair with a local schoolteacher (Rada Gospožina), his difficulties with Turkish occupiers and Bulgarian traitors and cowards, the burst of national pride in the hearts of the Bulgarian population which longs to be rid of its tormentors, the outbreak and quick suppression of the April uprising, and Ognjanov's hopeless last stand against the Turks, when he and Rada perish together and his severed head is exhibited as a trophy by the victors.

In *Pod igoto* Vazov was at his best when he described, not revolution-

aries, but the old patriarchal milieu presided over by the wealthy *čorbadžii* and simple but good persons of the type pictured in "Čičovci". Vazov takes the revolutionary movement as his chief subject, but he is unable to delineate it with the sympathetic familiarity with which he draws the ordinary society of the sleepy pre-liberation town. Moreover, Vazov had no sympathy with notions of internal social conflict, and so firmly rejected the doctrines of men like Botev, for whom a social revolution within the Bulgarian population was fully as important as the political one needed to drive out the Turks. Indeed Vazov is so understanding that he cannot pronounce an unreserved condemnation of outright traitors to the patriotic cause, much less the rich Bulgarians who at least did not oppose the revolution. He is at pains to emphasize the national unity in speaking of the popular ardor for the fight:

When they were told: "Be ready, you must die!" the church gave its priest, the school its master, the field its ploughman, the mother her son. The idea spread everywhere with irresistible force, it laid hold of everything. ... Even the *čorbadžii*, the branded class, the obstacle in the way of the people's progress, were fascinated by the idea which had fired the minds of the people about them. It is true that their share in the patriotic movement was relatively small, but they did nothing to hinder it, for they did not betray it.

Vazov writes favorably of the church, which Botev so despised: even though the local monastery is a hotbed of malicious gossip, even though a young deacon tries to break and run at a critical moment, in the end the deacon dies a hero's death and an elderly priest willingly donates his life's savings to the cause. The author further emphasizes the nation's unity of purpose by having Ognjanov and others polemicize with a radical named Kandov, who mouths socialist doctrine and advocates social revolution. "The ideas you express", Ognjanov tells him at one point,

merely prove how widely read you are, but they are a deucedly eloquent sign of your ignorance of the Bulgarian question. Under such a banner you'd find yourself alone. ... As to the principles of socialism to which you've treated us, they are not for our stomachs, Bulgarian common sense rejects them, nor can they now or ever find favorable soil in Bulgaria. ... We can depend on none but the people, and among the people we find both the *čorbadžii* and the clergy: they are a power, and we shall make use of them.

Of course Vazov would not dream of reading a Kandov out of the national movement either: his aim was to treat all elements of society equitably.

Vazov's novel has numerous shortcomings, among which are the overuse of coincidence, the employment of the mechanical device of

alternating peaceful tableaux with scenes of excitement and danger (a scheme which the critic Malčo Nikolov has attributed to Victor Hugo's pernicious influence), nature descriptions given for their own sake and not integrated into the novel's fabric, the flat characterization of many of the heroes, and a patriotic naiveté which sits badly with foreign readers. Despite these defects, *Pod igoto* displays a power in its evocation of the national arousal and a simplicity in the portrayal of its characters which make it possible for the reader to form an affection for them even when they are not wholly credible, and a love for the Bulgarian nation which ensure that it will endure as the classic work of Bulgarian literature. Upon first reading it a foreigner may be at a loss to comprehend the novel's reputation, but further acquaintance with Bulgarian culture and another perusal or two will usually lead to a much better appreciation of it.

Vazov's second novel, *Nova zemja*, ends with the Union of 1885, an event which he thought nearly as important as the Russo-Turkish war. An autobiographical strain is obvious in *Nova zemja*: its main hero, Stremski, like Vazov, starts out in Bjala Čerkva and later moves to Plovdiv, the center of the unification movement. Several characters from *Pod igoto* reappear in *Nova zemja* in less epic settings, for a principal theme of the book is disillusion with the realities of independent national life. The main plot line describes Stremski's political and love affairs, but around it are clustered a number of subplots and independent vignettes. Intended to give the reader a feel for the social fabric of the era, they instead frequently cause him to lose his way in a welter of detail. For all this, and even though *Nova zemja* enjoys a reputation distinctly inferior to that of *Pod igoto*, it sustains the reader's interest to the end, and not solely through the sensationalism which was a significant factor in the book's success.

In *Nova zemja* Vazov continued his polemic against the Bulgarian socialists, who by the mid-1890s had gained much influence in Bulgarian intellectual life. He gently caricatures one wild-eyed young socialist and has Stremski argue that socialist ideas derive too purely from western European conditions to find any application in Bulgaria. Further, in his description of the Union of 1885, interpreted as a bloodless revolution, the author emphasizes that it was precisely the population's unswerving desire for union which brought that event to pass so effortlessly. He maintains that the nation is an organic whole and thus opposes the advocates of internal social upheaval.

One of Vazov's closest friends and literary associates during the 1880s and 1890s was Konstantin Veličkov (1855-1907). Though not a literary

light of the first magnitude even by Bulgarian standards, Veličkov was reasonably gifted, and his work will occupy a modest spot in the history of Bulgarian literature. Perhaps more important, by his admirable public conduct he furnished an example to Bulgarian youth at a time when it stood in sore need of guidance. Like Vazov, Veličkov was both political figure and writer, but Veličkov the public servant was superior to Veličkov the author.

Veličkov was born in Pazardžik, an active economic and political center. A good student who loved to read and sketch, he was eventually sent to Constantinople to study, and there it was that he first met Vazov in 1872. He began his literary career with translations from French and Russian and also with an original play, *Nevenka i Svetoslav*, published in 1874. Upon returning to his home town in 1874 after six years in the Turkish capital, Veličkov plunged into political, cultural and revolutionary activity. Pazardžik did not rise in 1876, but he was arrested for his revolutionary doings anyway and sent to prison for a few months, first in Plovdiv and then in Odrin. This proved a misfortune with a silver lining, for his prison experiences furnished him the material for his well-known literary work, *V tǎmnica* (In Prison, 1894-1899). After the liberation he accepted an important local post in Pazardžik and in short order gained a reputation all over Eastern Rumelia both for his political acumen and for his efforts as co-editor, with Vazov, of the Plovdiv newspaper *Narodnij glas* and the journals *Nauka* and *Zora* (Dawn), for which he wrote both fiction and critical articles. Having also pursued legal studies in Paris in the meantime, after the Union of 1885 Veličkov was appointed Minister of Education in Plovdiv, a post he filled with distinction.

Being widely known as an honest politician and accomplished orator, Veličkov was soon dispatched to the national parliament in Sofia, where he hewed to a strongly pro-Russian line and opposed the anti-Russian policies of the Stambolov regime. A journey to Italy made for reasons of health gave him the material for *Pisma ot Rim* (Letters from Rome), a minor classic of Bulgarian travel literature which began appearing in the periodical press around 1891 and came out in a separate edition in 1895. Once his health was bolstered, he eventually accepted a teaching post in Salonika.

After Stambolov's fall Veličkov reentered the political scene as Minister of Education for the entire country, a post he held until 1897. The period of his tenure was a seminal one for Bulgarian culture. He was instrumental in the founding of the *Risovalno učilište* (Art School: he had long been interested in art and himself painted some pictures which today hang in

the National Gallery), supported the struggling Bulgarian theater, started the journal *Učilišten pregled* (School Review), established student libraries, arranged scholarships for foreign study, and introduced the requirement that copies of all books published in the country be deposited at the National Library in Sofia. Upon leaving the ministry of education he served briefly as Minister of Commerce, but he soon resigned this clearly uncongenial post to devote himself to literature. It was at this time, around the turn of the century, that he published the greatest portion of his literary work, in particular *V tǎmnica* and *Carigradski soneti* (Constantinople Sonnets), both in 1899. His renown as a translator reached its apogee with the publication in 1906 of his rendering of Dante's *Inferno*, a version which has yet to be improved upon.

Politics was, however, too much a part of Veličkov's life for him to abandon it altogether for literature, and he continued to serve his government, among other things as diplomatic representative in Belgrade. Finally he became so disgusted with public life that he resigned his posts. In November of 1907 he fell ill on the way to France and died in Grenoble. To the end he surely never ceased to hope that someday justice would triumph in his homeland. As he phrased it in the concluding stanzas of one of his *Carigradski soneti*, a poem at once a prophecy (his death far from native soil) and an admonition: "Who knows where my days will end, / perhaps I shall die in a foreign land, / but the faith [that freedom and justice will one day rule in Bulgaria] which warms my breast / will not die out until my last hour; / on my deathbed I shall call on her / and she will close my eyes for me" ("Neka me presledva").

Of Veličkov's works, the autobiographical *V tǎmnica*, though mediocre as literature, dealt with a subject of such intrinsic interest that he had only to display a modicum of talent in relating his experiences to come up with a gripping piece. Still, his memoirs lack the epic quality of Stojanov's *Zapiski*, largely because they are concerned with one man's fate rather than that of a whole people.

Veličkov's short stories are unimportant, but the *Pisma ot Rim*, where originality is not at such a premium, have been republished many times and still continue to be read. In his letter on the Coliseum, for example, Veličkov utilizes the ruins visible in the present to evoke for his reader a vision of the barbarities perpetrated there so long ago, and sketches the rise of Christianity against the background of a cruel and corrupt pagan society on the verge of a deserved collapse.

In his poetry as well as his prose Veličkov made the best of his modest talents. He favored the rigid sonnet form: Vazov also wrote sonnets, but

they did not constitute the backbone of his poetic work, and Veličkov first elaborated this genre in Bulgarian literature. Indeed the reader sometimes feels that the poet labors overmuch to achieve a nice poetic balance. His verse is visibly an artifact. Veličkov treated some subjects neglected before his day, for example the sea and those who gain their sustenance from it, and also paternal love, as in the poem "Dete, dete" (Child, Child, 1903), where the poet is apprehensive lest the slightest misfortune befall his daughter. A few of Veličkov's poems may survive in Bulgarian literature.

The trio of Vazov, Veličkov and Stojanov constitute the group of important authors old enough to have participated in the events of 1877-1878 and therefore able to write about them on the basis of personal experience. Almost all of Stojanov's work harked back to those days, as did the most vital of Vazov's and a large portion of Veličkov's. However, toward the end of the 1880s, the decade they dominated, the vanguard of a new literary generation appeared. There emerged upon the scene a group of younger men who during their adult lives had known only an independent or semi-independent Bulgaria and whose viewpoints differed from those of their immediate predecessors. The most significant among them was the humorist Aleko Konstantinov (1863-1897).

Aleko Konstantinov, often called simply Aleko, had a quintessentially Bulgarian approach to life. In view of this it is a trifle ironic that in his time he stood almost alone (though he was supported by a group of raconteurs who termed themselves "Vesela Bǎlgarija" [Gay Bulgaria] but publishing nothing) and that the foreigner finds it difficult to read his comic masterpiece because of the high incidence of Turkish words in the dialogue.

Konstantinov was born on New Year's day of 1863 in the town of Svištov. His early life was unhappy because Konstantinov's father dominated his ailing wife. The latter's physical weakness was transmitted to the family as a whole, for she and Konstantinov's three sisters all died prematurely. Perhaps his family background was one reason why Konstantinov never married, seemed little interested in women and rarely dealt with erotic themes in his work.

The young Konstantinov was educated first in his native town and then at the famous Gabrovo *gymnasium*. Afterwards he joined the general trek to the Russian Empire in search of further education, traveling to Nikolaev at the end of 1878 to study in a *pension*. While there he read Puškin and Lermontov and attempted to translate some of their poems into Bulgarian. He completed the *gymnasium* course in Nikolaev and in

1881 moved to Odessa, ostensibly to study at the university there. At first his newfound liberty went to his head, but after a visit from his mother and a sister he settled down to the study of law, reading Turgenev and Nekrasov on the side. In 1885 he completed his law training, returned to Sofia, and obtained a position in the lawcourts. Here again he led an improvident life at first, but his mother's death in 1886 and those of all his sisters before 1890 sobered him. Another blow fell in 1888 when the Stambolov government relieved him of his position for political reasons.

Konstantinov then set up a legal practice, which went badly because of his lack of business acumen. Consequently he turned ever further toward literature. Among his early advisers were two poets who were to occupy major positions in the Bulgarian literature of the late 1890s and the early 1900s: Penčo Slavejkov and Stojan Mixajlovski. Slavejkov was a man of higher literary culture and more refined taste than Konstantinov, who always remained rough at the edges, but the two were close friends until Aleko's death and Slavejkov later wrote a perceptive biography of him. Mixajlovski and Konstantinov were also intimates during Aleko's early years, and one of Konstantinov's few attempts at literary criticism was a discussion of Mixajlovski's *Poema na zloto* (Poem of Evil) of 1889.

The year 1889 was a pivotal one in Konstantinov's life. He had already begun doing translations from Russian and French which were published toward the end of the 1880s; in 1889 proper he had printed one short story and two articles. In addition he journeyed to the World's Fair in Paris, the first of several trips abroad arising from his consuming passion for travel. He visited Prague in 1891 and America in 1893. The American journey, made for the sake of the Chicago World's Fair, is described in the entertaining travel sketches *Do Čikago i nazad* (To Chicago and Back, 1893). Konstantinov's wanderlust was not satisfied by these trips: he dreamed of visiting China, Japan, the Sandwich Islands, and for a while contemplated the grandiose scheme of circling the globe on foot. Unhappily, most of the time he had to content himself with excursions to exotic spots of his small homeland. While at it he contributed to the founding of a Bulgarian tourist association.

In the early 1890s Aleko once more accepted employment in the Sofia lawcourts, was let go, and again tried and failed at private law practice. These continuing failures in practical life pressured him, almost as if against his will, to seek material and moral sustenance from literature. He contributed to several important journals of the decade, especially the newly founded *Misal, Bǎlgarska sbirka* (Bulgarian Miscellany), and *Bǎlgarski pregled* (Bulgarian Review). The year 1893, another pivotal

one in Konstantinov's life, saw the writing of his American travel sketches and the beginnings of his marvelous comic creation Baj Ganju (the word 'Baj' is a title of respect for a man), the embodiment of all that was crude, unintelligent, blundering and bourgeois in the Bulgarian spirit. Baj Ganju seems to have been in part the collective creation of the "Vesela Bǎlgarija" group, but though the humorist may have borrowed ideas from his colleagues in delineating Baj Ganju's personality, in main outline the Baj Ganju stories were his own. They started appearing in *Misal* in 1894 and were published in a single volume in 1895.

Before 1893 Konstantinov had been relatively apolitical, but after Stambolov's fall he participated more actively in politics. He supported the Macedonian liberation movement which was organized after 1894. In the same year he joined the Democratic Party but failed of election to the national parliament, in the process being quite repelled by the machinations of his political enemies. He then took refuge in literature once more, wielding the political *feuilleton* as a literary weapon against a system which he considered iniquitous. At this he was successful: according to Dr. Krǎstev the appearance of each piece was a "social and literary event which stirred all of thinking Bulgaria and filled it, now with gay laughter, now with rage and indignation". Aside from the *feuilletons* he wrote a few topical stories. But he could never be content with producing literature alone — even political literature — and always longed for a different kind of recognition. Thus in 1896 he dreamed of a professorship of criminal law at the institution which later became Sofia University. He got nowhere here either, which was all to the good from the viewpoint of Bulgarian literature.

Through his writing and political activities Aleko Konstantinov had made some serious political enemies, and was even warned that his life was in danger. On 11 May 1897, the feast of Sts. Kiril and Metodij, the staunch Slavophile Aleko traveled from Plovdiv to Peštera to celebrate the holiday. After a pleasant day he set out with a companion for Tatar-Pazardžik. In the dark the pair were attacked by hired assassins and Konstantinov died of his wounds before reaching Tatar-Pazardžik. His death shocked all of Bulgarian society. He was solemnly interred in the capital. His assassins were apprehended and executed, but those who hired them escaped and to this day it is not certain that Konstantinov was their intended victim — it is possible that the murderers wished to kill his companion instead.

Almost every word Aleko Konstantinov wrote was to some extent topical, although not so much so that his writings cannot be appreciated

today by a reader lacking specialized knowledge of the era's politics. This is especially true of his travel sketches, since they require that everything be made clear to the reader, whether of the 1890s or of the 1960s. Konstantinov also wrote brief travel notes on trips around Bulgaria — for example the great expedition of 1895 when he and 300 others trekked to the top of Černi vr̃x (Black Summit), mostly in order to publicize his tourist association. His greatest contribution to this genre, however, and the best-known travelogue in Bulgarian letters, is *Do Čikago i nazad*. Konstantinov wrote at greatest length upon New York and the Chicago World's Fair, but he visited several other American cities, including Boston and Detroit. The spirit of light humor in which the book is written does not prevent the author from presenting some acute and serious observations. He expatiates amusingly both upon his own ineptitude with the English language, which he hardly knew, and the vast American ignorance of the Balkans. For example, upon arrival in New York Aleko experienced the utmost difficulty in making the customs official who greeted him understand that he was a Bulgarian. The official first thought him a Russian because of his name; when Konstantinov protested that he was a "Bulgarian" his opponent heard "Hungarian"; and when finally the writer pointed to Bulgaria on the map the customs man classified him as a Turk.

Konstantinov did not arrive in the United States bristling with anti-American prejudices. If anything, he had idealized America before he came and was disappointed when in certain regards it fell below his expectations. But then occasionally reality was all it should have been. Having long wished to visit Niagara Falls, he approached it with a "nervous anguish and impatient desire" such as he imagined might be felt by a swain on his way to a rendezvous. He found Niagara Falls to be all that he had wished and devoted several enthusiastic pages to this natural phenomenon. Some of America's man-made wonders also impressed him. Though he had considered Vienna's Ringstrasse the most magnificent street in Europe, New York's Broadway, "the eternally dancing ballerina", eclipsed it with its architectural variety and endless vistas. The Balkan visitor was overwhelmed by New York's skyscrapers, those "fifteen-story giants". They were rather larger than the Bulgarian pavilion at the Fair, a modest little kiosk bearing the sign "Bulgarian Curiosities" which Konstantinov described in detail. Aside from material things, Konstantinov was struck by the Americans' attitude of democratic equality:

Enter a train or a boat: next to the governor or the millionaire is sitting a cobbler, next to the professor is sitting a cook and they are all dressed almost

exactly alike, with newspapers in their hands, with cigarettes in their mouths, their feet propped up any old way and nobody cares who is a very important person and who is a worker.

On the other hand, Konstantinov disliked some aspects of American life and did not hesitate to say so. In Chicago he was nauseated by the slaughterhouses, which for unknown reasons Americans take pride in showing to their foreign visitors. He was bitter when he learned (characteristically, not from an American but from a Serb whom he met by chance) that corruption was as widespread in America as anywhere else. He also included in his book a Marxist analysis of American society which held that regardless of the apparent American freedom and equality, everything was tightly controlled by the great capitalists. This passage seems forced, however, and Konstantinov discovered enough non-doctrinaire reasons for disliking America to assure his readers sincerely that he would not want to live there despite its advantages.

Konstantinov's delineation of the Bulgarian bourgeois psychology in the person of Baj Ganju is his chief contribution to Bulgarian letters. As first conceived during the light-hearted gatherings of the "Vesela Bŕlgarija" group, Baj Ganju was a blundering clod, completely insensitive to other people's feelings, but so ineffectual that he could not possibly be considered a menace. Baj Ganju is depicted as a buffoon in the sketch "Baj Ganju v Drezden" (Baj Ganju in Dresden). The hero arrives in Dresden at a tragic moment, after his sister has been killed while mountain climbing with a young American artist of whom she had grown very fond. Summoned as the girl's next of kin, Ganju enters the room where the two young people are laid out together, clumps along loudly and greets all with a cheerful "Good day!" When he approaches to view the bodies he is aghast to discover that his sister has been placed alongside a strange man and demands an explanation in no uncertain fashion. Everyone present is covered with confusion at this turn of events, but Baj Ganju is unconscious of the absurdity of his conduct. In several further episodes he is shown against the background of a foreign environment as someone who has no idea of proper conduct in enlightened society. Even in such an ordinary setting as the public baths in Vienna he makes a spectacle of himself by leaping into the pool and splashing about like a good-natured sea lion.

Baj Ganju the clown was no worse than comic and a little disgusting, but after Konstantinov's involvement in politics he began to view him more seriously: he was still a buffoon, but he verged on being dangerous. In the sketch "Baj Ganju Źurnalist" (Baj Ganju as Journalist) the hero

and his inane friends conceive the notion of publishing a newspaper, a project which it is unfortunately quite within their power to realize. Setting to work with enthusiasm, the group starts composing political articles crammed with all the current clichés. A piece about Russia necessarily includes such phrases as: "our liberator", "the fraternal Russian people", "long live the Czar Liberator". Any article expressing indignation over domestic politics must contain such combinations as "our father", "your humble offspring" (referring to the Bulgarian prince), and speak of "traitors", "scoundrels", and something or other which is "fatal for the Bulgarian people". Finally the aspiring journalists debate over the name for their organ. It was difficult to parody the titles which actually existed in the Bulgarian press of that time, but Konstantinov made a game attempt: *Justice, Popular Wisdom, The Pride of Bulgaria, The Valor of the People*, and the title which Ganju's men finally settle upon, *The Greatness of the People* (*Narodno veličie*). In sketches like these Konstantinov reinforced the topical satirical element substantially, although at the same time he did not abandon the lightly humorous touch.

The later Baj Ganju sketches represent a transitional stage between the earlier Baj Ganju pieces and Konstantinov's political *feuilletons*, in which his wit had an entirely serious purpose. A representative *feuilleton* was "Čestita Nova godina" (Happy New Year), composed for New Year's day of 1897, the last year of Konstantinov's life, and signed ironically "The Lucky One". In it the author remarks wryly that if one judges by the luxury of their quarters, the Prince of Bulgaria's horses will be the happiest creatures in Bulgaria during the coming year: the manege in which they are kept is much more impressive than, say, the building housing the university. But he stubbornly maintains that the university is more important than the best thoroughbred horses, although he recognizes that society may think him mad for harboring such opinions. Absorbing though *feuilletons* like these may have been when they first appeared, with the passage of time they have inevitably lost much of their interest for the general reader. Consequently *Baj Ganju* and *Do Čikago i nazad* remain Aleko Konstantinov's principal legacy.

Konstantinov stood nearly alone in the Bulgarian literary world of the 1890s and founded nothing approaching a school. The one literary 'school' extant at the time was that of the *narodnici*, or populists, who began to attain prominence in the late 1880s.

The economies of most east European countries and Russia were at any given time more heavily agricultural than those of most west Euro-

pean states. And since Bulgaria was among the more rural countries of eastern Europe, it is understandable that a literary group should focus its attention on the problems of the Bulgarian countryside and that, later on, a peasant-based party should be a prime factor in Bulgarian politics. Nevertheless, in the 1880s Bulgarian literature was still so poorly developed that the Bulgarian populists took the Russian populists of the 1870s and earlier 1880s as their models. These Russian writers had described the melancholy condition of the Russian peasantry and stimulated numbers of urban young people, who suffered pangs of idealistic conscience, to join in the early 1870s the "movement to the people", which in the short run ended in a fiasco because the peasantry failed to comprehend why citified youngsters should be concerned about them for altruistic reasons. No such mass movement as this developed in Bulgaria — for one reason because few Bulgarians were so cut off from the village in the first place to feel any need to return to it — but the populist frame of mind did color literature and life to a substantial degree.

The tradition of service to society, always powerful in Bulgarian literature, linked the writings of the populist precursors Petko Slavejkov and Ljuben Karavelov to those of the populists properly so called. The most important of them were Todor Vlajkov, Canko Cerkovski and Mixalaki Georgiev; included among the minor ones were Xristo Maksimov (1867-1902) and Nikola Filipov (1876-1959). Moreover, populist themes may be discovered in the earlier writings of Pejo Javorov and Petko Todorov, although they were not populists in the strict sense. The Bulgarian *narodnici* wanted to maintain close contact with the people because they considered them the foundation stone of Bulgarian society and hoped to raise the peasantry from its ignorance through education. Their culture hero was the village teacher, the shedder of light amid the darkness so assiduously generated by the *čorbadžii* and other exploiters. The populists strove to educate the adult rural population, which was beyond the reach of the schools, through periodicals designed specifically for them. The populist journals usually bore characteristic names: Cerkovski's *Selski vestnik* (Rural Gazette, 1895), *Evtina biblioteka* (Cheap Library, 1895), and *Selska probuda* (Rural Awakening, 1902-1903); Maksimov's *Učitel* (Teacher, 1893-1901); and Elin Pelin's *Selska razgovorka* (Rural Conversation, 1902-1903). Publications of this type were at best only marginally literary, but the strong practical strain evident in populist journalism was also prominent in works which may be termed literary. Many of the populist authors had good esthetic instincts, but they were often crowded out by an impulse to preach. Thus,

following the Russian populists, they usually wrote brief sketches, which allowed their journalistic impulses freest rein. Largely because of their topicality, few of the populist sketches now retain more than historical interest.

The most prominent of the *narodnici* was Todor G. Vlajkov (1865-1943), who, like some of his slightly older contemporaries, pursued a career which oscillated between politics and literature. He was brought up on Russian writers like Puškin, Lermontov, Gogol' and Turgenev as well as those Bulgarian authors who had put in an appearance by that time. In his youth Vlajkov (he began publishing under the pseudonym Veselin) wanted to write verse and admired Vazov's poetry, but, perceiving that he would make a no more than mediocre poet, he turned to prose. His first story, "Sedjanka" (The Working-Bee), appeared in 1885. In that same year Vlajkov departed for Russia to study literature at Moscow University, but since he disliked its strongly classical orientation he read contemporary Russian literature and literary criticism, passing through the radical critics until he came to intellectual rest with the great Russian populist critic and journalist N. K. Mixajlovskij. After three years in Moscow Vlajkov terminated his studies and returned home in order to be of practical use to society as a rural teacher.

While still in Russia Vlajkov had written two stories, "Za djadovata Slavčova unuka" (About Uncle Slavčo's Granddaughter) and "Lelja Gena" (Aunt Gena), published in *Periodičesko spisanie* in 1889 and 1890 respectively. The first story especially attracted the notice of Dr. Krǎstev, then just beginning his career as a critic, and it has remained one of Vlajkov's best known works. After the beginning author had moved to Sofia as a school inspector, he made the rural teacher a principal hero in his tales of the early 1890s such as "Bljanove i dejstvitenost" (Dreams and Reality, 1890), "Srešta" (Meeting, 1890), and "Učitel Milenkov" (Teacher Milenkov, 1894). Another group of stories chronicled the joyless life of the ordinary peasant: "Kosač" (The Mower, 1890), "Čičo Stajko" (Uncle Stajko, 1890), "Rataj" (The Hired Hand, 1892). Vlajkov's first collection of populist stories was published in 1897 under the title *Razkazi i povesti* (Stories and Tales).

Vlajkov entered politics around 1894 and was close to Aleko Konstantinov for a time. He served as a co-editor of Dr. Krǎstev's *Misal* but devoted even more of his time to politics and non-literary journalism. He belonged to the group which in 1905 became the Radical Party, and the major journal which he founded, *Demokratičeski pregled* (Democratic Review, 1902-1925), was the Radical Party's official organ. Then for

many years he functioned primarily as a politician and journalist until in 1925 he encountered political difficulties and more or less involuntarily returned to literature. From this point on he lived mainly in the past.

Following Vazov's death in 1921 Vlajkov had inherited the mantle of unofficial patriarch of Bulgarian letters. He utilized his newfound leisure to publish his collected works in six volumes between 1925 and 1931. The belletristic pieces included in this collection were those which had made his literary reputation in the late 1880s and the 1890s, but he revised them so thoroughly that this edition cannot be used by the literary historian investigating his early career in any detail. Aside from altering and republishing his previous works, Vlajkov put out the first volume of his autobiography *Preživjanoto* (My Experiences) in 1934; the second and third volumes followed in 1939 and 1942. Another book of memoirs, *Zavoi* (Turnings), appeared in 1935, but it was generally agreed that *Preživjanoto* bade fair to be Vlajkov's most valuable contribution to Bulgarian letters. Death cut short his labors in April of 1943, however, while he was planning the fourth volume, and his autobiography was left incomplete, covering only his childhood and youth up to his first literary experiments. Even in its unfinished form *Preživjanoto* is a fascinating portrait of a long-vanished era.

In his fiction of the 1890s Vlajkov adopts the standard populist attitudes toward the standard social problems of that time. Didactic and journalistic though his fiction is, it often tells an absorbing story of the difficulties populist enlighteners faced in backward villages.

"Učitel Milenkov" is a characteristically Vlajkovian work. The hero, Milenkov, arrives in an unnamed Bulgarian village in 1891 as a teacher. Inspired by lofty ideals, he is too ambitious to content himself with teaching only children: he longs to enlighten the town's adult population as well. In his enthusiasm he sweeps along several of his teacher colleagues, but most of them argue against his ideas, though more from inertia than from any wish actively to oppose the good. And then Milenkov unintentionally offends important people in the village when his zeal makes their sluggishness painfully obvious. For example, when he suggests reopening the old *čitalište*, the members of its former governing board regard his project as a personal affront and frustrate the scheme by dragging their feet. Milenkov also inaugurates special lectures on practical topics for adults but soon discovers that he must run them entirely himself and that furthermore he is considered subversive because of certain ideas which he expounds in them. Finally, when he refuses to yield to pressures to abandon his philanthropic projects, his powerful enemies secure his

removal from the village's school staff. Subsequently he must accept employment in a small village deep in the provinces, where there is no culture whatever, even on the unimpressive level of the original town. On the other hand, here Milenkov may work unimpeded and, most important, his conscience is clear because he has stood his ground against obscurantism. Furthermore, he has planted seeds within a few of his colleagues in the town he has left, and they may eventually sprout and bear fruit. "Učitel Milenkov" thus treats many themes and situations dear to the populist heart, including the desirability of education for both young and old, the struggle of the young idealist against the forces of darkness and apathy, the hero's stubborn adherence to principle. Vljakov does not minimize the obstacles which Milenkov must surmount and at the end shows him temporarily defeated, but the trend of the times is with him and the reader is confident that in the end his cause will triumph.

Aside from Vljakov the most significant prose-writer of the populist movement was Mixalaki Georgiev (1852-1916). Georgiev was educated in his native Vidin and in Czechoslovakia and became a specialist in agriculture. He also worked as a teacher in Lom and Sofia, as a customs official in Vidin, and as a bureaucrat with substantial responsibility for agriculture. As a consequence of these activities Georgiev did not begin to publish fiction until he was past 35. In the early 1890s he contributed stories to such periodicals as Vazov's *Dennica* and Dr. Krastev's *Misal*. For a time following Stambolov's fall he served abroad as a diplomat, but after 1899 he devoted himself entirely to literature.

A born raconteur, Georgiev worked in the genres of the short story and the sketch. His works, first printed in journals, were now and again collected in separate volumes bearing titles like *Tri srešti* (Three Meetings, 1899) and *Ot kasmeta e vsičko na tozi svjat* (Everything Is a Matter of Luck in This World, 1904). Georgiev specialized in lightly satirical descriptions of everyday life in the village. For example, one of his sketches depicts a man who is simultaneously physical giant and moral pygmy. His services are sought by whatever political party is currently in power because he can effectively terrorize the voters at election time. When he is killed by a man he had been sadistically teasing, the local regime attempts to enshrine him in memory as an exemplary citizen assassinated by the unscrupulous opposition. The entire situation could come about because of the proliferation of political parties in Bulgaria, which led to acrid partisan disputes.

Canko Cerkovski (1869-1926) represented populism in poetry. Born in the vicinity of Tarnovo, like Vljakov and Georgiev Cerkovski taught

for a time and also participated in politics, playing a key role in the formation in 1899 of what later was transformed into the *Bŭlgarski zemedelski naroden sajuz* (The Bulgarian People's Agrarian Union), a peasant-based party which appointed Cerkovski a minister when it took power after the First World War. This proved to be a liability when the Agrarians were ousted: he was arrested more than once during the political turmoil of 1923-1925 and died soon after his release from prison for the last time in 1926.

Cerkovski wrote several prose works, including a novel composed during his imprisonment in the mid-1920s, *Iz gŭnkite na sŕceto* (In the Depths of My Heart) and the posthumously published *Pisma ot zatvora* (Letters from Prison, 1932). He had begun publishing short stories as early as 1892 and wrote for the theater as well, but despite this he is remembered primarily as a poet. His brief and artlessly simple verses acquired such popularity that some passed over into folksongs. The corpus of his poetry may be divided into three segments. The first is comprised of intimate love-lyrics in which he expressed his soul's dark despair. Second, his populist leanings are obvious in poems picturing the suffering and exploitation of the Bulgarian peasant. Cerkovski's view of the rural laboring population was colored by the Marxist doctrine of the class struggle. Finally, in such collections as *Polski pesni* (Songs of the Fields, 1904), Cerkovski treated the theme of productive labor: without playing down its unpleasant aspects, he recognized that only hard work would improve the peasants' lot. In short, Cerkovski was the bard of rural social progress.

During the two decades following the liberation, when the country was struggling to gain its political feet and create an independent culture, literature understandably served social ends: it stimulated national consciousness, satirized the abuses resulting from selfishness and partisan politics, argued the necessity of education and freeing the peasant from exploitation. These would continue to be important concerns in Bulgarian literature, but the times were changing and the turn of the twentieth century would see Bulgarian culture assume different contours.

IV

THE AGE OF MODERNISM AND INDIVIDUALISM (1896-1917)

Although the two decades from 1896 to the end of the First World War are usually characterized as a period of individualism and modernism, this does not mean that literary currents prominent in the preceding period entirely disappeared then or that the first stirrings of new literary movements which reached their highest developments in these years were not detectable before. The fact that just after the liberation authors of stature were few simplifies the task of writing the literary history of that time. In the 1890s, on the other hand, worthwhile writers espousing different doctrines and literary approaches appeared in relative profusion, and it is more difficult to define the period's main thrust. However, most historians would agree that the era's fundamental note was sounded by the men gathered about the critic Dr. Kræstju Kræstev and his journal *Misæl*, which came out from 1892 to 1907. All other groupings may be most conveniently classified by their attitude toward the 'modernists' who then predominated, however briefly, in Bulgarian letters.

Dr. Kræstev and his associates were a different breed from their predecessors. In contrast to the anti-intellectual Stojanov and Vazov, Dr. Kræstev had endured much formal education, and his allies Penčo Slavejkov and Petko Todorov likewise pursued higher studies and even wrote dissertations. This educational gap was sufficient in itself to engender a certain coolness between the representatives of the old and the new in Bulgarian culture. But in addition the *Misæl* circle oriented itself toward the contemporary cultures of western Europe, especially French and German, more consciously than did their predecessors. Instead of automatically traveling to Russia for their university education, numerous writers now went to France and Germany. If Bulgaria was still a backwater, it was now a backwater of western Europe as much as of the Russian Empire.

The post-liberation writers also differed from the modernists in their general assumptions about life. A Vazov, for instance, might bemoan the

shortcomings of Bulgarian life, but fundamentally he was confident of Bulgaria's future. Vazov lived a long and for the most part satisfying life. Writers like Aleko Konstantinov, despite their misfortunes, were also of an optimistic cast of mind. But the advent of modernism was accompanied by spiritual malaise. Slavejkov enjoyed poor physical health most of his life and died relatively young. Petko Todorov also died early after bouts with debilitating illness. More important, Pejo Javorov committed suicide for intimate psychological reasons, and in some of his darker moments Dr. Kræstev contemplated taking his own life too. Furthermore, the work of Javorov and Stojan Mixajlovski is permeated by a metaphysical pessimism almost entirely absent from earlier Bulgarian literature except for the writings of Rajko Žinzifov and to a lesser extent Botev. Mixajlovski and Javorov were not merely grieved by superficial disorders of society, they were convinced that it — and with it all mankind — was radically and incurably corrupt. Surface evils could not possibly be eliminated through tinkering, for they were but the manifestation of a deeper disease which could not be healed. Such a view of society and man was foreign to Vazov and his literary allies.

The beginning of the twentieth century is usually tagged by historians of Bulgarian literature the era of 'individualism', a concept applicable chiefly to the central figure of the time, Penčo Slavejkov. Slavejkov and his associates did indeed promote the development of the individual personality through education, including a broad awareness of the achievements of world culture. Moreover, Slavejkov was the major Bulgarian propagandist for Nietzschean notions of the superman and the primacy of the human will. The '*Misel* circle' was assuredly individualistic in the sense that it was anti-collectivistic: Dr. Kræstev was an eloquent opponent of Marxism in the 1890s and 1900s. The doctrine of the primacy of the individual espoused by the Kræstev group was carried further by the early symbolists, who sought the highest cultural levels and argued that poetry ought not to be accessible to all. Their poetry was more personal than Slavejkov's; they rejected the notion that literature should have any social function. Thus in many respects the literature of the turn of the century appeared as a reaction to the writing of the preceding period, although authors with a social bent continued to live and work.

Social and political themes suitable for literary treatment existed in abundance during this time of turmoil and dissatisfaction. The monarch, Prince Ferdinand, had little support among the intelligentsia. Stambolov's fall in 1894 initiated a period of political jockeying, creation of new parties and shuffling of cabinets. The Macedonian sore continued to

fester, and in the mid-1890s there emerged a Macedonian revolutionary movement, headed by such men as Goce Delčev, whose aim it was to obtain for Macedonia autonomy of the sort enjoyed by Eastern Rumelia before the Union of 1885. To this end partisan bands operated in Macedonia. They were granted the valuable asset of sanctuary in Bulgaria, but in return the Bulgarian government attempted to control the movement for its own purposes. Tension over Macedonia peaked in 1903 in outbursts like the Ilinden rebellion.

Despite the political instability manifested in the constant seesawing between pro-Russian and pro-Austrian governments, Bulgarian culture took important forward strides during these years. The Institution for Higher Learning in Sofia, which had existed through the 1890s, in 1904 became Sofia University, largely through the efforts of the Bulgarian statesman and scholar Ivan Šišmanov. In 1907 the National Library in the capital was firmly established and the National Theater founded. All three institutions have been instrumental in the nurturing of Bulgarian culture ever since. On the political front, the Turkish revolution of July 1908, which brought the 'young Turks' to power, encouraged Bulgaria and other countries to press for the further loosening of Turkish control. In particular, Bulgaria proclaimed itself an independent kingdom in September of 1908 and Prince Ferdinand assumed the title of Czar. In April of 1909 Turkey recognized Bulgaria's independence, and the Great Powers followed suit. Nevertheless, relations with Turkey remained strained since the Turks held Bulgaria responsible — not without reason — for their Macedonian difficulties.

The Balkan states were agreed on the desirability of driving Turkish power from the peninsula altogether. Encouraged by certain of the Great Powers, in February of 1912 Bulgaria concluded a pact of friendship and aid with Serbia. A secret protocol divided Macedonia between the two countries except for one disputed area, the final decision on which was to be made by the Russian Czar once Macedonia was liberated. In May 1912 Greece and Bulgaria reached partial understanding on military cooperation, again without completely resolving the question of Macedonian partition. The diplomatic preparations having been completed by the signing of a pact between Montenegro and Bulgaria, on 17 September a general mobilization was announced. Notes to Turkey went unanswered, so on 5 October the Balkan allies declared war on her. With Bulgarian troops bearing the brunt of the offensive, in less than a month the Turks were effectively driven from the Balkan peninsula. Peace talks were begun in December, but then the Turks resumed the war after a coup at home.

They were no more successful this time than before, and on 3 April they signed an armistice. Despite dissension over Macedonia between Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, the Allies concluded a peace treaty with Turkey on 17 May, 1913. By its terms Turkey gave up all its territory on the Balkan peninsula except Albania, for which a special state was formed.

During this time Bulgaria's former allies were making private arrangements. On 24 May, 1913 Greece and Serbia, supported by Montenegro and Rumania, agreed to divide Macedonia between themselves, leaving Bulgaria out entirely. Rumania, dissatisfied with the areas Bulgaria had already yielded, renewed its claims to southern Dobrudža. Seeing nothing to be gained by delay, Bulgaria attacked the Serbs and Greeks in Macedonia on 16 June to trigger what is usually called the Interallied War, or Second Balkan War. This time the opposition was strong, especially since Rumania and Turkey joined the anti-Bulgarian coalition. By the peace treaties of that same summer a defeated Bulgaria turned over almost all of Macedonia to Serbia and Greece, a portion of western Thrace to Greece, southern Dobrudža to Rumania, and eastern Thrace to Turkey.

After these vicissitudes Bulgaria grasped what it thought would be the chance to regain its lost territories by allying itself with the Central Powers in the First World War, though it is true that it hesitated for some time before concluding a formal alliance with Germany on 6 September, 1915. Shortly thereafter Bulgaria declared war on Serbia and retook that portion of Macedonia which it had yielded to Serbia. Southern Macedonia was also recovered from Greece. When Rumania declared war on Austria-Hungary in August of 1916, Bulgaria occupied the whole of Dobrudža. At this point many Bulgarians felt their country had reasserted its legitimate claims and should go no further. But it was not so easy to stop, and in the end Bulgaria went down to defeat along with its allies. A Bulgarian armistice was arranged on 29 September, 1918. The country's internal situation was so uncertain that Czar Ferdinand abdicated his throne on 3 October in favor of his son Boris, the second and last significant czar of modern Bulgaria. A series of cabinet shuffles produced a stable one headed by Aleksandar Stambolijski, leader of the peasant movement in Bulgaria. Stambolijski had no choice but to accept the Treaty of Neuilly of 27 November, 1919, by the terms of which Bulgaria ceded part of Macedonia to Serbia, southern Dobrudža to Rumania, and eventually western Thrace to Greece. Thus at one blow Bulgaria lost approximately ten per cent of her territory and was saddled with war reparations payments in addition. After having fought three wars and lost two of them, after having once again been deprived of lands which the

Bulgarians felt to be rightfully theirs and which had been the cause of the conflicts in the first place, Bulgaria lay physically and psychologically prostrate.

Stojan Mixajlovski (1856-1927), a member of the generation which might have been active by the early 1880s but was not, personifies the transition from the post-liberation period to the era of modernism. A contradictory personality, Mixajlovski stands essentially alone in the history of Bulgarian letters. He was born into a cultured family of Elena: his father had been educated at Moscow University and was considered a leading intellectual of his day. Mixajlovski himself was educated in local schools, in Tŕnovo and in Constantinople, where he graduated from the *gymnasium* in 1872. By that same year, though only sixteen, Mixajlovski had printed at least one article in *Čitalište*. During the Russo-Turkish war he was safely esconced in a French university in Aix-en-Provence, from which he graduated in 1879 and where he gained a familiarity with contemporary French poetry. He then worked for a while as a lawyer and a journalist in Bulgaria but soon resumed his studies in France. After 1883 he was employed as a civil servant and in various political capacities until 1892, when he was appointed professor of French at the *Visše učilište* (Higher School) in Sofia. Alternating between politics and the intellectual life, after 1894 he was elected a member of parliament; from 1895 to 1899 he taught comparative literature; from 1900 to 1905 he again participated actively in public life.

After 1905 Mixajlovski, though not yet fifty, ceased to be a factor in creative literature. Instead he gave himself over to journalism, at times descending to inconsequential squabbling. He wrote for the ecclesiastical organ *Čarkoven vestnik* (Church Gazette) and theorized about politics from a conservative viewpoint. He summarized his political opinions in the unfinished *Vŕvedenie v filosofijata na novobŕlgarskata istorija* (Introduction to the Philosophy of Modern Bulgarian History), written apparently in the mid-1920s but not published until 1940. Here the poet maintained that social changes require much time, for they must be prepared for within people's souls before they can be given legal formulations. The purpose of life is not freedom but "moral and spiritual perfection", which society can promote by maintaining order. Anarchy was the enemy, Mixajlovski thought. Mussolini had shown the way, and a dictator who could "restrain the insane extremist elements in Bulgaria would be a hero of liberty, and by no means a standard-bearer of oppres-

sion". Mixajlovski's doctrines were not always consistent, and in any case they were little noted as he preached them in the newspapers. By the time he died in 1927 he was nearly forgotten.

Mixajlovski was relatively prolific. He published in many periodicals, but he reserved his most important pieces for *Misal*, with which he was closely associated. He made his literary debut with *Poema na zloto* (Poem of Evil, 1889), a reworking of the Adam and Eve story cast as a cross between a drama and an epic poem. Although he failed to produce a work of universal significance, as he probably hoped to do, some of the chief philosophical concerns of his later writing, such as religion and the problem of evil, appear in it.

The long narrative *Poema na zloto* was followed by a collection of lyrics under the general title *Novissima verba* published in three parts: *Vopli i pripevi* (Wailings and Laments, 1889); *Currente calamo*, 1890; and *Železni struni* (Iron Strings, 1890). In subsequent years there appeared collections of verse on social and philosophical themes: *Satiri* (Satires, 1893); *Filosofički i satirički soneti* (Philosophical and Satirical Sonnets, 1895); and the narrative poem *Kniga za bŕlgarskija narod* (Book of the Bulgarian People, 1897). All through the 1890s Mixajlovski received support from Dr. Krŕstev in his capacities as editor of *Misal* and critic: Krŕstev devoted two lengthy essays to him and in 1897 awarded him a prize for *Kniga za bŕlgarskija narod*. Mixajlovski's later collections included *Iztočni legendi* (Eastern Legends, 1904). On occasion he contemplated issuing his collected works, but the only collected edition actually attempted (1918) never got past the first volume.

Mixajlovski occupies a unique place in Bulgarian literature because of his curiously mixed attitudes. He shared the political interests of many other writers of his day, and the presence of social and didactic themes in his verse was nothing extraordinary. However, he had an uncommon bent for philosophical speculation, and he was one of the few figures in Bulgarian history who tried to be a 'philosophical' or at least an 'intellectual' poet, although his philosophy was not especially profound. His view of existence was pessimistic and aristocratic. He had no faith in the ordinary run of mankind; on the other hand, though he favored the notion of an intellectual aristocracy, he was not at all sure it could maintain its integrity against mass pressures. When repelled by the deformities of contemporary political life, he moved, not leftward, but to the right, advocating a view essentially Christian, though colored by overemphasis on the corruption of human nature. Mixajlovski's amalgam of disillusion with man and contemporary society combined with

Christianity and political conservatism makes him an unusual phenomenon. He was not the sort to found a school.

Literary men who are by inclination satirists often use fables as vehicles for social criticism. Mixajlovski was among them. In his fables he treats the traditional subjects of the genre in vivid language, though he sometimes makes his message excessively clear. Thus in "Pse i patka" (The Dog and the Duck) the dog points out to his collocutor that he may be able to fly, walk and swim, but he still remains a universal symbol of stupidity. But then after the point has been made, the author adds unjustifiably: "You, young journalists and scribblers, / will you understand what this small fable means?" Mixajlovski's jaundiced view of mankind also found expression in the minor genre of the epigram, an example of which is this quatrain directed against "a certain literary man": "Ivan is always scribbling, preparing / all sorts of works — / but he doesn't produce anything / except for preparations."

The satirical approach applied to more serious matters is fundamental to other poems, many of which were written as sonnets. He displayed his erudition by equipping his poems with epigraphs of an appropriately pessimistic sort, sometimes in Latin or a modern foreign language, including English. Since he was himself one of the keenest students of French literature in the Bulgaria of his day, it is mildly surprising that at times Mixajlovski could be anti-intellectual. Thus in the sonnet "Našite prosvetiteli" (Our Educators) he remarks sarcastically in the final stanza: "These people know what spirit and will are according to Locke, / and if villainy were unknown in this world below, / they would discover it — through their intense wisdom." Mixajlovski objected to scholars because they pretended to be disinterested when in fact they were morally just as depraved as anybody else. He considers the nature of human repute in his poem "Slava" (Glory), bearing the epigraph "Cavenda est gloriae cupiditas." Ask at any gathering who Jenner was, complains the poet, and nobody will be able to identify this benefactor of humanity, whereas anyone will be happy to discuss the mass-murderer Napoleon. And this perverse result is the work of "Glory", that "repulsive harlot, shameless traitress", as the poet calls her in vexed frustration. Mixajlovski's ideal of social equality and a fascination with death as the great unalterable fact of life come together in his poem "Ravenstvo v tlenieto" (Equality in Corruption), oddly prefixed by the epigraph "Odi profanum vulgus!", a sentiment Mixajlovski sincerely shared often enough, though this time he used it pejoratively. The sonnet pictures a former aristocrat buried near a plebeian whose decomposing corpse stinks horribly. To the aristocrat's

complaint that he is offended by having to repose near such a low-born person, the plebeian retorts that now they are the same in their corruption and the worm will devour each with equal relish.

The most extensive exposition of Mixajlovski's bilious view of human foibles and the baseness of society is contained in the *Kniga za bəlgarskija narod*. Here he proffers his Machiavellian ideas on the most effective methods of seizing and retaining political power. The poet placed his poem in a middle eastern setting, but the cynical realist philosophy expounded in it was clearly meant to apply to all societies. In *Kniga za bəlgarskija narod* the wise old pasha, realizing that his days are numbered, summons his nephew so that he may impart to him, his successor, the secrets of rule. The central support of the pasha's regime, it develops, is brute force coupled with deceit. Man is predatory ("Man is like a wolf to every other man") and the sword, the rope and the stake (the sharpened stake upon which malefactors were set to suffer a lingering death) are the foundation stones of governmental authority. There is no middle way between anarchy and enslavement: one of the two extremes must inevitably prevail. Nor can 'honesty' or 'honor' (*čest*) play any role in the governing of a people, for power is invariably best pursued through deceit. Once authority has been gained, it should be maintained through total thought-control, which means that the state has no use for scholars or independent thinkers: "I am looking for people / without their own intellect, with a paralyzed brain, / Turks inclined ... / to content themselves with readymade thoughts / and truths approved by me / and to ask me every morning: 'Today / what is true and what is false?'" Still, the old pasha knows that humans have a way of rebelling against strict controls. The best means of forestalling conspiracies against the regime is to foster corruption and licentiousness among the population: when this is done effectively, the people will fight only for food and drink. Abstract ideals will not appeal to them. Anything can be done to people for whom nothing is sacred. *Kniga za bəlgarskija narod* continues in this vein as Mixajlovski sets forth what he considers to be the bitter truth about society. But because he is an idealistic cynic, and not just a cynic *pur sang*, he is deeply grieved by reality and wishes that it might be different, although at the same time he realizes it never will be.

Mixajlovski did have his optimistic moments. In poems like "Napred" (Forward) he displays a slightly forced optimism as he exhorts his compatriots not to abandon the struggle for the achievement of the ideal society and urges them to see their good projects to fruition. If in Mixajlovski's world the scholar could not claim moral superiority over

the common herd, the poet was different. The brief poem "Mojat 'pasport'" (My 'Passport'), containing chiefly a description of the author's physical appearance, ends with the lines: "and almost no special identifying marks — / except a heart thirsting for justice". In a longer piece, "Orisija" (Fate), dedicated to Penčo Slavejkov, Mixajlovski expresses several characteristic notions: the idea that the poet is the upholder of the ideal in society, coupled with the realization that the forces of evil and apathy arrayed against him are so mighty that he cannot hope to overcome them, or even to preserve his own soul's purity. Mixajlovski combines his sense of the poet's mission with a religious chord in the sonnet "Lama sabachthani!" (Christ's despairing cry from the cross: "Why hast Thou forsaken me!"), where he wearily comments that, since his proffered services have gone unappreciated, he is ready to abandon the struggle. His only hope is in God's protection: "Thus a kite, wounded by the hunter, / expires in some secluded spot, / his eyes directed toward the horizon!" Mixajlovski's fatigue after the extended battle is unmistakable. Mixajlovski was that uncommon breed, a religious nihilist. Some Bulgarian poets have been at least in part religious, some have been philosophical nihilists, but Mixajlovski remains almost the only Bulgarian writer to have combined the two attitudes.

Mixajlovski's colleague Penčo Slavejkov (1866-1912) was the central literary figure of the early twentieth century. He consciously competed with Vazov for recognition as the leading Bulgarian writer and at the time of his greatest influence it seemed to some that he did indeed eclipse his rival. But history has decreed otherwise: if Slavejkov was the central figure of a major epoch, Vazov is the patriarch of Bulgarian literature in its entirety. Slavejkov's reputation has faded since his death partly because his poetry and his philosophy were excessively cerebral, whereas Vazov had the universal appeal necessary to become a national writer.

Petko Slavejkov's son Penčo was born in Trjavna, presumably on 27 April 1866 (the date is not absolutely certain because the record of his baptism was destroyed during the war of liberation). The family eventually included five sons and two daughters, with Penčo the youngest of the sons. He was educated initially at home and in a local grammar school. In 1876 or 1877 the Slavejkovs moved to the central Bulgarian city of Stara Zagora and witnessed its temporary recapture and sacking by the Turks during the Russo-Turkish war. The horror of that time was later reflected in Slavejkov's epic poem *Kǎrvava pesen* (Song of Blood). After the liberation, thanks to the elder Slavejkov's varying political fortunes, the family wandered from place to place, residing in Plovdiv for

a while in the early 1880s. At this period Penčo Slavejkov first read Heine and also some eastern poets, including Persian ones. These latter studies were the first fruits of an interest in exotic eastern literatures. Aside from studying, Penčo also participated in a school demonstration against some teachers thought unfair, but he was freed from possible punishment for the escapade when one day he contracted a severe chill. This illness made him a semi-invalid for some three years and weakened his health to such an extent that for the rest of his life he could walk only with the aid of a cane, which became his trademark.

In 1888 Slavejkov published his first book, *Momini salzi* (A Maiden's Tears), a collection of his intimate and not especially mature verse of 1886-1887. He also published translations from Russian and other languages. At the very first of the 1890s Slavejkov printed some of his work in Vazov's *Dennica* because it was almost the only literary periodical in existence, but he immediately joined Dr. Krāstev's *Misāl* upon its founding in 1892 and later became as inseparable from *Misāl* as Krāstev himself (after about 1900 the so-called 'Misāl circle' was generally understood to consist of Krāstev, Slavejkov, Petko Todorov and Pejo Javorov). Krāstev the critic and editor and Slavejkov the poet and critic, working in tandem, dominated Bulgarian letters for nearly a decade at the start of this century.

It was also in 1892, at the age of twenty-six, that Slavejkov decided to seek higher education in Germany and enrolled at the University of Leipzig, where he remained until 1898. He subsequently propagandized German culture in his native land after reading Nietzsche and absorbing German idealist esthetics from such sources as Johannes Volkelt and Wilhelm Wundt. But he maintained his interest in Slavic culture while in Leipzig: he learned Russian, wrote his dissertation on Heine and the Russian lyric, and conceived a high regard for the Polish national epic, Mickiewicz's *Pan Tadeusz*.

Slavejkov wrote several shorter poems, called 'epic songs' (*epičeski pesni*), first published in two separate volumes of 1896 and 1898, then revised and collected in one volume of 1907. Some of these epic songs were based on folk themes, but most of them dealt with international topics and figures, including Shelley, Michelangelo and Beethoven. This mixing of national and international traditions was typical of Slavejkov, who considered it his life's task to raise the Bulgarian nation to an appreciation of the best in world culture, while simultaneously emphasizing the most valuable portions of the national tradition. For this reason Slavejkov followed the course of contemporary Russian and

especially German culture intently, but at the same time employed native folklore motifs extensively in his poetry. He even sought to internationalize the national through the publication in 1904 (in cooperation with the English specialist in Bulgarian literature Henry Bernard) of a collection of Bulgarian folk songs in English for which he wrote an introduction. Slavejkov maintained contact with foreign students of Bulgarian culture such as the German Georg Adam and the Swede Alfred Jensen. It was at least partly thanks to his foreign contacts that Slavejkov became the only Bulgarian ever nominated for a Nobel prize in literature. Unfortunately this occurred only in 1912, and his death destroyed any chance of his winning a modicum of international renown for Bulgarian literature and for himself.

By the time Slavejkov returned to Bulgaria in 1898, the publication of *Epičeski pesni* had already established him as a writer. He could not live solely by writing, but he avoided politics, unlike so many other literary men of his day. He preferred more intellectual occupations. After teaching for a time, he obtained a post as an assistant director of the National Library, which during those years seems to have been largely staffed by writers masquerading as librarians. Slavejkov never married, but he lived in a family circle composed of his mother, a sister and a niece, and from 1903 on he kept up a liaison with Mara Belčeva, the widow of an assassinated cabinet minister and a poetess. It was she who attended him in his last hours. Slavejkov kept in touch with literary circles through evening visits to the Krastev household and to coffee-houses where the intellectual *élite* congregated. He also loved to travel abroad, frequently for reasons of health. And of course he continued to write: his lyric poetry from the first years of the century was brought together in the collection *San za štastie* (The Dream of Happiness, 1906-1907).

The century's relatively calm beginning was followed by a more turbulent period in the last portion of Slavejkov's life. In 1908 he was appointed director of the National Theater. He made a major contribution to this venture even though he retained the position for only a year, never wrote any plays and had rarely had anything to do with the theater before. From the National Theater Slavejkov returned to the National Library as its director. In 1909 he also represented Bulgaria officially at the unveiling of the Gogol' monument in Moscow. In 1910 he protested vigorously against the convening of a Slavic Congress in Bulgaria which he thought an instrument for the advancement of reactionary aims. Such activities as these aroused some political hostility toward him. Just when he had reached the height of his literary and political prestige his old

enemy (and Vazov's ally) Stefan Bobčev was appointed to a high government post and obtained his dismissal from the library in 1911. After this injustice Slavejkov entered voluntary exile, wandering through Switzerland and finally arriving in Italy, where he died on Lake Como on 28 May 1912. His remains were brought from Italy to Bulgaria in 1921 and interred on a hill near Sofia where he had loved to sit and which Dr. Kræstev visited every year on the anniversary of Slavejkov's death as long as he lived.

Slavejkov's literary activities during his last years were quite varied. He published critical works, including a biographical study of Aleko Konstantinov and a major article of 1906 entitled "*Bølgarskata poezija predi i sega*" (Bulgarian Poetry Formerly and Now). He continued his labors over *Kærvava pesen*, which he had begun under the inspiration of *Pan Tadeusz* as far back as 1893. Though he first published portions of it in 1896, he was still working on it when he died, and it was left incomplete. He promoted German culture through *Nemski poeti* (German Poets), a collection of translations from leading German writers published in 1911. He also read Slavic authors, including Serbs, Poles and Ukrainians. But his most original contribution to Bulgarian poetry during this period was *Na Ostrova na blaženite* (The Isle of the Blest, 1910). The book's roots extended back to 1892, when, perhaps partially under Mixajlovski's influence, Slavejkov had published in *Misæl* a few poems purporting to be translations from a Persian poet who in fact never existed. In *Na Ostrova na blaženite* Slavejkov elaborated upon this idea by compiling an anthology of poetry by writers with such exotic names as Silva Mara, Stamen Rosita, Tixo Čubra and Ralin Stubel. In addition to giving samples of his 'work' the poet offered a brief biographical and critical appreciation of each author. None of these fictional poets can be directly linked with single actually existing persons, but Slavejkov's commentaries in their entirety amount to an oblique criticism of the conditions under which Bulgarian writers were forced to work at that time.

Penčo Slavejkov was a consciously 'literary' author. In some respects this was a strength, but it was also symptomatic of an unpoetic weakness in him. Slavejkov took accurate stock of Bulgarian literature's deficiencies and set out deliberately to correct them, but his efforts reeked of midnight oil. His poetry was too artificial. This point was made by friend and foe alike at the time. Vazov, contrasting the work of his protégé Kiril Xristov with Slavejkov's in 1903, proclaimed Xristov's verse unquestionably superior to that of the "industrious" Slavejkov, "whose poems, tortured and overdone, unwarmed by the divine fire, repel even a reader

armed with the best will in the world!" Vazov exaggerated for polemical effect, but his words had a core of truth: Slavejkov as a poet was made and not born, despite his poetic heritage. *Karvava pesen* supplies perhaps the best example of his endeavoring to satisfy a "felt need" of his native culture, in this case for a national poetic epic. The poem's failure is attributable to its over-intellectualization, among other things. One of Slavejkov's admirers, Malčo Nikolov, admitted this in comparing *Pod igoto* with *Karvava pesen* as literary treatments of the April uprising. "And if *Pod igoto* suffers from an excess of diversity of color and a light, entertaining quality", he wrote, "then *Karvava pesen* suffers from an excessively great ... and weighty seriousness, an abstract and reflective quality." This "abstract, reflective quality", though most clearly perceptible in the epic genre, pervades his lyric poetry as well, for Slavejkov was too much aware of his aims to write very good poetry.

Slavejkov's literary consciousness is conjoined with a conviction that beauty and the good are all that matter in the world. Consequently, in his view the true poet excludes current political topics from his work. In his article "Bǎlgarskata poezija predi i sega" Slavejkov argued that Bulgarian poetry of the earlier period (he limited himself mainly to his father, Karavelov and Botev) was entirely too journalistic: a publicistic purpose was obvious even in Petko Slavejkov's love lyrics, not to mention the verse of Botev and Karavelov. Though this approach was perhaps valid at the time, Slavejkov held, it was no longer so in the modern age, when questions of form had come to the fore. Of all the poets of the past Slavejkov felt most closely akin to Botev — not because of his ideas, which by then impressed only "schoolboys and Bulgarian socialists", but because of the "poetic clothing" of those ideas and the unity between his poetry and his life, that "wondrous madness of a life-poetry". Of the modern poets, Slavejkov discussed Javorov and Todorov sympathetically, Xristov less so, and criticized Vazov, but he concentrated mostly upon himself as a representative of contemporary currents in Bulgarian literature. His ideal, he said, was the "free heart and the free mind". He always expressed the joy of reality though some of his poems might seem melancholy at first glance. He attempted to discover universal human qualities in the individual, and especially in the individual Bulgarian, with all his national peculiarities. By his own analysis, then, Slavejkov's approach combined deep respect for national and individual characteristics with a striving toward the classical ideal of the universal. He attempted a synthesis of the romantic with the classical.

The brief lyric "Molitva" (Prayer), so different in spirit from Botev's

atheistic "Mojata molitva" (My Prayer), may serve to illustrate a point or two about Slavejkov's work. In this poem Slavejkov addresses God as a believer would, seeking His aid because he feels his loyalty to truth weakening. He pleads that the divine flame may be rekindled within him, that his soul may "once again become the temple of truth". Slavejkov's paradoxical inclination to seek joy through pain is expressed cogently in "Skrøb" (Grief), where he asserts that he is sufficiently mature to find consolation in anguish, having attained to a higher wisdom: "Oh sweet grief, my sole joy!" The poet's awareness of his services to Bulgarian culture is expressed in "Pametnik" (Memorial), which recalls Deržavin's and Puškin's poems on the same subject as well as their ultimate model, Horace. Here Slavejkov credits himself fully for his literary accomplishments and predicts the advent of a new generation with "open gaze and clear brow", capable of appreciating the monument he has created in men's hearts. Clearly Slavejkov was not the most modest of men.

Other important universalist themes occur in Slavejkov's *Epičeski pesni*. The image of the towering individualistic genius, derived partly from Nietzsche, is prominent in them. The figure of Prometheus, doomed to eternal torture for his defiance of the gods, is central to one of Slavejkov's best known and most characteristic poems, "Simfonija na beznadežnostta" (Symphony of Hopelessness), with its cosmic ending: "The darkness thickened. The lifeless wasteland / opened wide its jaws and with weary gasp in the night / breathed forth its query eternally mute." The Nietzschean strain is evident in the "Ximni za smørtta na svørxčoveka" (Hymns on the Death of the Superman), done in classical style with choruses, semi-choruses and anonymous voices and set in a Sofia building which first was a pagan temple, next a Christian church, then a mosque, and now is unconsecrated but used for Christian services.

The notion of the stupendous genius belonging to all mankind dominates the epic poem "Cis Moll", dedicated to Beethoven in his deafness. Although deprived of ordinary hearing, Beethoven enjoys a "higher hearing" which brings him in contact with the "furious pulse / of the general life of creation". He has obtained the "promethean flame" from the heavens and kindled it in the hearts of men, and in their hearts he will live immortal. A different type of universal genius is displayed by the hero of "Sørce na sørcata" (Heart of Hearts), Shelley, whose heart escapes the cremating flame because it has been the source of a universal love expressed through art.

Conscious Art is linked with pure beauty, as in the classically inspired "Frina". In this poem the Greek *hetaera* (concubine) Frina is falsely

accused of impiety. The rabble in its wrath wishes to execute her until she calms them by the simple expedient of removing her clothing and appearing before them as a "marble vision": "and her divine forms breathed / the tranquility of beauty proud". The formerly bloodthirsty mob, instantly converted by the power of Frina's beauty, bears her off to the temple of Aphrodite.

These, then, were the abstract ideals — beauty, truth, genius, art — to which Slavejkov, the fountainhead of Bulgarian 'individualism', gave currency in his writing. His poetic talents were inadequate to the task of imbuing Bulgarian culture with classical ideals, but he did what lay within his power. Dr. Kræstev once wrote that Slavejkov was to Bulgarian literature what Puškin had been to Russian literature. His importance now seems to us to be scarcely of these dimensions, but it remains great nevertheless.

Prominent among Slavejkov's literary allies was his companion of many years, Mara Belčeva (1868-1937). Although attracted all her life to art and literature (she shared Slavejkov's Germanic orientation, having studied in Vienna), she did not become seriously interested in writing until her relationship with Slavejkov began in 1903, at which point she was thirty-five. Thereafter she contributed regularly to *Misæl*. Although the major collections of her verse appeared after the First World War (*Na praga stæpki* [Footsteps on the Threshold, 1918], *Soneti* [Sonnets, 1926], *Izbrani pesni* [Selected Songs, 1931]), it seems suitable to speak of her work here because of her connection with Slavejkov.

Mara Belčeva was a lyric poet — none of the poems in *Na praga stæpki* runs to more than some six stanzas — and apparently had no desire to work with larger forms. Her poetry is very feminine, but — perhaps because of her years — not especially concerned with love. Instead her *forte* is the creation of an atmosphere of light melancholy. Cast in a minor key, her lyrics conjure up the memory of past joys and sorrows. The theme of resurrection occurs frequently in her verse. Autumn was her favorite season, for then she could both ruminate upon the fading of the old and anticipate the resurrection of spring. Mara Belčeva was a lyrical, contemplative spirit.

Slavejkov's ally Dr. Kræstju Kræstev (1866-1919) was a key figure in the literary life of his time, functioning as journalist, esthetician, critic, and personal advisor to such major writers as Mixajlovski, Slavejkov, Petko Todorov and Pejo Javorov. Bulgarian literature would be significantly poorer had Kræstev never existed.

A native of Piro, located in present-day Yugoslavia, Kræstev was

educated in his home town and in Sofia. In 1885 he entered the University of Leipzig to study psychology and esthetics, graduating with a doctorate in 1888. Returning to Bulgaria, he tried his fledgling hand at journalism in the beautiful provincial city of Kazanlak but moved on to the capital in 1890. There he taught German and entered the world of journalism in good earnest with the short-lived magazine *Kritika* (Criticism, 1891). After the failure of this project, in 1892 he founded the journal *Misal*, which for fifteen years supplied a forum for a sizable portion of the cultural *élite*. *Misal*'s editor maintained consistently high standards of quality in an attempt to raise Bulgarian literature to European levels of excellence. In the 1890s *Misal* published a relatively large group of writers, but even after 1900, when it became more exclusively the organ of the '*Misal* circle', it continued to exert a powerful influence upon Bulgarian culture.

In addition to his editorial work Dr. Kræstev functioned as a professor of philosophy, primarily esthetics, at the Higher School in Sofia, as a practicing literary critic, and as a commentator on the social and political scene. He printed most of his critical articles initially in *Misal*, gathering them later in separate volumes entitled *Etjudi i kritiki* (Etudes and Critical Studies, 1894), *Literaturni i filosofski studii* (Literary and Philosophical Studies, 1898), and *Mladi i stari* (Young and Old, 1907). The first two collections contained studies on the representatives of a burgeoning Bulgarian literature, such as Mixajlovski, Vlackov, Slavejkov and Konstantinov, but they also included articles on Shelley, Shakespeare, Swift and other western writers. Although Kræstev's esthetic theories were almost entirely derived from the work of German estheticians, he demonstrated his ability as a practical critic by assessing contemporary writers on their own terms and apprising them of their individual strengths and weaknesses. Many of his judgments have stood the test of time and are cited even now by historians of Bulgarian literature.

Dr. Kræstev considered art an autonomous realm, especially after 1900, and he firmly opposed the Marxists and others who would encase literature in a dogmatic straitjacket. In a series of articles on tendentiousness in literature published in 1903 Kræstev argued that art should not be linked with material human needs and condemned literary works written for the purpose of advancing a social thesis. For Kræstev as for Slavejkov, literature should dwell in the cultural empyrean, above political passions.

Despite his advocacy of disinterested art, however, Kræstev occasionally became embroiled in political controversy. In 1897 he took a public stand in favor of Macedonia's liberation and in 1907 was involved in the matter of the temporary closing of Sofia University by the government,

publishing a book entitled *Našija universitet* (Our University, 1907) in which he criticized the Bulgarian educational system. Dr. Kræstev was always obstreperous. Though a political and literary conservative, he was no apologist for the existing order.

After the publication of *Mladi i stari* in 1907 and *Misal's* discontinuation in early 1908 Kræstev's authority at home waned perceptibly. He was dismissed from the university for a time because of his intemperate remarks during the crisis of 1907, he had lost the journal through which he had disseminated his views, and his colleagues Javorov and Slavejkov seemed to be abandoning literature proper for the theater. However, just at this time, as if in compensation, his prestige abroad rose rapidly. He described Bulgarian literature to the outside world in Russian and German periodicals, reporting on its achievements, extolling Slavejkov and denigrating Vazov. But this lasted only a few years. Slavejkov died in 1912. Javorov attempted suicide in 1913 and succeeded on a second try in 1914. And when Petko Todorov died in 1916 Kræstev was isolated because he had linked his fortunes so closely with those of the younger literary generation, which proved unusually deficient in vitality. Consequently he retired to the privacy of his study, writing uncharacteristically expressionistic critical appreciations of his dead colleagues, including Aleko Konstantinov. Toward the end of his life Dr. Kræstev turned his attention to Botev, investigating Botev's heritage in the work of Slavejkov and Todorov and interpreting the radical poet as a spiritual forebear of the younger generation. When he died Kræstev was preparing a critical edition of Botev's poetry in which he made an interesting attempt to determine, on the basis of various redactions of Botev's poems and his own conception of the psychology of literary creation, just who was responsible for variant readings of the poems: the author or the editor of the periodical in which they were first printed. Dr. Kræstev's edition of Botev was published posthumously though it had been left incomplete.

It is difficult to overestimate the value of the service Dr. Kræstev rendered Bulgarian culture by his personal support of contemporary writers. Some considered him cold and reserved, but others — including his old antagonist Kiril Xristov — have witnessed to his readiness to do anything within his power to aid writers in distress. Furthermore, Kræstev more than once set an example of intellectual probity with his outspoken protests against injustice and his willingness to suffer for what he thought right. Finally, by serving as a two-way communications channel between Bulgaria on the one hand and Europe and Russia on the other, he promoted the internationalization of Bulgarian literature

and helped bring Bulgarian culture to the attention of a European public which had theretofore been almost unaware of its existence.

If Dr. Kræstev was akin to Slavejkov in his championing of pure esthetics, his interest in German philosophy and his preaching of the highest cultural values, in other ways he resembled Pejo Javorov. Though relatively untutored by comparison with Slavejkov, Javorov's native poetic gift was indisputably superior to Slavejkov's. His sensitivity to social injustice and his political concern linked him more closely with Kræstev than with Slavejkov, although the latter remained by no means totally aloof from politics. For instance, Kræstev and Javorov both supported the quest for Macedonian independence, although Javorov was much more deeply and actively involved than his mentor; both got in trouble over certain of their activities, Javorov especially in his earlier, socialist days. Certainly Kræstev was at least as close to Javorov as to Slavejkov: each of the poets fitted a different aspect of the critic's spirit.

Pejo Javorov (1878-1914) — the surname Javorov, from the word for sycamore, was chosen for him by Slavejkov — was born Pejo Kračolov on New Year's Day of 1878 in the small town of Čirpan, between Plovdiv and Stara Zagora. After beginning his schooling in Čirpan he moved to Plovdiv but could not continue his studies there because of his own poor health and his father's unfavorable financial situation. Of all the members of the '*Misal* circle', Javorov thus had by far the least formal education.

Being unable to stay in school, in 1894, at the age of sixteen, Kračolov obtained a position as an apprentice telegraph operator in his home town. His employment was not time-consuming, so he broadened his education by reading Russian and Bulgarian classics such as Puškin, Lermontov, Karavelov, Zaxari Stojanov and Vazov. In 1895 he was promoted to full-fledged telegraph operator; in the fall of that year he visited Sofia for the first time. Not wishing to remain a telegraph operator all his life, he thought of various careers, for example acting (an ambition which he partially fulfilled through his association with the National Theater toward the end of his life) and becoming a partisan in Macedonia. After returning to Čirpan he read extensively in socialist literature and organized a socialist study group. Though in later years he rejected socialism as a general philosophy, many of its tenets continued to color his thinking, and in the early years his poetic tastes were flavored with social concern, for he read Heine and the Russian social poet Semjon Nadson. Populism was reflected in some of his early poems of 1896, but Javorov has never been closely connected with Bulgarian populist

writers in the public mind. All during this time he had to earn his living not as a poet but as a telegraph operator. After several transfers he found himself employed in isolated Anxialo, far from friends and culture, but he profitably spent his time reading the Bible, absorbing impressions of the sea, and in particular composing a brief narrative poem, "Kaliopa".

"Kaliopa" made Javorov's reputation. As an unknown from the provinces he had been submitting his lyrics to *Misal* since July of 1898: some of them had been published but had not caused any stir. This was partly because Javorov was not always adept at disciplining his literary talent, a service Dr. Kræstev performed for him. After receiving word of the enthusiastic response to "Kaliopa" in the *Misal* editorial offices, Javorov wrote to Kræstev in January of 1900 that in the course of the preceding year he had submitted many poems to the journal but few had been accepted. This discouraged him, but when he reread the rejected poems he discovered that they were so weak as to be fit only for the discard. In any event, after "Kaliopa" had come out in *Misal*, Javorov's newfound literary colleagues got him transferred to Sofia so that he would be near at hand. In 1901 he published his first collection of verse, *Stixotvorenija*, which was welcomed by critics so warmly that Dr. Kræstev warned Javorov against taking this sudden praise too seriously.

Just as Javorov had acquired renown as a poet, the political activist within him came to the fore, and at the end of 1901 he left his position to edit the political newspaper *Delo* (The Cause). Political journalism did not satisfy him entirely, so in 1902 he went to Macedonia as a partisan with the outstanding revolutionary Goce Delčev. On his first expedition the spirit proved willing but the flesh weak: illness forced him to return to Sofia. By early 1903, however, he was back at the same Macedonian stand, functioning mostly as a political agitator to awaken in the population a greater recognition of their own misfortunes. For this purpose he moved from village to village printing a hectographed newspaper entitled *Svoboda ili smrt!* (Freedom or Death). The paper was almost wholly his handiwork: he wrote the editorials and filled up blank spaces with agitational poems of appropriate length. All this ended in late April of 1903 when Goce Delčev was tracked down and killed by the Turks. As Javorov had owed his primary loyalty to Delčev, he returned to Sofia by July of 1903, before the abortive Ilinden rebellion in Macedonia in August.

Once Javorov's guerrilla days were done he resolved to produce a literary chronicle of the Macedonian liberation movement. Thus, taking little more than two months at the end of 1903 for the purpose, he wrote a

biography of his old comrade in arms, *Goce Delčev*. Further, in 1905 he began publishing memoirs of his Macedonian experiences in *Misal*, continuing them through 1907 and then collecting them under the title *Kajduški kopnenija* (Dreams of a Partisan) in 1908. Javorov was a superb stylist even in the Macedonian memoirs, which were written in the early stages of his interest in artistic prose.

Kajduški kopnenija was a worthy literary memorial to a rather brutal historical phenomenon. Javorov's political views as set forth in the memoirs were undoubtedly influenced by Delčev and were therefore quite radical. In the foreword to *Goce Delčev* Javorov exhibits a powerful Russophobia. He is convinced that Russia undertook the war of liberation for self-seeking reasons alone and that furthermore the liberation from outside did more harm than good. Though the liberation would have required more time this way, it should have been achieved through the efforts of the indigenous population, for then a social revolution would have accompanied the political revolution and the power of the church and the bourgeoisie would have been smashed, Javorov held. Of course his theories had little relation to reality, for the Turks had easily suppressed both the April 1876 uprising and the Ilinden rebellion of 1903; Bulgaria proper and later Macedonia were freed from Turkish rule only through major wars involving the expenditure of much blood and treasure by outside states. Another 50 to 100 years might have been required for the Bulgarians to drive the Turks out under their own power.

Though Javorov was little more than a wistful fellow traveller lacking the moral or physical stamina to be a genuine revolutionary, Goce Delčev as the poet pictures him lived solely for the revolution. He was a socialist and an atheist — although he had to play down such views in dealing with the common people — and he possessed that absolute intolerance so necessary for revolutionaries. His intolerance was reportedly manifested very early, for example when as a schoolboy he stabbed and wounded a fellow pupil while attempting to kill him in retaliation for what seemed an act of treason. People of Delčev's caliber scarcely thought about death: it was readily inflicted and readily undergone.

After 1903 Javorov retreated temporarily to his study. He was appointed chief librarian of the National Library in 1904 and traveled abroad in the summer of that year. In 1905 he assumed the editorship of *Misal* for a time in Dr. Krastev's absence and in 1906 was officially designated co-editor. Also in 1906 he was dispatched on a cultural visit to Paris by Ivan Šišmanov, who in his capacity as Minister of Education sent several young writers abroad. Javorov never got to Paris, though; instead he

settled in Nancy long enough to compose most of the poems in his sub-collection *Prozrenija* (Intuitions).

After coming back to Sofia in April of 1907 Javorov published a collection of poems dating from 1905-1906 under the title *Bezsnici* (Insomnias). At first he took up his old position at the library, but in 1908 he left it to join the newspaper *Ilinden* and work in the Sofia office of a Macedonian revolutionary organization. He was no totally dedicated revolutionary activist, though, and when he needed more money to live on he calmly accepted a position as the *dramaturg* (artistic director) of the National Theater in August of 1908. He performed so well as *dramaturg* that in 1910 he was finally sent all the way to Paris as a reward. In that same year of 1910 which saw the publication of his most important poetic collection — *Podir senkite na oblacite* (Following the Shadows of the Clouds) — he was orienting himself toward the drama. He printed his classic play *V polite na Vitoša* (In the Foothills of Vitoša) in 1911 and *Kogato grām udari — kak exoto zaglaxva* (The Lightning Strikes: The Thunder Dies Away) in 1912. There is reason to believe that, had his personal situation permitted, he might have become so engrossed in the theater after 1912 as to have ceased writing poetry altogether. But such a development proved impossible, for his private world had begun to disintegrate as early as 1910.

Javorov's personal tragedy revolved about two women. The first, whom he loved and who evidently reciprocated his passion in full measure, was Petko Todorov's sister, Mina Todorova. Her family's strong opposition to the match prevented them from marrying, however. Moreover, in 1910 Mina died an agonizing death of tuberculosis in Paris with Javorov at her side. His relationship with Mina Todorova had extensive psychological effects on Javorov. The poet's second affair was intertwined with the first until 1910, but in this instance the woman, the famed Sofia beauty Lora Karavelova, was the pursuer and Javorov for the most part simply accepted or rejected her initiatives. The two had known each other for some time before 1910, but as long as Mina lived Lora could make no headway. Immediately upon learning of her rival's death Lora journeyed to Paris to declare her love to Javorov, who at that point understandably put her off. But she would not be denied forever and eventually had her way. On the eve of his departure for the First Balkan War Javorov, thinking it likely he might never return, married her. Consequently, when he did in fact come back he was bound to an extraordinarily possessive wife. Lora was so jealous that she could not bear her husband's even looking twice at another woman. On the evening of

30 November, 1913, upset over what she considered Javorov's flirtations, Lora entered his room and unexpectedly shot and killed herself before his eyes. The frenzied poet wrote a suicide note and attempted to take his own life too but succeeded only in partially blinding himself. Later he went totally blind. His friends, especially Dr. Krāstev, did everything they could to rehabilitate him, but he hardly appreciated their efforts. His resolve to end his life was reinforced by the appearance of an almost certainly baseless but widely accepted rumor that he had murdered Lora and attempted to make her death appear a suicide. Finally, on 17 October, 1914 Javorov both took poison and shot himself to ensure that his suicide attempt would be successful. It was.

For Javorov literature and life were as closely intertwined as they had been for Botev, although in a different way. For instance, his best play, *V polite na Vitoša*, is largely autobiographical. Aside from *V polite na Vitoša*, a considerable fraction of Javorov's poetic production consists of intimate lyrics in which he bares his soul to the reader. Javorov was subjected to intensive study by his close friend Prof. Mixail Arnaudov, who wrote a classic study on the psychology of literary creation in which he utilized, among other things, materials from extensive interviews with the writer later gathered in the book *Kam psixografijata na P. K. Javorov* (On the Psychography of P. K. Javorov, 1916). The poet himself was given to analyzing his creative psychology in private letters, especially those written to Dr. Krāstev. In one of the most intriguing of them — a letter of 27 August, 1908, to Krāstev — he declared that few poets had genuinely influenced him because he had never really loved poetry and had never been able to bring himself to read another poet's work in its entirety (in confirmation of this it may be noted that Javorov, unlike Slavejkov, was uninterested in translating foreign poets). Why then did he write poetry? Because "one has to do something in this world", for one thing, and because he achieved catharsis through the writing of verse. Unhappily, a poem ceased to be his as soon as it was written: "and I often think to myself that if only I could remove from people's hands and minds everything I have given them, I should be the happiest of the happy". Although he was not a Christian, Javorov went on to compare himself with Christ, whom he termed a "great symbolist poet" because He gave others His very self through the instrumentality of bread and wine. Javorov viewed his poetic production as something analogous, but simultaneously different in that Javorov gave of himself selfishly: he shared his soul with others because he was somehow compelled to, all the while wishing that he did not have to. It must have been for some such reason that he said

that he "hated poetry", a startling statement to come from one of Bulgaria's best poets.

Javorov's verse confirms much of what he said about his work in his letter to Dr. Kræstev. The poet's emotions are always close to the surface. He rarely knows spiritual peace: he is either ecstatically happy or in the slough of despondency. Perhaps for this reason he did not pay sufficient attention to questions of poetic form. In moments of inspiration he allowed himself great logical jumps and inconsistencies of composition which he either could not or would not eliminate later. He lacked the tact needed as a brake on his writing, and certain of his poems are so chaotic or so embarrassingly personal that he should not have published them. When he is good Javorov can be powerful indeed, but when he is bad he is execrable.

The two chief strains in Javorov's lyrics are the social and the personal. His social poetry, tinted as it is by both populist and Marxist doctrine, is highly valued in present-day Bulgaria. Social themes appeared all through his career, though they were most prominent in the 1890s. As examples one might cite those poems linked with the Macedonian revolutionary movement, such as his *Xajduški pesni* of 1903. A famous poem of his expressing populist views is "Na edin pesimist" (To a Pessimist, 1898). Here the poet concedes that for the moment the people are so enveloped in darkness and ignorance as to be in effect slaves. But he is also convinced that if only the intelligentsia will supply them with the torch of learning the people themselves will "burst their bonds" and without further guidance discover the most direct route to social justice and happiness. Javorov's sense of his own impotence and lack of faith coalesced in a curious way with the belief that the "savior-day" would eventually dawn in "Šte dojdeš ti" (Thou Wilt Come, 1905), a poem which the author evidently considered significant, since he placed it at the conclusion of *Bezsānici*. The poet did not know precisely what the "savior-day" would bring, but he was certain it would arrive. On that day the earth would be somehow transformed and the schizophrenic poet, a "disembodied spirit", would "weep alone over [his] own cold corpse". Thus, though Javorov was sure the new order would be beautiful, he was not at all clear that it would bring happiness to him personally. In the short run Javorov could see little hope either for himself or for entire peoples, for instance the Bulgarians, the Macedonians or even the Armenians, another small nation suffering, like the Macedonians, under Turkish oppression. In "Armenci" (The Armenians, 1900) Javorov depicts that land's plight with compassion but proffers the Armenians no hopeful advice; all they

can do is patronize the taverns to obliterate their woes in inebriation and sing through their tears. Though the poem contains a hint of revolutionary sentiment, the burden of its message is one of pessimistic resignation.

To be sure, Javorov occasionally wrote cheerful poetry. He could compose fine descriptions of nature, as in the optimistic "Prolet" (Spring). He could be optimistic in his love poetry as well. This type of verse is illustrated by "Dve xubavi oči" (Two Beautiful Eyes, 1905), written in honor of Mina Todorova. The poem is constructed like an object and its mirror-image: the second half repeats the first half but with the words in reverse order. Though "Dve xubavi oči" is naively and charmingly erotic, a tragic and unhealthy note is sounded in the love-poem "Na Lora" (To Lora, written on the occasion of an excursion to a monastery with her and others in 1906). Here the themes of love and death intertwine as the poet compares himself to a "wounded bird" and declares that his soul has been "wounded unto death by love". Love is torture for him, his soul is transformed into a "moan", a "cry", something inarticulate but pained. Love is physical, unambiguously sensual, and simultaneously destructive. "Na Lora" of 1906 exhibited a remarkable foreboding of the disaster his love for Lora would later bring upon him.

All in all, Javorov the poet is almost invariably remembered as a writer of blackly pessimistic cast who could discover nothing in the entire universe in which to believe. In this regard he was quite modern. As the critic Malčo Nikolov has pointed out, one may discern connections between Javorov and Nietzsche in their negation of the old absolutes, their disdain for the crowd, their glorification of the poet's own personality; between Javorov and the Polish decadent Stanisław Przybyszewski in their demonic ambitions and their tendency toward hyperbolization; between Javorov and Maurice Maeterlinck in their sense of man's hopelessness and helplessness, their impotent horror in the face of death, and also in certain technical devices. Javorov's terror at the thought of his eventual dissolution emerges in such poems as "Nošt" (Night) and "Smərtta" (Death). The poet is fascinated by death, which he dreads but which nevertheless enchants him. The individual may expect only Nirvana or chaos after death: when Javorov took his own life after Lora he almost certainly did not believe he would join her in an afterlife, yet he was irresistibly driven to bring his life to a close. Javorov was, then, a paradoxical character who strove unsuccessfully to reconcile opposites: life and death, love and pain, suffering and joy. Suffering and joy are the themes of the overdone "Az stradam" (I Suffer), describing Javorov's

cosmically tortured soul. He searches and suffers, all the while endeavoring to keep from descending into the pit of chaos below him. What precisely he is seeking while suffering he does not know — unless perhaps it is suffering itself. Such poems are typically Javorovian. He was a poet of the metaphysical shadows, who lacked firm faith even in his poetic calling.

Aside from his poetry Javorov wrote extraordinarily lucid prose. His writing in *Xajduški kopnenija* and *Goce Delčev*, since these works were not strictly literary, contributed relatively little to the improvement of Bulgarian artistic prose. The same may be said for Javorov's letters, which were not published during his lifetime, and for his plays, which are not usually thought of as 'prose works'. His numerous critical and journalistic articles have retained little significance for the present day. Thus despite the merit of his prose style, Javorov is known as a poet first, secondarily as a playwright, and not particularly as a prose-writer.

The remaining member of the '*Misal* circle', Petko Todorov (1879-1916), did write mostly artistic prose — indeed some have claimed that he was as much a poet in soul as most composers of verse. Certainly he rounds the *Misal* circle out neatly: Dr. Kræstev the critic, Slavejkov the poet, prose-writer and critic, Javorov the poet and playwright, Todorov the prose-writer and playwright.

Todorov was the only one of the group who belonged chronologically entirely to the post-liberation era, having been born on 26 September, 1879 in the mountain town of Elena. He came from an affluent, socially prominent family: his father was a *čorbadžija* who occupied important government posts after the liberation. Thus for a time the elder Todorov was governor of northern Bulgaria, with his headquarters in Ruse; he was offered — but refused — ministerial positions with the central government in 1882 and 1883. The adolescent Todorov rebelled against his family, but at the same time he was indebted to his father for easing his political difficulties through influence and also for giving him an excellent education. An important portion of that education was imparted in Tørnovo, where the family resided in 1894-1895. As early as 1892, at the age of thirteen, Todorov had begun writing verse of a socialist sort which he published in 1894 in a volume entitled *Draski* (Sketches). The fact that he first published at the age of fifteen shows that Todorov was precocious even for Bulgaria, where many writers started early. His juvenile inclinations toward socialism were reinforced by his stay in Tørnovo, which at that point was a hotbed of socialist agitation, since the founder of the Bulgarian Communist Party, Dimitør Blagoev, and some

of his associates lived there then. In 1895 Todorov offered the public more of the same in his *Stixove na skučnata lira* (Verses from a Boring Lyre). The collection was all too aptly titled, for even the socialists could not condone the author's artistic ineptitude, though they approved of his ideology. In 1895-1896 Todorov also made a few attempts at writing short stories.

In 1896 Todorov and his brother were sent to Toulouse, where he absorbed French culture and read widely in world literature and socialist theory. At this time, when he was still well under twenty, politics continued to fascinate him. He delivered a May Day speech in Toulouse in 1897 and also became special Balkan correspondent for *La Dépêche*, a progressive newspaper. Moreover, in 1897 he also took up the Macedonian cause, speaking on its behalf in Ruse and issuing an upsetting proclamation to the local population. He was arrested and brought up for trial in March of 1898. His father's influence, good lawyers and his youth worked in his favor and he was released, though he did not repudiate his ideas. In 1898 he went to Bern, ostensibly to study law. Instead he seems to have spent most of his time circulating among Russian and Polish radicals and conducting extensive correspondence. Upon returning to Bulgaria in the summer of 1899 he continued his socialist activities. Another crisis occurred in September of 1899 when the young writer gave a speech on the subject of the portraits to be hung in the local reading room. He declared that there should be no pictures of crowned heads, who were always reactionaries, and for good measure termed Prince Ferdinand "the Austrian agent in Bulgaria". For this Todorov was brought to trial once more and sentenced to prison; later, through the efforts of his father, then a member of parliament, he was pardoned in a general amnesty of 1901. These legal formalities were carried out in Todorov's absence, though, for he promptly left Bulgaria after his speech and remained abroad until the amnesty. By the time he was pardoned Todorov — still hardly more than twenty — had reconsidered many of his opinions.

Todorov's retreat from socialism began in 1899 and continued in 1900. His radical activity had reached a peak with his speech of September 1899; in that same year he wrote stories critical of contemporary reality, one of which, "Za pravda" (For Justice), appeared in *Misal* in 1900. But simultaneously new themes started emerging in his work, and it was also in 1899 that he produced the first example of that genre for which he is now famed, the idyll "Pevec" (The Singer). "Pevec" was a product of his involuntary exile in Munich and Berlin, for in the latter city, through

Georg Adam, a German specialist on Bulgarian culture, Todorov was introduced to the literary circle "Die Kommenden". Its guiding spirit, Johannes Schlaf, wrote idylls which now occupy a very modest place in German literature but which markedly influenced Todorov's literary future just as the philosophical idealism and estheticism of "Die Kommenden" affected his more general outlook on life. Under these pressures he started formulating anti-socialist sentiments in his letters of 1900, and in a missive of March 1901 to one of his literary associates he proclaimed that "social situations are temporary and only beauty is eternal" and declared that he was not a "useful writer" but rather opposed social art and defended true religion in the positivistic epoch in which he lived. Moreover "Pevac", the story of a simple shepherd and his emotions on the day when his beloved marries another, attracted Dr. Kræstev's notice. The critic found more to condemn than to praise in the idyll, but he recognized Todorov's potential and in December of 1899 invited him to contribute to *Misal*. An external observer in 1900 might well have concluded that Todorov had completely gone over to the enemy camp. This was not so, however, for in later years Todorov remained interested in political questions and problems of social justice despite his primarily esthetic orientation.

Todorov did not permit his periods of extended residence in French and German lands to lessen his commitment to Slavdom. Thus in 1901-1902 he studied under the famous Slavist Alexander Brückner in Leipzig, traveling to Czechoslovakia and Poland to gather material for his dissertation *Za otnošenieto na slavjanite kəm bəlgarskata literatura* (On the Attitude of the Slavs Toward Bulgarian Literature). This investigation has been published several times and is still a valuable contribution to the study of the interrelationships among the various Slavic peoples. Todorov then returned to Bulgaria and joined the *Misal* circle. He produced short stories and idylls; the latter were first collected under the title *Idilii* in 1908. At the same time he remained politically active. He joined the Radical Party and helped direct it for a while; he supported the protest against the Sofia Slavic Congress of 1910. His political views were expressed rather openly in some of his plays.

During much of this time Todorov was employed at the National Library, along with many of his fellow writers. He met the father of Socialist Realism, Maksim Gor'kij, during a vacation on Capri in 1912. Then his health failed prematurely, and after a period of decline he died before his thirty-seventh birthday, in February of 1916, in a small Swiss town. Because of the war his body could not be returned to Bulgaria

immediately, but in 1921 his remains, along with those of Penčo Slavejkov, were disinterred and transferred to his native land. With Todorov's death the last creative writer of the *Misal* circle passed from the scene.

Though Todorov wrote little verse after his now forgotten juvenile attempts, in spirit he remained a poet. The bulk of his idylls resemble lyric poems in that they attempt to create an emotional atmosphere rather than tell a tale. Like Vazov, Todorov was skilled at describing the patriarchal *milieu* with which he was familiar. He also had a talent for nature description, although he frequently personified nature so that it reflected the state of mind of his ordinarily dreamy, inactive human characters: thus nature is often shown in his work as sunk in thought or lost in reveries. However, Todorov's palette is limited, and his nature descriptions before long become repetitive and boring.

In line with the sentiments quoted from his letter of 1901, in certain early idylls Todorov did attempt to promote the cause of true religion. For instance, in "Učilištna ikona" (The School Icon, 1901) the author recalls the hallowed icon of Sts. Kiril and Metodij in the local school before which the children of an older generation had sung hymns and chants and which was still there as a visible bond between the faithful of all ages. Todorov's religiosity was apparently a passing phenomenon of the period when he was first rejecting socialism, however, for it practically vanished in subsequent years.

Todorov consistently used folk songs and folk motifs in his writing. A very explicit folk motif occurs in the idyll "Nad čerkova" (Above the Church). Two lovers are prevented from marrying because they are distantly related; they die and are buried on opposite sides of a church, separated in death as in life. But then from the man's grave there grows an elm (the name for elm is masculine in Bulgarian) and from the woman's a poplar (the noun is feminine). The trees grow until they are almost able to intertwine their branches, but a storm intervenes to fell the poplar, and the lovers remain forever apart.

Up to now Todorov has probably been overrated, and time will most likely place him clearly below Javorov and Slavejkov on the literary scale, especially where his idylls are concerned. His poetic passages are sometimes quite good, but many of his characters are merely puppet-like mouthpieces for his individualistic ideas drawn from Nietzsche and Slavejkov. He does not delve deep enough into his heroes' psychology. His style is mannered and occasionally precious. He uses so many provincialisms that his prose is difficult for the non-Bulgarian to understand. But his worst shortcoming (and this is paradoxical in view of his

desire to be a consciously artistic writer) is the utter structural chaos prevailing in his idylls. He skitters from subject to subject so disconnectedly that the reader ceases trying to follow him. After finishing one of Todorov's idylls the reader often retains only the vaguest recollection of its content, remembering only that it evoked within him, say, a feeling of dreamy melancholy. Many of Todorov's idylls are simply unreadable. They are ideologically and artistically confused.

The *Misal* circle, though a carrier of the germs of modernism in Bulgarian literature, did not consist of doctrinal extremists who embraced an apolitical estheticism as a reaction against socially significant literature. It was left for the Bulgarian symbolists to extend certain facets of their older colleagues' approach to their logical conclusions. Of all the *Misal* circle Javorov is generally considered to have been closest to the symbolists, and numerous symbolist and crypto-symbolist themes and expressions do in fact appear in his poetry. Nevertheless, it would be incorrect to call Javorov a symbolist in any significant sense. Slavejkov, moreover, was totally out of sympathy with the symbolists.

The history of Bulgarian symbolism has never been investigated in detail. Scholars in today's Bulgaria would prefer to ignore it, but it cannot entirely be overlooked since so many major Bulgarian poets were symbolists at some point. Consequently, most current scholarly writing on the Bulgarian symbolists emphasizes the areas in which they deviated from the movement's canons in the direction of realism. The communist attitude toward the symbolists derives from the fact that the latter tended to be mystics, consciously denied the relevance of everyday life to literature, and concentrated too heavily on esthetic problems. But the Bulgarian symbolist movement plainly deserves investigation on its own terms.

Symbolism arrived late in Bulgaria from abroad, but it was still the most consistent artistic school in Bulgarian literature except for the communists. Bulgarian symbolism was strongly affected by such external influences as the French writers Mallarmé and Verlaine, the Germans Dehmel and George, the Pole Przybyszewski, and the Russians Bal'mont, Blok and Brjusov. Its first stirrings date from 1905: in that year the journal *Xudožnik* (Artist) published the poem "Novijat den" (The New Day) by Teodor Trajanov, who later became the country's leading symbolist and one of the few who never betrayed symbolism. In 1907 the symbolists put out an almanac entitled *Južni cvetove* (Southern Flowers, a name reminiscent of the important Russian symbolist collection *Northern Flowers*), edited by Trajanov, Dimo K'orčev and Trifon Kunev

and containing mostly works by them. In 1910 Ivan Radoslavov, later the movement's chief theoretician, propagandist and historian, published a rendering of Baudelaire's *Poèmes en prose*; the year 1912 saw the first volume of symbolist prose, Nikolaj Rajnov's *Bogomilski legendi* (Bogomil Legends). The journal *Naš život* (Our Life), edited by Anton Strašimirov, nurtured symbolism between 1905 and 1912; in 1914 the journal *Zveno* (Link) published the writings of the symbolists and other representatives of the pre-war generation until its existence was terminated by the outbreak of hostilities.

The Bulgarian symbolists liked to theorize about their own rather vague poetry. K'orčev's article of 1907, "Təgite ni" (Our Sadnesses, from *Južni cvetove*), was a central programmatic statement of the early period. In the course of a lengthy discussion ranging over the history of nineteenth-century Russian literature and attempting to coopt such writers as Tolstoj, Turgenev and Tjutčev as spiritual ancestors of symbolism, K'orčev elaborated a mystical doctrine reminiscent of medieval Hesychastic theory. Taking "purely rational concepts" as their point of departure, said K'orčev, the symbolists soon pass the limits of the rational and draw near to the essence of existence.

Then our entire being is transformed into a great point of light which emits rays ...; we have approached the eternity which is hidden within us and feel happy because we have become immortal; the physical world loses its meaning and significance. ... In these streams of light ... the reason, returned to its parent and father, feels small and falls silent.

After these mystical ruminations the symbolist theoretician argues that art must contain three elements within itself: "God, Silence and Fatherland". Certainly the Hesychasts would have felt comfortable with the first two of these.

In the foreword to his collection of symbolist verse *Videnija na krəstopət* (Visions at the Crossroads, 1914) the poet Ljudmil Stojanov maintained that

any poetic work, as Oscar Wilde says, is in essence completely useless. It can find its justification only in the degree of that astonishment which it is able to evoke. And this astonishment is inversely proportional to the indifference which Reality inspires. In other words, the closer a given work is to everyday affairs, the fewer elements of poetry it contains and, consequently, it does not deserve a shadow of attention. The specter of Morality and the idol of Truth have no place in art, which lives for itself alone and drinks at fountains purer than those of the accepted virtues. In general any attempt at introducing [Truth and Morality] into this enchanted kingdom is ... fruitless and vain.

Contemporary defenders of the traditional approach could only be appalled at Stojanov's assertion that art could be false and immoral if it felt so inclined because it was a law unto itself. The poet's sole duty, according to Stojanov, was to strive for beauty of form and expression.

Stojanov in any case formulated a relatively comprehensible credo, but others could be vaguer. For example, in an "Afterword" appended in 1929 to a new printing of his poetry originally composed between 1905 and 1911, Teodor Trajanov wrote that his collection was "fate", "the romance of a life". The theoretician Ivan Radoslavov developed this notion in his *Balgarska literatura (1880-1930)* (Bulgarian Literature [1880-1930]), where symbolism was held to be the goal toward which Bulgarian literature had been aiming for decades. "Trajanov's work", Radoslavov wrote,

is not literature, no matter how many of the noblest and most beautiful characteristics of literature it may display. It is fate, because each song of his is a gem cast up upon the sand after a raging storm in the ocean of his spirit. Of all his contemporaries and immediate predecessors he alone displays a truly dramatic art, which will ever remain the most perfect thing in poetry.

Critics not in sympathy with the symbolist movement — and there were many — defined the essence of symbolist poetry in simpler terms. Georgi Canev, writing as a leftist critic after the First World War, lashed out against the symbolists in his article "Mærtva poezija" (Dead Poetry, 1923). Composing symbolist verse, Canev sarcastically declared, was hardly taxing intellectually: "All you have to do is discover and add some 'ominous' to 'sorrow' or 'hellish' to 'grief' and a whole flood of tears will flow forth. A flood of deception and falsehood. Because personal grief is lacking and another person's grief cannot be felt." In symbolist poetry everything happens as in a dream, nothing bears any relation to reality, wrote Canev. Some symbolists even descended to what Canev in 1923 took as pornography. Finally, in symbolist verse could be discovered the ultimate horror: mysticism — an entity which in the critic's opinion served as a mere "cover for creative impotence". Though Canev criticized symbolism from the extreme left, he did raise some valid points, especially when he deplored the symbolists' predilection for clichés and their narrow diapason of themes, which made it easier for poetasters to join the movement and lowered the value of the production of the genuine poets within it. The symbolist world, as its detractors claimed, was in fact a homogeneous and even monotonous one, but the most talented symbolists transcended its limitations and nearly all of them contributed to the

refinement of the native poetic language and poetic technique.

The leader of the Bulgarian symbolists during the pre- and post-war phases of its existence was Teodor Trajanov (1882-1945), who came from Pazardžik, a moderately large city near Plovdiv. Like several of his symbolist colleagues, he was formally educated in fields remote from poetry or even literature. He at first studied physics and mathematics at Sofia University, later transferring to a polytechnical institute in Vienna. His Teutonic education made him a transmitter of German culture to Bulgaria, just as Penčo Slavejkov and Dr. Kræstev had been before him. Moreover he was employed by the ministry of foreign affairs as a secretary of legation and spent some time in Austria and Germany, where he developed contacts with writers. In 1921 he returned to Bulgaria and began to participate in literary and intellectual life, editing the symbolist journal *Xiperion*. After the disappearance of the symbolist movement in the early 1930s he continued to be recognized for his achievements, but on the whole he led a quiet life until his death in Sofia in January of 1945. Until recently he was rarely mentioned favorably in Bulgaria since he had always remained a consistent symbolist.

Trajanov's literary career was roughly coterminous with the period of Bulgarian symbolism's existence and may be divided into two distinct portions separated by the First World War. He began publishing at an early age (seventeen) in 1899 in *Smjax* (Laughter); later he contributed to various periodicals, such as *Balgarska sbirka*, Simeon Radev's *Xudožnik*, and the almanac *Južni cvetove*. His poetry of the pre-war period was collected in the two volumes *Regina mortua* of 1908 and *Ximni i baladi* (Hymns and Ballads) of 1911. Thereafter Trajanov seems to have fallen silent until 1921, since during much of this time he was in the foreign service. After 1921 he wrote poems of a quite different type which will be discussed in the following chapter.

The poems in *Regina mortua* and *Ximni i baladi*, brought together in 1929 under the general title *Osvobodenijat čovek* (The Liberated Man), are typical symbolist pieces. It is difficult to recall the content of Trajanov's poems, for they are not meant to convey messages. Their prevailing tone is pessimistic and sorrowing: his verse contains frequent references to grief, death, night, parting from a loved one. Trajanov liked to write about the seasons, of which autumn was the most congenial for him, a decadent. To be sure, he also wrote many poems about winter — a season already dead and not in the process of dying, as the autumn — and even on occasion about the spring.

Since Trajanov's writing is very much of a piece, one short poem,

"Smertta na noštta" (The Death of the Night), may be taken as representative of his general approach:

The night awakens and listens apprehensively,
Its heart beats painfully and fearfully,
It burns reflected in the black lake
And glitters in parting through its last tears.
Invisible fingers intertwine lightly
Funeral flowers with the reeds on the shore,
Melodies pour forth, reflections wander about,
A white angel kisses the night in parting.

It is not easy to discuss such a poem as this in any consistent fashion, since the symbolism is often too indefinite to lend itself to interpretation. The "invisible fingers", for example, may be treated in various ways — they are most probably the fingers of some unknown sentient being, but they might also be understood as belonging to the "white angel". The poem contains words and associations which recur over and over again in Trajanov's poetry: death, night, painfully, black lake, last tears, funeral flowers, parting. Trajanov sometimes wrote optimistic poems, but these are but aberrations from his basic outlook, so neatly referred to in the heading for a sub-section of *Regina mortua*, "Above the Sarcophagus of the Spring". Life is unreal, as the subtitle of the second book of *Regina mortua* implies: "Life and Dream". Life is a phantasm; death is nearer to actuality. This is why the poet so frequently speaks of "last" things, writes lyrics like "Pogrebenie" (Burial), and is obsessed with death and dissolution.

Trajanov's marked predilection for the irrational and unanalyzable led him to a species of mysticism, a state of mind with which organized religion has always found it difficult to cope. On the other hand, religious terminology and concepts are prominent in his verse. A short sub-section of *Regina mortua* is headed "Salve Regina!", and the two books of *Ximni i baladi* bear titles of religious provenance: "Prisnodeva" (Virgin) and "Pilgrim v černoto" (Pilgrim in Black). Other section headings include: "Hell", "Purgatory", and "Communion". Some individual poems are labeled "hymns", others "prayers". All this is not indicative of the poet's commitment to orthodox Christian doctrine, however, for Trajanov simply rummaged about in whatever religious traditions he found interesting. For him the Christian tradition was most important, but he also drew upon the classical pagan heritage — as in the "Hymns to Astarte" — and eastern belief (cf. the section-heading "Reincarnations"). Trajanov was an eclectic mystic.

Finally, there is evident in Trajanov a trait again characteristic of the symbolists as a whole: his acute sense of the literary tradition from which he sprang and in which he was working. The symbolists made a custom of dedicating books or portions thereof to their writer colleagues, and Trajanov's last collection, *Panteon* (Pantheon, 1934), is mostly a series of poems written to honor great poets of the past, Bulgarian and other. By such devices the symbolists at the least made their reading public more conscious of the native and foreign roots of contemporary culture.

The most remarkable thing about Bulgarian symbolism in the post-war period was the alacrity with which its adherents deserted it. The first important symbolist to abandon the movement was Xristo Jasenov (1889-1925), who had been as fervent a symbolist as any in the immediate prewar period, when symbolism was a dominant literary force. Jasenov had studied art in Sofia and begun writing in 1909. His prewar poems came out in such journals as *Naš život*, *Nabljudatel* (The Observer), and *Zveno*, and the bulk of them were collected in the volume *Ricarski zamək* (The Knight's Castle), the title of which was apparently inspired by a sentence from Kierkegaard, "My grief is a knight's castle." Because of the disruptions caused by the wars *Ricarski zamək* did not appear until 1921, by which time the author had shifted his ideological ground and joined the Bulgarian Communist Party (1919). In a foreword to the book Jasenov explained that, although these youthful poems were no longer characteristic of his outlook, he published the collection anyway because it might be regarded as a "stage in my development" by "those few readers for whom my literary work is still of some interest". After the October Revolution of 1917 Jasenov started producing poetry in the orthodox communist agitational spirit and composing political *feuilletons* for the communist humor magazine *Červen smjax* (Red Laughter), which he helped edit in 1919-1920. After 1920 he practically abandoned literature for politics. During the unsettled years after the September uprising of 1923 he was twice arrested; on the second occasion, in May of 1925, he vanished under mysterious circumstances.

The early Jasenov did not differ noticeably from his symbolist fellows. *Ricarski zamək* is comprised of twelve poems, each with several parts written in different meters (most of the constituent parts are complete in themselves and were originally published separately). One of the chief poems is titled "Madonna", so religious themes do occur in the collection. In the poem "Sebepoklonnik" (Self-Worshipper) they are given an original twist when the individualistic Jasenov proclaims himself a great admirer and even worshipper of his own poetic personality. "I love my

own verse, / radiant and transparent", he declares, and adds that it is "like a stone — / proud and cold and severe". Jasenov also draws parallels between himself and Christ. The poet's egotism is clearly evident in the title poem "Ricarski zamək", where he revels in his own loneliness and inaccessibility, which for him are not burdensome but rather desirable, since they reinforce his feeling of exclusiveness. He "ascends the granite staircase" into his "marble tower" (the images of stone prevalent in this poem and "Sebepoklonnik" symbolize the poet's unyielding desire for independence) where he will be shielded from the "vain noise" of the vulgar crowd and can commune with the sun and the cliffs. Thus at least in theory the early Jasenov sought a titanic, contemplative independence. Obviously such aspirations had to be discarded when he became a communist, and thus by the 1920's his symbolist poetry represented a completed phase of his development. However, this does not alter the fact that he made an important contribution to Bulgarian symbolism in its first stages.

Another enthusiastic early symbolist who later moved far to the left — though the process took him longer — was Ljudmil Stojanov (1888-). Stojanov was born in a village near present-day Blagoevgrad and received his early education in such places as Sliven and Plovdiv. In Plovdiv, he struck up a friendship with the poet Dimčo Debeljanov in 1905. In that same year he moved to Sofia, registered as an auditor in philosophy and pedagogy at the university, and published his first verse cycle, "Zamrznali cvetja" (Frozen Flowers), in the journal *Xudožnik*. Although his initial poetry was seemingly free of symbolist influence, by 1909-1910 he was a zealous convert to the new fashion and had begun producing the verse which would be collected in 1914 in *Videnija na krəstopət*. In the previously quoted foreword to the collection he announced that he was renouncing all his poetry written before 1909-1910 ("And could it be otherwise for a heart which has had no teacher other than the starry heaven?" he exclaimed) and joining the new current without reserve. And in fact the appearance of *Videnija na krəstopət* was an event in prewar symbolist poetry. A consciously literary artifact, the entire book was dedicated to Teodor Trajanov "as a sign of admiration and cordial friendship" and one sub-section was offered to Dimčo Debeljanov. Most of the sub-sections were prefaced by a citation from some poet, usually a symbolist (Trajanov, Baudelaire, Blok, Brjusov, Ivanov), although Shakespeare and Puškin were also quoted. The poetry itself exhibited a tinge of classical antiquity which was rather common among the symbolists; other motifs are standard as well: night, grief, death, autumn. "It is

bitter, bitter, in the level wastes / my unknown voice will pass by, / and above my sad solitude / a funeral song will fade away" ("Samota" [Solitude]). To be sure, Stojanov claimed not to care about originality. Instead he said he was most interested in attempting to "restore their original meaning" to certain words. Later critics scolded him for this, maintaining that he went to extremes in employing exotic names and words purely for their hypnotic effect upon the reader, and ignored sense more than most symbolists did.

Though some minor symbolists from the early period, for instance Trifon Kunev (1880-1954), might be mentioned here, it is unquestionably of more interest to pass on to a major poet who was with one part of his being a thoroughgoing symbolist but who at the same time often worked outside the symbolist tradition. Dimčo Debeljanov (1887-1916) left behind only some 115 lyrics, but among them are genuine pearls which have earned him a place of honor in Bulgarian literature. Debeljanov was born in Koprivštica and studied for a time in Plovdiv, where he was evidently very unhappy. Like most Bulgarian intellectuals he soon gravitated to Sofia, where he enrolled as a law student but spent little time studying. Instead he indulged his literary impulses and published for the first time in 1906 in the journal *Savremennost* (Modernity). The symbolist movement being then in its infancy, Debeljanov drew his inspiration from Penčo Slavejkov, to whom he later dedicated an important lyric, and Javorov. Slavejkov's cast of mind fitted Debeljanov's melancholy, reflective nature, and the younger writer discovered certain types of poetic techniques through him as well. Too, there was a striking spiritual affinity between Javorov and Debeljanov; indeed Javorov is said to have predicted that "this young man will surpass us all". There were moments in Debeljanov's short life when Javorov's prophecy seemed uncannily accurate.

In his poetically immature period from 1906 to about 1910 Debeljanov published approximately 70 out of his 115 lyrics, but they gave no hint that he was particularly superior to his run-of-the-mill contemporaries. He supported himself by working at non-literary jobs — as a stenographer and as a reporter, for example — but literature remained his passion. He consorted with young writers of the generation which would produce the Bulgarian literature of the 1920s and 1930s and studied the work of foreign writers, principally symbolists like Brjusov, Blok, Baudelaire and Verlaine.

In his prime mature period, 1911-1915, symbolism was a leading component of Debeljanov's writing, and in 1914 he contributed to the

semi-symbolist *Zveno*. A number of his best lyrics are wholly symbolist in spirit, and others fall largely within that tradition. But then there is a third group of poems untouched by symbolism: personal lyrics treating of his private sorrows and disappointments. The melancholy which lies at the heart of both his symbolist and realist verse is expressed very differently in these two categories of his writing. The symbolist and the realist coexisted on equal terms within him. The critic Georgi Markov, a specialist on Debeljanov's poetry, holds that the verse of his first mature period is a more perfect expression of themes he had been unable to handle properly in the early years. Aside from composing masterful verses on the old subjects, principally the ever present ones of love and nature, during this period he also revised his previous works to bring them up to his mature standards.

The poems of Debeljanov's last period sprang from his war experiences and therefore diverge from his other mature work. Though he could easily have avoided being drafted, the poet volunteered for service and was killed in Greece on 2 October, 1916. His untimely death at the front made him the prime representative of a brilliant Bulgarian literary generation cut down by the war.

Debeljanov's personality was an enigma to his contemporaries, who differed over whether he was a gay sort who enjoyed the company of his fellows or else a withdrawn and tragic individual. His verse makes a similarly ambiguous impression. Though he was by nature a lyric poet who should hymn the more cheerful sides of life, and though he often composed in the affirmative genre of the 'song', much of his poetry was melancholy, haunted by the sorrows of the past and the anticipated misfortunes of the future. The genre of the elegy best suited Debeljanov's personality, for it allowed him to combine lyricism with melancholy.

Debeljanov analyzed the duality of his own character in the well-known "Černa pesen" (Black Song), which begins with the stanza: "I die and am born in light, — / a multifaceted, disjointed soul, / in the daytime I build tirelessly, / at night I destroy without mercy." The very juxtaposition of the words "black" and "song" in the title is indicative of the split within him, since songs are not ordinarily gloomy, and the first stanza expresses well the conflict between the creative artist and the demonic destroyer within him. Perhaps his destructive tendencies led the poet to volunteer for the front, almost in the hope that he would perish there. A major pivot of Debeljanov's creative world was the light-darkness dichotomy: this is evident from the title (BLACK song) and from the assertion that at night he destroys but is "born in light" and creates

during the day. Similar light images occur in the final stanza of the poem "Na zloto" (To Evil), describing the visionary world which the poet shared with the symbolists: "I am borne away in a troubled dream / and see through some bitter spleen, / that I am in some country of light, / God's most luminous son."

Remembrance is important to Debeljanov. In the sonnet "Plovdiv" he recalls his joyless hours in that city when he later revisits it to wander through its streets, "the sole home of my homeless grief" (the juxtaposition of opposed concepts like "home" and "homeless" was typical of him). In this case he is so oppressed by premonitions that he does not even wish to remember the bitterness of his early years there. Deceptive remembrance is central to the beautifully orchestrated lyric piece beginning: "Do you remember, do you remember the quiet court, / the quiet house with the white-blossomed cherry trees?" The lightness of the memory of the house contrasts with the "gloomy prison" of the author's current psychological state. Though he first hopes the contrast may bring him emotional relief, in the second stanza he concludes that the quiet house and court had never been anything more than a "dream", lacking even the solidity of a memory. Sometimes Debeljanov nurtures remembrance as one of the few things which cannot be taken from him. For example, in the elegy "Az iskam da te pomnja vse taka" (I Want to Remember You Ever Thus) Debeljanov seeks to create a picture of his beloved from whom he must part at a time when the darkness is closing in upon them and he "does not believe even in his own faith", as he phrases it in a characteristic paradox. He attempts to fix the image of his beloved in his mind as, leaving him forever, she turns to trudge into the night.

In fact, the poet almost seems to feel truly comfortable with his beloved only at parting: many of his lyrics emphasize his loneliness, especially during the night hours, his preferred time. In "Nošten čas" (Night Hour) he invokes the "lonely, hopeless" night's benediction upon himself; in "Spi gradot" (The City Sleeps) he rejoices in his own sorrow and pain as he walks aimlessly through the city: "The city sleeps in its silent shadows. / The faithful son of faithless night, / I wander, homeless and lonely, / and the rain falls and falls and falls ...". In his war poetry of 1916 Debeljanov achieved a greater sense of human community than before since he no longer felt alone in his misfortunes. In "Edin ubit" (Dead Soldier) he discusses — without enmity — the fate of an enemy soldier who, after experiencing the ordinary joys of life, had come to this forlorn battlefield to die and therewith to cease being an enemy. The pathos of such poems was not anti-war in the usual sense, as the poet appears to have been con-

vinced that the conflict was necessary, but he was fully aware of the suffering which it visited upon both sides. Before he himself was killed he left a final melancholy song, "Sirotna pesen" (Orphan Song), one of the purest gems in the Bulgarian lyric treasury. In "Sirotna pesen" the poet laments the fact that he had lost his mother and never found a wife or true comrades. His existence had been joyless; he had been endowed only with grief; he would depart this life unnoticed and unmourned: "I shall leave this world — / just as I came, homeless, / calm as a song / which brings back a useless memory."

Between them the symbolists and the *Misal* group boasted a virtual monopoly on the younger poetic talents of the pre-war period. There was, however, one poet aside from Vazov who for the most part escaped them: Kiril Xristov (1875-1944). Xristov was born in Stara Zagora to a wealthy family. He was educated in larger Bulgarian cities, including Tŕnovo and Sofia, and read widely in the giants of world poetry, including Byron and Lermontov. In the 1890s he temporarily became a socialist: in 1894-1895 he wrote poems of a suitable slant and published them in the socialist organ *Delo* (The Cause). But he soon abandoned radical doctrine with little regret and quite completely. He did not republish his early verse and in later poems explicitly rejected the social doctrines of his youth. They left few traces in his mature work.

Xristov was a restless soul. In the course of his elementary schooling he wandered all over Bulgaria, and when he grew up he wandered all over Europe. Because of his poor health he could not satisfy his desire to go to sea, but he did live for a time in Trieste and Naples, where he came to love the seafaring life. Later he drifted from one European center to another, then taught for a while in Šumen before coming to a brief rest in Sofia around 1901.

Xristov's poetic talent matured during these early wanderings, and he wrote his best verse in the last years of the nineteenth century. His sojourns in Italy had given him a taste for Italian poetry, especially modern verse of a more erotic type such as that of Gabriele D'Annunzio. At first he was connected with the *Misal* group: he was a good friend of Aleko Konstantinov's, accepted advice from Penčo Slavejkov, and received critical notice from Dr. Kræstev. He also published in *Misal*. His first collections of verse appeared around 1900: *Trepeti* (Quivers, 1897), *Večerni senki* (Evening Shadows, 1898), and *Na kræstopæt* (At the Crossroads, 1901). In time Xristov's relations with the *Misal* circle deteriorated. Thus, though Penčo Slavejkov probably helped arouse his interest in Bulgarian folk songs, soon Slavejkov, Kræstev and Javorov were attacking

him for spoiling rather than improving them through his reworkings. They were also repelled by Xristov's blatant egotism. Consequently, Xristov's most important single collection, the *Izbrani stixotvorenija* (Selected Poems) of 1903, appeared with a foreword by Vazov. In 1905 Xristov made things even worse by publishing a verse play entitled *Stalpotvorenje* (Tower of Babylon). It enraged the *Misal* circle, and in January of 1906 Javorov published a long article attempting to show that *Stalpotvorenje* had been plagiarized from a narrative poem of the same title by the obscure Russian poet N. Minskij with infusions from Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra* (in fairness to Xristov it should be noted that he included Minskij's poem in a brief list of works appended to *Stalpotvorenje*: had he been a conscious deceiver he would never have revealed his sources so lightheartedly). The *Misal* circle in any case thought Xristov had degenerated into a thoroughly dishonest literary hack. The situation was not improved when Xristov was appointed professor of Bulgarian literature during the 1907 university controversy, especially since he was poorly qualified for the post. For his part, Xristov was always quick to take umbrage at real or fancied insults. The gulf between him and the *Misal* circle remained.

After 1903 the quality of Xristov's original poetic production declined. This became evident as early as 1904, the year in which he published *Samodivska kitka* (The Wood Sprite's Garland), a collection of reworked folk songs. Indeed all his writing for about forty years after 1903 may with but minimal distortion be regarded as a lengthy footnote to his poetry of the turn of the century. His collections *Ximni na zorata* (Hymns to the Dawn, 1911) and *Slančogledi* (Sunflowers, 1911) consisted mostly of revised earlier lyrics. He also wrote mystical plays like *Bojan Magesnikat* (Bojan the Magician, published 1907) and *Starijat voin* (The Aged Warrior, published 1913), but they are of only historical interest. To be sure, something new — but also undesirable — entered Xristov's verse during the war years. In a burst of nationalist enthusiasm over the First Balkan War, in 1913 he published *Na nož* (With Fixed Bayonets) and in 1916 *Pobedni pesni* (Songs of Triumph). Here he gave free rein to his chauvinism, which has since become proverbial. In addition, symbolism influenced his verse slightly at this period. On the whole he was well shielded from its attractions through his association with Vazov, who always opposed it unhesitatingly, but certain decadent and symbolist attitudes found voice in his verse nevertheless, and some of his lyrics fall completely within the symbolist tradition. However, these are rarely held against him.

Xristov could be extremely cutting in his epigrams directed against his enemies, but he was quite thin-skinned himself. In 1922, feeling persecuted and insufficiently appreciated by the Bulgarian public, he entered voluntary exile. Until 1930 he lived in Leipzig, then from 1930 to 1938 he worked at the Charles University in Prague as an instructor in Bulgarian. He had declared several times that he would never return to Bulgaria, but in 1938 he did precisely that and received a tumultuous welcome. His lyrics of the last period, for example those in *Válnolom* (Breakwater, 1937) and *Posledni požari* (Last Fires, 1944), were of little consequence. Nor was he especially successful with *Čeda na Balkana* (Children of the Balkans, 1930), an epic poem about the First Balkan War. Xristov could become the talk of society once again only by publishing memoirs which were not always fair to his former associates, many of whom were long dead. On the other hand, he occasionally gave credit where credit was due in them and sometimes admitted that he had criticized his friends wrongly. His memoirs were collected in 1943 in the volume *Zatrupana Sofija* (Sofia Covered: the title seemingly refers to the fact that one must rummage in memory in order to come up with a few worthwhile recollections). When he died shortly after the ninth of September, on 7 November, 1944, he had far outlived his day.

For all practical purposes Xristov's place in Bulgarian literature is defined by his poetry up to 1903. His personality was best suited to the genre of the song, in which he could express his fundamentally optimistic outlook, but he worked with the sonnet as well. What melancholia lurked within him emerged in his elegies. He satisfied his liking for history and folklore by writing ballads and reworking folk songs. Finally, the chief vehicle for his personal bile was the satirical epigram, of which he wrote many. He produced in other verse forms as well, but the ones just enumerated were most characteristic of him.

Xristov's outlook was generally affirmative. On the occasions when he expresses sorrow, the reader is conscious that his grief does not run deep. Thus after Petko Slavejkov's death in 1895 Xristov composed a short "Rekviem" (Requiem) in three stanzas in which he concentrated attention mainly on the indignities endured by the poet in his old age. The exquisite lyric "Esenen motiv" (Autumn Motif) deals with the favorite season of the elegiac poets, but the author is relatively cheerful and the poem ends: "And one's soul is borne away / in calm, sweet grief." For Xristov there was nothing painful or oppressive about winter's approach. The poet's true face appears in the energetic "Xež, prolet ide!" (Hey, Spring Is Coming!), with its spirit of gay abandon and its forceful refrain:

"Hey, spring is coming to our native land!" Spring was Xristov's season, not autumn.

Xristov is famed for his nature descriptions, which are always replete with the joy of life, indeed a hedonistic joy of life. In particular, he was one of the few Bulgarian poets to write extensively about the sea. His stays in Trieste, Naples and Burgas on the Black Sea stimulated his affection for the sea; part of its poetic legacy were his splendid "Morski soneti" (Sea Sonnets), describing the water in its various aspects at different times. For Xristov the sea is usually friendly, a bringer of inner serenity: "The sailor is going home after roistering — / he finds peace for his stormy soul in the sleep / of the boat that dozes by the shore" ("Utro" [Morning]). Then the poet also celebrated the beauties of inland regions, for instance the mountains surrounding the Rila Monastery, so rich in its historic and patriotic associations. In this area he emulated his mentor Vazov, who frequently sang of Bulgaria's natural beauties for patriotic reasons. The patriotism which was present in his early work, such as the ballads "Obsadata na Solun" (The Siege of Salonika) and "Bojat pri Čermen" (The Battle of Čermen), where he commemorated the feats of ancient Bulgarian arms, became predominant in his chauvinistic war poetry and later on in certain of his attempts at the epic.

In the final accounting patriotic themes are the extension of social attitudes, and Kiril Xristov is remembered, not for his social consciousness, but his insufferable egotism. Personal — especially erotic — themes are very common with him. The poet described himself precisely in a stanza from "Skitnik" (The Wanderer). Drawn by the lure of the sea, the wanderer "left — and left forever / for unknown regions and lands, — / but everywhere he found gay companions, / but everywhere he found wine and girls". In "Ximn" (Hymn), a species of poetic and philosophical credo, Xristov declared that he no longer cared about "rational life, glory, ideals", the notions he had promoted during his socialist period. Now he was perpetually inebriated ("I am drunk with my youth"); he took as his motto: "Women and wine! Wine and women!" He wanted to live his life as a sensualist who eschewed commitments to anything or anybody. Much of his poetry is erotic, and not just in the polite sense, but as verse openly preaching unrestrained sensuality. Occasionally his approach was relatively pure, as in "Pervata celuvka" (First Kiss), where the poet claims that the first kiss bestows "might on the one who gives it / and powerlessness on the one who receives it". In a later, untitled verse ("Majka za ljubov te e rodila") Xristov seeks permission to cover his beloved's face with "fiery kisses" but promises her nothing: his heart, he

says, is like a bird which flits from bush to bush, leaving in each the memory of a wondrous song with which alone the bush must content itself in the future. "Černite oči" (Dark Eyes), written in quasi-ballad form, describes a hero who, driven by the force of his passion, is prepared to murder his rival if need be to gain the right to join his lips to those of his beloved.

Poems like these would seem to indicate that Xristov could take or leave any particular woman without compunction, but even he was at times puzzled by the uncanny power which love for a woman can exert over a man. In one of his elegies he speaks of a woman's "ringing laughter" as "poison" and says jealousy has sprung up in his heart like a "poison poppy". The two lovers in this poem balance above an abyss symbolizing love's destructive powers. The darker side of Xristov's eroticism, merely hinted at in this elegy, comes out in such poems as the decadent "Autopsija" (Autopsy). The persona is a woman dead in her prime who now stretches naked under a medical student's dissecting knife. She urges the scientist to cut deeply into her breast, heart and loins in order there to discover the secrets of her former miserable existence. The more horrible aspects of the tender passion were not usually emphasized in Xristov's writing, though, and he is usually considered the bard of a lusty and if anything thoughtless eroticism.

Xristov's sometime protector, Ivan Vazov, continued to play a dominant role in the literary life of the first two decades of the twentieth century, although he no longer enjoyed the almost exclusive eminence which had been his in the 1880s and early 1890s. He and his literary approach came under attack at the time, but he was still revered by most segments of society.

Following a not very remarkable tenure as Minister of Education from 1897 to the beginning of 1899, Vazov was content to withdraw from public service to his house in the capital and live in a small family circle, engaging in literary and intellectual pursuits. It was also at about this period that he formed a close friendship with Ivan Šišmanov, who later became something of a Boswell to him and supported him loyally until his death. His two decades in the twentieth century were productive years; toward the end he partially realized a plan to publish a complete edition of his works with the issuance of eight volumes between 1911 and 1918. During the series of wars beginning in 1912 Vazov wrote patriotic verse to brace the morale of Bulgarian soldiers at the front. However, once such areas as Macedonia and Dobrudža had been regained by Bulgaria, he favored peace. In the end he shared the shame of a country humiliated by its enemies and former allies.

As his life drew to a close, reminiscence became more and more important in Vazov's work. In his last years, as in his very first, he wrote more poetry than prose. In the twilight of his life all manner of honors were heaped upon him: his friends considered nominating him for the Nobel Prize; schools, streets, libraries and institutions were named for him; in 1920 the fiftieth anniversary of his literary activity was extensively celebrated. Even the government contributed to the jubilee by granting him 100,000 *leva* and exempting him from property and income taxes. A fund to support the publication of his collected works in twenty-eight volumes was begun, a ceremony for him was staged at the National Theater, a collection of articles and other contributions in his honor was printed. In short, Vazov's fiftieth jubilee was marked in a style in which no other writer's anniversary has been commemorated before or since. His death about a year later, on 22 September, 1921, was mourned by the entire country. His funeral procession, which included members of the government, writers and scholars, was headed by Czar Boris. He was buried near the Aleksandər Nevski cathedral, and in recent years a statue of him has been placed in a prominent spot not far from his grave. Monuments to Vazov and to Paisij Xilendarski, the man who capped and the man who initiated the Bulgarian Renaissance, now appropriately adorn the center of Bulgaria's capital.

Vazov attained his greatest fame as a novelist on the strength of his first novel, *Pod igoto*, and each new novel he published afterwards was inferior to its predecessor. After painting a broad portrait of Bulgarian society from the liberation through the Union of 1885 in *Nova zemja*, he brought the story down to the 1890s in the third book of what may be considered a historical trilogy, *Kazalarskata carica* (The Czarina of Kazalar). In this work the author hangs his story upon a slight plot involving the amatory affairs of two young ladies, though in fact he was trying to describe society of the 1890s as a whole, not concoct an intricate plot. Dr. Kræstev proclaimed the novel beneath critical contempt, but it sold well when first published. Time has confirmed the critic's judgment, however, and it is now little read. Even less read than *Kazalarskata carica* were Vazov's later short novels, set in the distant historical past: *Ivan Aleksandər* and *Svetoslav Terter* (both 1907). These works deal with events at the end of the thirteenth and the middle of the fourteenth centuries respectively.

Vazov was much concerned with the history of medieval Bulgaria, especially during the first ten years of this century. His travel sketches have a way of becoming meditations on Bulgaria's past historical glories.

He had a gift for nature description, and his travel sketches set standards for this genre in Bulgarian literature. But Vazov did not write nature descriptions merely to quiet his lyrical urge. It was patriotism which led him to praise the natural beauties of his homeland and utilize historic sites as stimuli for ruminations upon Bulgaria's past glories. Unhappily, destruction and years of neglect had done their work so well that little more than pedestals and pieces of walls remained of the medieval structures in such cities as Pliska and Tǎrnovo, but Vazov's imagination fed upon even this scanty fare. For example, in a piece written in 1900 about Tǎrnovo, Vazov contemplates the remnants of the city's medieval fortress and recalls with pride how once upon a time Bulgarian power had extended from that spot over an area almost double that granted Bulgaria by the Treaty of San Stefano. "This grandeur has vanished without trace today", Vazov writes. "And a quiet pain embraces the soul, which is filled to overflowing with grandiose and mysterious visions but which stands before the ugly reality of desolation and death. But nevertheless I cast insatiable glances at the bare summit, for I expect that there will appear to me there the shade of some Czar with his golden helmet." Vazov also remarks upon how appropriate it would have been to return to this "improbable, impossible city" (Tǎrnovo hangs precariously on rugged steeps above a river) its pride of place, to make it the capital of liberated Bulgaria. It was precisely this capacity for never losing sight of his country's historical aspirations and heritage which helped make Vazov the national poet he is today.

Vazov's prose writings between 1900 and 1920 included ordinary sketches and short stories as well as travelogues and novels. He published numerous sketches in the periodical press, bringing them together in such volumes as *Videno i čuto* (Things Seen and Heard, 1901), *Pǎstǎr svjat* (A Varicolored World, 1902), and *Utro v Banki* (Morning in Banki, 1905). Some of his short stories were simply nature descriptions. Others, descendants of the satirical items in *Draski i šarki* of 1895, contained innocuous slaps at abuses prevalent in the society of post-liberation Bulgaria. In these years Vazov particularly disdained people who shifted with the political winds for personal advantage, or those who prided themselves on never having voted and thus neglected their civic duty. A large fraction of his brief prose works were stories based upon reminiscence or else straightforward memoirs of historic events Vazov had witnessed or important people he had known. He had not always mingled with the great alone, however. For instance the pleasant sketch "Daskalite" (Teachers) from *Videno i čuto* is comprised of disjointed recollections of

the teachers whom Vazov had known during his school days: their teaching methods, their small mannerisms, the general atmosphere of the schools at that time. With a few exceptions — such as Joakim Gruev and Xristo Botev's father — none of them left a mark on history, but Vazov has memorialized them in vignettes which convey a vivid sense of the epoch's texture. In other memoirs Vazov recorded his impressions of certain great personalities, including Ljuben Karavelov and Stefan Stambolov, who dominated the period of his youth. Vazov himself remarked that he preferred to employ a genuine occurrence as the kernel of a fictional piece rather than rely exclusively on his fancy. It is therefore not astonishing that he produced such memoirs as these.

Vazov's poetic production in the early part of the century began with the collection *Skitniški pesni* (A Wanderer's Songs, 1899), followed by *Pod našeto nebe* (Under Our Skies) in 1900. Many of the poems in these volumes were fully as patriotic and historical as what he was then doing in prose. After a period given over largely to the writing of plays, and following the outbreak of the First Balkan War, buoyed by the general enthusiasm and spurred by letters from admirers, Vazov turned out a quantity of prematurely optimistic verse published in *Pod grama na pobedite* (In the Thunder of Victories, 1914). Here he described battlefields and the quiet heroism of the Bulgarian soldier: if a monument to Bulgarian arms were ever raised, he wrote in "Pametnik na bŕlgarskata mošt", it should include a statue not of some fanciful Mars, but rather of a simple Bulgarian peasant. He also challenged people like the French Turkophile Pierre Loti, who condemned the Balkan allies' attack on the Turks, the most virtuous of peoples. Bulgaria's victories of the First Balkan War were promptly undone by the defeats of the Second, but after the beginning of the First World War and Bulgaria's occupation of Macedonia, the poet published his *Pesni za Makedonija* (Songs of Macedonia, 1916), in which he hailed the liberation of that land. But Bulgaria eventually relinquished its territorial gains once more and Vazov, disillusioned with politics, turned to the composition of lyric poetry. The verse in the volumes *Novi ekove* (New Echoes, 1917), *Kakvo pee planinata* (What Song Does the Mountain Sing, 1917) and *Ljuleka mi zamirisa* (I Caught a Scent of Lilac, 1919) for the most part dealt with personal themes, for instance the poet's attempt to define his own role in society and his place in Bulgarian history and to analyze his feelings at the approach of life's end. He also wrote topical poetry, but not in such quantity as before.

In addition to their purely literary activities, Vazov and his allies —

primarily Stefan Bobčev, Simeon Radev and Kiril Xristov — carried on a running dispute with the *Misal* circle. Very possibly the deepest cause of the dispute was simple personal animosity between Vazov and Kræstev, if one may judge by the latter's remark in a letter of 1903 that he published "nothing about Vazov the *writer* simply because the *man* is repellent and repulsive to me: many years ago I had the misfortune to learn of some of the ugliest features of his personality, of which only about a dozen people are aware. From that time on he has been repulsive to me and he will remain so!!!" Precisely what Dr. Kræstev had in mind may never be known, but evidently he felt he had good reason to dislike Vazov. In any case, whatever its initial causes may have been, the quarrel between the two soon developed ramifications far beyond the merely personal.

In his early years Dr. Kræstev had admired Vazov: his first critical article (1887-1888) discussed Vazov's poetry very favorably, although it contained the seeds of his later strictures on the national poet. During the 1890s he reviewed Vazov's works and contributed to his journal *Dennica*. But *Dennica* failed at the time when *Misal* began its long and successful career. The fact that his own journals never enjoyed anything approaching *Misal*'s success must have grated on Vazov. And then the electoral campaign of 1894, when both ran for the national parliament from Kazanlak and Vazov was elected, widened the breach between them. Their relations were further strained by the publication in *Draski i šarki* (1895) of Vazov's satirical sketch "Dr. Džan-Džan", which, though labeled a fantasy, was clearly directed against Kræstev. The hero, Dr. Džan-Džan, after having been overeducated in Europe, returns to Bulgaria expecting to astound his fellow countrymen with his erudition. To his dismay, he is greeted by contemptuous silence rather than applause. Wishing desperately to attract attention, he contemplates organizing a hoax to cause people to think him dead, so that he may enjoy the "posthumous" praise heaped upon his head. When upon further reflection he realizes the scheme will fail, he abandons it. Vazov was so pleased at the success of his assault on what he considered Kræstev's "egotism" that in later years he referred privately to the critic as "Dr. Džan-Džan".

For its part, the *Misal* circle believed that Vazov was no longer a literary force, that he had contributed much to the development of Bulgarian literature when it was in its infancy but that now the Bulgarian palate required stronger stuff. Dr. Kræstev never thought Vazov's work devoid of literary significance: he consistently proclaimed the excellence of Vazov the poet and approved of certain of his prose writings, especially *Pod igoto*, but he thought his later novels and stories and especially his

plays to be nearly worthless. Slavejkov, however, condemned even Vazov's poetry in 1906. Vazov, he said, composed in a language which was "understandable, light and pretty" because it was "smooth and contentless, written by the hand of a lively man under the dictation of a heart extruding love and anger. Everything is ... mushy, so that even toothless gums can handle it." The thesis of Kræstev's critical collection of 1907, *Mladi i stari*, was that Slavejkov and his colleagues were the wave of the future which had already left the older generation far behind. Kræstev sustained his vendetta in his writings for the foreign press also, as when in 1912 he paid Vazov the following left-handed compliment in a Russian journal: "That which [Vazov] lacks in poetic or artistic depth is more or less compensated for by the literary historical significance of his works." In his last years Kræstev, in the course of his university lectures, denigrated Vazov's reputation so forcefully that some of his students reportedly refused to listen to him.

Vazov and some of his colleagues spread the idea that Vazov was the offended party in this controversy. In his poem "Poet" (1902), dedicated to Vazov, Kiril Xristov attacked the Kræstev camp: "It's very painful when I see / hordes of mentors descending upon the chosen one." In fact, however, Vazov was ordinarily at least as intemperate as his opponents. We have already noted his using the foreword to Xristov's collected poems of 1903 to assault Slavejkov. "What a difference", he exclaimed then, "between this genuine poet and poets of the type of, say, Penčo Slavejkov, otherwise so industrious, whose distorted and overdone songs, unwarmed by the divine fire, repel even the reader armed with the best will in the world." In 1905 Vazov once more utilized *belles lettres* as a polemical weapon. In the story "Japonski silueti" (Japanese Silhouettes, included in *Utro v Banki*), while pretending to be describing Japanese literary life, Vazov derided the *Misal* camp. He gave special attention to Dr. Kræstev, pictured as the critic Xara-Karasuta-Xi-Jamacura. According to Vazov, this critic, a virtual dictator on the Japanese literary scene, based all his evaluations upon his likes and dislikes: he praised his personal friends and damned his personal enemies. Indeed Vazov followed this line consistently in his polemics with Kræstev, stating it explicitly in an interview of early 1906, in which he claimed that Dr. Kræstev had already become "legendary" in Bulgaria for his personal approach to criticism. During these years Vazov several times — and quite unscrupulously — published anonymous articles defending himself and casting aspersions on Slavejkov and Kræstev. In 1907 one of Vazov's supporters, Simeon Radev, published a small book attacking Kræstev as a

critic. After *Misal* ceased publication in early 1908, moreover, Krāstev's reputation did decline while Vazov's rose, and with the deaths of Slavejkov, Javorov and Todorov between 1912 and 1916 Krāstev was increasingly isolated. By the period of the wars, when personal hostilities could be more easily forgotten in view of national calamities, the two tried but failed to reach an understanding. To be sure, after Krāstev's death in 1919 Vazov wrote a short poem entitled "Proška" (Forgiveness) in which he pardoned all those who had earlier heaped contumely on his head, and in 1921 he contributed at least indirectly to covering the cost of transferring Slavejkov's and Todorov's remains from abroad to Bulgaria. But by that time he had prevailed and could afford to be magnanimous.

The Vazov-Krāstev controversy on the highest level had dealt with the question of the artist's special function as an individualistic hero in history, one whose lofty responsibility to the people demanded that he be thoroughly conversant with world culture. The *Misal* group, who looked on the artist as a superior being, consisted mostly of intellectuals with a modernist coloration, linked to symbolism and decadence. The Vazov circle, on the other hand, was mistrustful of intellectualism, symbolism or even relatively wholesome modernism, and believed that literature should be immediately accessible to the common man and inculcate the traditional personal and social virtues. The Vazovites also tended to be more nationalistic than the *Misal* group.

The social and psychological satire so prominent in Vazov's shorter prose works was the foundation of the writings of an unusual figure in Bulgarian literature, Georgi Stamatov (1869-1942), whose most significant literary production appeared in the early part of this century. Stamatov was born in Russia to a Bulgarian *émigré* employed there as a civil servant who returned to Bulgaria in 1879 and was appointed Minister of Justice. Stamatov himself moved to Bulgaria in 1882 to enter a military academy, but after graduation he decided against pursuing a military career and instead betook himself to Geneva to study law. Following obliquely in his father's footsteps, he worked as a judge for many years in the provinces and in the capital, eventually becoming an appellate court judge. Although Stamatov thus was born to a family deeply involved in government and he himself functioned in governmental capacities, he always felt alienated from the bureaucracy and sought to dissociate himself from it intellectually as far as possible. In like manner, though not a total atheist, he detested the clergy and never attended church. He reportedly took pains to avoid important people and once refused to shake hands with an old friend after the latter had been ele-

vated to a high post. He was proud that as a judge he had never imposed a death sentence. Indeed he once declined to serve on a panel of judges when it seemed the only sentence they could impose was death. This philosophy made it difficult for him to kill off even his fictional characters. As a result, few suicides occur in his pages, despite their generally pessimistic tone. Again, he was a zealous antifeminist, but he contracted an unhappy marriage and in his later years on two separate occasions fell passionately in love with younger women. Thus in literature as in life Stamatov was a personality of numerous contradictions.

Stamatov's first publication was a poem of 1890 printed in Vazov's *Dennica*; his initial story appeared in *Misal* in 1894. Never attempting anything very lengthy, he contributed short stories and sketches to journals like *Misal*, *Balgarska sbirka* and *Novo vreme* (New Time), collecting them periodically in volumes with such titles as *Izbrani očerci i razkazi* (Selected Sketches and Stories, 1905), *Skici* (Sketches, 1915), and *Razkazi* (Stories, two volumes, 1929-1930). Stamatov displays a well-defined literary profile. He was a bitter man, and his works fall almost entirely in the tradition of Bulgarian satire — the biting type represented by Mixajlovski rather than the comparatively good-natured sort produced by an Aleko Konstantinov. His range, though, was narrower than Mixajlovski's.

Being addicted to literary naturalism, Stamatov tended to emphasize the weaknesses of human nature (the critic Vladimir Vasilev aptly characterized him as a writer of "belletristic epigrams"). His attitude is that of the enraged satirist — he was immensely discontented that people failed to meet an ideal standard, although it is likely that had he ever attempted to define such a standard he would have mistrusted it just as much as the reality he described. He was no ideologist with a patented set of beliefs: his personality was too negative for that. He could discover in his fictional characters — usually members of the urban intelligentsia — no unselfish traits. All was physiological and this-worldly, he held. Man's every action is based on egotism and physical instinct, particularly the impulse to survival, the sexual drive and, on a more civilized level, the urge toward comfort. However self-sacrificing a man's actions may appear outwardly, when analyzed fully they will always turn out to be self-seeking. The only partial exception to this generalization was man's creative impulse, for this could be unselfish and manifested a spark of divinity within him. But in general Stamatov felt obliged to expose the base motives behind men's actions: in literature as in life he judged others. Somehow he seems to have believed that he was free from corruption himself and therefore justified in condemning his unlovely heroes

outright. Because of this and also his lack of literary sensitivity, Stamatov did not leave his reader in any doubt as to the proper attitude to be adopted toward his characters. As the contemporary critic Simeon Sultanov has put it, Stamatov functions as a prompter for his characters, but a bad one who speaks too loudly, so that we hear him before the character has a chance to repeat the words. Still, despite their weaknesses Stamatov's stories may be read with interest for their engrossing if shallow interpretations of the darker sides of the human psychology.

Stamatov cared little for the beauties of nature, being concerned solely with man and his gruesome handiwork. In one sketch, "Našata zemja" (Our Land), begun with a sarcastically orchestrated hymn parodying Vazov's style ("Paradise! Divine land! Promised land of mankind!"), he describes the hell into which man has transformed his earthly paradise, what with his prisons, barracks, churches, fine clothes and newspapers with ironic names like *Freedom* or *Peace*. There is a total contrast between the country's natural beauties and the misery or hypocrisy of those who inhabit it.

Aside from social relationships in the large, Stamatov's jaundiced eye often surveyed personal relationships between individuals. In his view these were almost invariably founded upon deceit, including self-deceit. In the sardonically titled "Idilija" (Idyll) he pictures a young man and woman who in their freshness should be thoroughgoing idealists but instead are worried only about their futures. The young man dreams of an opportunity to study in Paris with an allowance of 400 *leva* a month. His sister is in a happy fog because she has received a formal proposal from lieutenant colonel Nikušev. It is not important that she hardly knows her suitor, for what she wants is a marriage with a person properly connected socially. "If someone had asked her what he was like? young? old? intelligent? stupid? good? bad? she would have answered merely: he is lieutenant colonel Nikušev." That was all she knew and all she cared to know.

Stamatov provides a detailed analysis of the marital relationship in his successful story "Za edno kŭtče na dušata" (About a Small Corner of the Soul). The husband, being persuaded that everyone must conceal a portion of his personality even from those nearest to him, commits the error of recording his private thoughts in notebooks which he keeps hidden from his wife under lock and key. When she learns of their existence, devoured by curiosity and blinded by the delusion that husband and wife should be completely frank with each other, she will not rest until she gains access to them. When she does despite her husband's

prohibition, she is horrified to discover how basely he has acted on occasion in the past and how cynically he looks at life. He writes, for instance, that he did not marry because of any immense passion or even desire to achieve a biological form of immortality: rather he married his wife instead of some other woman purely by chance. Furthermore, chance was buttressed by the most basic sensual attraction: since she would allow him to possess her physically only in marriage, he acceded to her requirement and married her. What he wanted was her body, for spiritually they had little in common. When the wife reads such frank statements as these in the notebooks she feels that there can be no possibility of further communication between them now that she has viewed her husband's soul in all its nudity, though she continues to conceal her own spiritual corruption from herself. Their marriage is destroyed.

Stamatov did not believe that education would eliminate mankind's woes, for educated people remained human beings, subject to the entire gamut of human frailty. In the sketch "V xrama na naukata" (In the Temple of Scholarship) he depicts the halls of the university as crammed with present and future careerists: the future lawyers interested only in obtaining more money, the future doctors who decline to work in the provinces, the future men of God who dream of the beautiful young women to be in their spiritual charge, the girl students who plot to trap a husband so as to ensure themselves a comfortable existence, the professors who brook no disagreement with their opinions and coast along on the same lectures for years. No disinterested commitment to scholarship for its own sake may be discovered in this "temple". All are actuated by selfishness. And if this was true of those at the apex of the pyramid, how much more was it true of those lower down on the educational scale!

One last Bulgarian prose-writer from this period worth detailed comment is Anton Strašimirov (1872-1937). Born in the Black Sea port of Varna, he was orphaned at twelve and did not have a very pleasant childhood. He dropped out of school very early and started wandering about the country, supporting himself through a heterogeneous assortment of jobs: he worked in hotels and inns, in the tobacco fields, in a monastery and as a typesetter. After completing the third year of the *gymnasium* he toured the eastern part of Bulgaria on foot. Later he was employed as a government official and as a teacher in various villages. He also made his literary debut at about this time, printing poems in 1889 in the journal *Iskra* (Spark, published in Šumen). In subsequent years he contributed to such journals as *Misal*, *Balgarska sbirka*, *Novo vreme* and *Balgarski pregled* and gradually acquired a reputation. In the middle of the 1890s he

studied literature, political economy and geography at the University of Bern while continuing to write.

Strašimirov's wanderlust did not abate, and so he was soon back in Bulgaria teaching, first in Vidin and then in Kazanlak, which at the time was quite a provincial cultural center. Eventually he gravitated to Sofia, where he lived in poverty as a free-lance writer and took up political causes, including the Macedonian revolutionary movement. He was also active in intellectual journalism, founding the journal *Naš život* in 1901 along with Stojan Mixajlovski and Kiril Xristov. *Naš život* came out rather irregularly for more than ten years. Of all the journals with which he had anything to do, his name remains most closely connected with this one.

Ever eager for activity and novelty, Strašimirov volunteered for service in the First Balkan War and worked as a correspondent during the First World War. After the upheavals of 1923 he became even more entangled in politics. One of his brothers, a communist, was killed in 1924. Between 1923 and 1926 he contributed to communist publications, but thereafter he diverged from the party, transferring his allegiance to such organs as *Literaturn glas* (Literary Voice, a prominent literary weekly). During the 1930s he wrote, lectured, and pursued amateur interests in ethnography and the history of his native land. One fruit of this latter enthusiasm was *Diktatorat* (The Dictator, on Stambolov, 1935). He died in 1937.

Strašimirov was an erratic author, and few of his writings are still of interest, but the fact that he produced a great deal and shifted readily with the prevailing intellectual winds makes him an intriguing figure for the literary historian. He began as something of a populist, he encouraged the symbolist movement in its early stages in his journal *Naš život*, a few years later he became a prime representative of modernism; he was a fellow traveller when the communists were influential in the 1920s, later breaking with them when this appeared the thing to do, and finally he was comparatively apolitical in the 1930s. A perusal of his works from beginning to end would give the reader a substantial idea of each epoch through which Strašimirov lived.

If we exclude Strašimirov's early attempts at poetry, his first important volume was the collection of short stories *Smjx i səlzi* (Laughter and Tears, 1897). Written in the best populist tradition, the pieces in *Smjx i səlzi* described the rural misery the author had observed during his youthful wanderings. Between 1895 and 1903 Strašimirov was also keenly interested in problems of criminality and abnormal psychology (the Russian modernist Leonid Andreev exerted a malign influence upon

him in this area). The story "Ubiec" (The Murderer, 1896) depicts the reactions of a young man to the discovery that his father once committed murder to acquire the money and property which he, the son, will one day inherit. Unable to bear up under this revelation, he leaves home and eventually dies of sunstroke; his father, for all his money and power, is powerless to save him. The story "V grada na mǎrtvite" (In the City of the Dead) exhibits Andreev's influence in its choice of subject — love between brother and sister who are unaware of their blood relationship.

In addition to short stories Strašimirov wrote novels and occasionally novelettes, planning several novel cycles which were somehow never completed. Certain of his early novelettes, such as *Esenni dni* (Autumn Days, 1902), were set in the countryside, but others — for instance *Smutno vreme* (A Troubled Time, 1899) — described the urban *milieu*. The psychology of the masses in an urban environment intrigued him for a time, so that in 1919 he published *Bez pǎt* (Without Direction), the initial novel of an intended series of five chronicling city life to bear the overall title *Visjašt most* (The Hanging Bridge). In this instance he got as far as the second novel, *Bena* (1921), before abandoning the project. War experiences were the subject of the 'novel-chronicle' *Vixǎr* (The Whirlwind, 1922). However, his best-known novel dealt with the uprising of September 1923. Called *Xoro* (Round-Dance, 1926), the book is difficult to follow because it is written in the mannered style which was one of the author's besetting sins. Moreover — much to the discomfiture of Bulgarian critics today — it lacks communist characters. Still, *Xoro* was one of the signal works written about the September events. In 1929, continuing to elaborate upon political and revolutionary themes, Strašimirov published the first volume of the novel *Robi* (Slaves), which described the Macedonian revolutionary movement. The second volume of *Robi* came out in 1930, but the work as a whole was left unfinished for both political and personal reasons.

If his numerous novels were not especially outstanding, Strašimirov did make a notable contribution to the development of the modern theater in Bulgaria. Two of his plays, *Vampir* (The Vampire, 1901) and *Svekǎrva* (The Mother-in-Law, 1906), are now considered among his best work. After *Svekǎrva* won first prize in a dramatic competition marking the opening of the National Theater in Sofia in 1907, Strašimirov launched an assault against the corruption of high government officials and important persons generally in plays such as *Kǎšta* (The House, 1908) and *Pred Vlxernskite vrata* (Before the Blachernae Gates, 1908 — Blachernae is a quarter of Constantinople) but then transferred his

allegiance to modernistic themes in plays like *Reveka* (Rebecca, 1908), *Sveti Ivan Rilski* (St. Ivan Rilski, 1911), and *Kam slanceto* (Toward the Sun, 1917), where the characters tend to be maniacs or mystics and the influence of such decadents as Maeterlinck, Nietzsche and Przybyszewski is evident.

The theater, we recall, had in the pre-liberation years served to instruct the general public and arouse revolutionary sentiment. Bulgarian authors had begun to write plays then: they may not have been very artistic, but at least they were native. In the years following the liberation, on the other hand, dramatic activity slackened, for no one followed Dobri Vojnikov in taking the theater as his special province. Vazov was almost the only important writer of the 1880s, and no more than a portion of his production was intended for the stage. From time to time theatrical performances were given in Sofia; plays were put on in such lesser provincial cities as Varna, Ruse and Lom; but the greatest theatrical center of the early post-liberation period was Plovdiv, which boasted a building pretentiously termed the "Luxemburg International Theater". Plays were first staged there in 1881. During the years 1883-1885 there existed a "Rumelian Theatrical Troupe", which was dismantled along with Eastern Rumelia itself after the Union of 1885. Aside from Vojnikov's group, the most important theatrical troupe extant before the founding of Sofia's National Theater was *Selza i smjax* (Tears and Laughter). Begun in the capital in 1892, *Selza i smjax* formed the backbone of the fledgling Bulgarian theater in the years bracketing the turn of the century, staging both whatever native plays then existed and what it could handle from the international repertoire.

The Bulgarian stage struck out upon an independent path only after the National Theater's founding. Begun under the direction of Ilija Milarov, who had headed *Selza i smjax* since 1903, in 1908-1909 the theater's fortunes were entrusted to Penčo Slavejkov, the one responsible for organizing it and formulating the principles upon which it later operated. Among the directors in subsequent years were Božan Angelov (1909-1911) and Anton Strašimirov's brother, Dimitar Strašimirov (1916-1918). The post of *dramaturg* (artistic director) was held by Javorov from 1908 to 1912. As few Bulgarians had any experience in staging plays, the theater imported its early stage directors (*režis'ori*) from abroad (Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Russia), which was not the most ideal of situations. This and other difficulties were early singled out by Penčo Slavejkov in his article "Nacionalen teatăr" (National Theater), written around the time he left the directorship. Slavejkov commented

on the thinness of the native repertory. Begun by Vojnikov and Drumev, the national tradition had passed into Vazov's keeping, but to Slavejkov's mind this was scant improvement, since his plays lacked even "ordinary common sense". Since there were so few Bulgarian plays, Slavejkov wanted foreign plays to be well translated into Bulgarian. The stage director, he continued, should be a strong personality. Even if he were otherwise suitable, though, a foreign stage director could not be expected to see that the theater discharged one of its prime responsibilities, that of setting a standard for spoken literary Bulgarian. Finally, the theater should be autonomous; if it were subsidized at all the government should be permitted no more than a veto power over it. All these suggestions of Slavejkov's were sensible and could be supported even by those who did not sympathize with his ultimate vision of the National Theater as a "higher cultural institution, like a temple in which one performs a liturgy with the Bulgarian language and through it manifests in artistic forms and images our creative might and our consciousness of life". The National Theater never became anything so exalted as this, but from its founding to the present it has served as the spiritual home for the entire Bulgarian theater.

The years during which the National Theater was getting its start witnessed a renaissance of native Bulgarian playwriting. Vazov was again the most important playwright over this period. He had responded to the demand for new plays during his Plovdiv years with such minor efforts as *Mixalaki Čorbadži* (1882) and *Ruska* (1883), but he began to write seriously for the theater only in the 1890s. In 1894 he adapted his novelette "Nemili-nedragi" for the stage under the title *Xəšove* (the name for Bulgarian revolutionaries living in Rumania). The play is done in several loosely connected scenes picturing the lot of the impoverished revolutionaries, the conflicts between them and the wealthy Bulgarian *émigrés* settled in Rumania who contributed to the revolutionary cause only grudgingly, the delirious welcome given visiting Russian soldiers by the Bulgarians. Though *Xəšove* was a throwback to the patriotic works of Vazov's early period and in its naiveté can be fully appreciated by native Bulgarians alone, it is yet a staple of the repertory.

In the early 1900s Vazov's plays were of a piece with his short stories containing satirical attacks on the blatant careerism so prevalent in Bulgarian society. The comedies *Vestnikar li?* (Is He a Journalist?, 1900) and *Službogonci* (Jobseekers, 1903) are typical products of the period. In *Službogonci*, for instance, the hero Baltov, a government minister, spends all his time fending off petitioners who would like to avoid work by

obtaining a government sinecure. At the end he is notified of his dismissal from his post and is immensely relieved to be freed from wearisome supplicants.

After the opening of the National Theater Vazov intensified his theatrical efforts, writing five plays in six years. To be sure, three of them were simple adaptations of prose works of his. *Pod igoto* and *Kazalarskata carica* were based upon the novels of the same name and described events of the recent past, but the remaining plays reflected his preoccupation with medieval history: *Kam propast* (Toward the Precipice, adapted from the novel *Ivan Aleksandar*), *Borislav* (1909) and *Ivajlo* (1913). *Borislav* is set in the years around 1237 and *Ivajlo* pictures the peasant revolutionary and usurper of the later 1270s. Vazov's brand of patriotic historical drama apparently suited the public's taste: between 1907 and 1912 his plays were presented a total of 154 times, so that he was by far the most popular playwright at the National Theater. His nearest rival was Shakespeare, with 66 performances.

Though other playwrights could not compete with Vazov in popular appeal, the work of some of them was plainly more inventive than were his conventional historical dramas. Petko Todorov was most prominent among the more original playwrights, for his plays utilizing folklore motifs mingled the fantastic with the realistic in intriguing ways. Todorov's first important play was *Zidari* (The Builders, written in 1899, published in 1902). Taking the old popular tradition that a large structure's stability could be guaranteed by the cruel expedient of walling up a human sacrifice within it, Todorov devised a complex plot in which love rivalries lead to the enticing of a beautiful girl to the construction site of a church so that she may be murdered and immured there and the building successfully completed. The church is indeed finished on schedule, but the local population then avoids it studiously because of the tragedy associated with it, and the man most directly responsible for the girl's death commits suicide. *Zidari* was followed by several other plays employing folk motifs: *Samodiva* (The Woodsprite, 1903), *Straxil strašen xajdutin* (Straxil the Terrible Xajdutin, 1903), *Nevjasta Borjana* (Young Wife Borjana, 1907), and *Zmejova svatba* (Zmej's Wedding, 1910). *Zmejova svatba* is of particular interest as an experiment in interweaving the fantastic with the realistic. The heroine Cena feels oppressed by her parents and isolated from her fellow peasants. Village gossip has it that she is drawn to Zmej, a folk personage who specializes in abducting young women through enchantments and who has reportedly been seen riding a green horse in the vicinity of Cena's house. At the end of the

first act, when Cena is alone, she is approached by Zmej, who seems a very ordinary person. Zmej persuades Cena to accompany him to his home in a forest cave. In the second act Cena, after spending the night in Zmej's cave, is uncertain about remaining with him and prepares to leave. Zmej even gives her directions for returning home, but at the last moment, much to Zmej's astonishment, she changes her mind and resolves to join her life to his. But their idyll is destroyed when all the villagers appear before the cave to demand the girl's return and disregard Cena's declaration that she wishes to remain with Zmej voluntarily. One of her brothers attacks Zmej with a knife and unintentionally stabs Cena fatally when she intervenes to protect him. At the end Zmej drives the crowd away from his cave with curses and retires to mourn over the corpse of his beloved.

Although modelled on a fantastic folk personage, Zmej in Todorov's play boasts few preternatural powers. Aside from his odd habit of living in a cave, he seems like any commonplace young man, and not a particularly aggressive one at that. The villagers do not fear him. A brief passage in which Todorov describes how Cena's heart throbs with terror at the thought that perhaps her lover has done away with girls in the past is unsuccessful, for the reader can hardly believe such a thing of the good-hearted Zmej. In sum, the psychology of the play's characters is almost entirely realistic even if its setting is semi-fantastic.

Aside from the folklore dramas for which he is famed, Petko Todorov wrote one social drama, *Pervite* (The First, first published 1907, reworked 1912). *Pervite* paints in stark tones the conflict between the common people, who seek equality and justice, and the village *čorbadžii* who wield economic and political power. Intellectual leadership is provided to the popular forces by the teacher Dimitar. The future is presaged by Milka, the daughter of the main *čorbadžija*, when she leaves her family to join her lot with Dimitar's. As the play ends the ruling class realizes that the period of its hegemony is drawing to a close. Dimitar and his allies are the "first" of those who will eventually construct a new order. In emphasizing the class conflict here Todorov harked back to his first play, *Zidari*, and thus apparently was reverting to his youthful interests, but the wars and his illness prevented possible further development in this direction.

Social conflicts as well as family and personal tensions underlie Anton Strašimirov's best dramas and Javorov's two plays. Strašimirov's *Vampir* was set amid what the author considered the stifling moral darkness of life in rural Bulgaria. The cast of characters includes the attractive girl Vela, her overbearing mother Malama, Želju (the mayor's

son, who is having an affair with Vela), and Malama's stable-man, the coarse and repellent Dinko. Malama, who hates Želju and his entire family, prevents Vela from marrying him by forcing her to become Dinko's wife, but Vela and Želju nevertheless continue their relationship. Dinko, aware of his wife's infidelity, disappears. Before long the rumor spreads that he has been killed; bones supposedly his are found and buried. In fact, though, Dinko is quite alive. He reappears with a group of bandits, kills Želju, would do the same to Malama except that she is too strong for him, and kidnaps Vela, who ends by losing her mind. Although its plot was overdone, *Vampir* still impressed viewers as a concentrate of the tragedies which might occur in the unenlightened rural *milieu*. These tragedies arose from such emotions as Malama's unreasoning hatred of Želju which led her to compel her own daughter to marry a servant, the selfish jealousy of Dinko, and Želju's vanity. The play has scarcely any attractive characters, and the *milieu* taken as a whole is utterly repulsive.

The second play by Strašimirov to have survived in the repertory is *Svekərva*. In general atmosphere the play is similar to *Vampir*, except that the action takes place in the city. In a preface Strašimirov remarked on the power which women, and especially mothers-in-law, had theretofore exercised in the Bulgarian family, offering the work in support of his view that Bulgarian society had long been a matriarchal one, though this was no longer true, he thought. In *Svekərva* the mother-in-law almost manages to destroy her son's marriage through her constant meddling. But since she is not at bottom a tyrant, when she realizes the damage she has wrought she takes steps to right the situation. All concerned come to see that the mother-in-law has overstepped the limits of her power and the play ends happily. *Svekərva* is now ranked as one of the best Bulgarian comedies of morals.

Although certain of Strašimirov's and Todorov's plays were outstanding, genuine pride of place as a playwright in this period belongs to Pejo Javorov, with his two works *V polite na Vitoša* (1911) and *Kogato grām udari — kak exoto zaglaxva* (1912). Javorov was a disciple — though not an imitator — of Anton Čexov and Henrik Ibsen. Both his plays revolve around tragedies which were simultaneously personal and universal.

V polite na Vitoša exhibits a striking interplay of literary catharsis and clairvoyance. The poet had begun work on it by November of 1910, for in that month he wrote to Dr. Kræstev and Penčo Slavejkov that he was laboring over a piece which had emerged "from the secret places of

[his] soul, ... worked out to the last detail". He wrote feverishly, as if in a nightmare, every night from ten until four or five in the morning, never ridding himself of the feeling that someone was dictating the whole thing to him.

The play's plot and characters display numerous points of contact with Javorov's own career. The heroine's name is Mila, practically the same as Mina (Todorova). The hero, Xristoforov, is an idealist active in politics who at one point in the past has been a socialist, as Javorov was, and who is greatly concerned with the problem of forming a national culture in a small country. Xristoforov has his political and journalistic activities to occupy him, but Mila's life is totally filled by her love for him. As she says to him at one point, "while you were talking, I felt ... like a thirsty man who is bending over a stream and drinking but even so is still burning with thirst". Again, though Mila dreads death, she tells her lover early in the play that if he should die before her she would then love death because it would possess him. Tragedy is all too liable to ensue where such powerful passions are engaged, and in fact, when Mila's brother objects to any match between her and Xristoforov (the two men are at political loggerheads), she runs from the house and — whether intentionally or not is unclear — throws herself under a streetcar. In the last act Xristoforov is in a euphoric mood until he is informed of his beloved's mortal injury. Rushing to her bedside, he tries desperately but unsuccessfully to communicate with her as she nears the end. Finally, to the accompaniment of melodramatic thunder from a storm, he commits suicide at her bedside so that she will not fear to follow him. The next instant she expires, as the sun breaks through the clouds.

V polite na Vitoša is effectively constructed and written in some of Javorov's tightest prose. The plot line is clear and the characters believable once the reader grants the possibility of such devouring passion as that exhibited by Mila and Xristoforov in fiction and Lora and Javorov in real life. Social and political commentary is present in suitable proportions and Javorov's tact does not ordinarily desert him, though the finale is a sad exception to this statement.

The conclusion of *V polite na Vitoša* foreshadowed with astonishing accuracy the end of Javorov's affair with Lora. In March of 1912 Javorov wrote Dr. Krāstev a letter criticizing an attempt by the critic Bojan Penev to equate him with Xristoforov. It was true, Javorov said, that they had much in common, but he (Javorov) had survived the tragedy of his beloved's death whereas Xristoforov had not. "I have buried [Xristoforov]", Javorov went on with pathetic optimism, "together with the

man I have buried within myself. Now I am quite different, strong, ready for the fight, in order to demonstrate that I can achieve something." In 1914 he took his own life.

The lesser, though later, of Javorov's two plays, *Kogato grām udari*, was begun under the direct inspiration of Čexov's *Djadja Vanja* (Uncle Vanja), for Javorov first conceived the notion of writing a family drama after reviewing the Russian play in 1908. Originally to have been titled *Pod starija dāb* (Under the Old Oak), the piece was to have chronicled the destruction of an apparently normal, happy family through the exposure of a dread secret suppressed for some twenty years. The hideous secret of Javorov's play is that a young officer named Vitanov, when forced to seek temporary refuge in the house of his friend Popovič for political reasons, seduced his wife Bistra and gave her a son, Danail, after she had long been unable to conceive by her husband. Popovič has considered Danail his own for twenty years at the point when the play begins with Vitanov's return from Russian exile. The gradual disclosure of the secret of Danail's birth, accomplished in the best tradition of the psychological drama, causes the Popovič family to disintegrate. Javorov added to *Kogato grām udari* a separately titled epilogue, *Kak exoto zaglaxva*. Here Bistra, Danail, his wife Olga, Vitanov and a lieutenant named Drumev, a childhood friend of Danail's, gather at the grave of Popovič, who has died a lonely death. Drumev unexpectedly declares his passion for Olga and she yields to him. Thus the original situation which had engendered the Popovič family tragedy is repeated almost exactly. The echo is a reprise of the thunderclap.

At the heart of both parts of *Kogato grām udari* as well as of *V polite na Vitoša* lies an obsessive sexual passion, the psychological ramifications of which Javorov worked out in dramatic action. Through these plays Javorov established his reputation as the most skilful psychological dramatist in Bulgarian literature.

In the period from roughly 1900 to 1913, with such playwrights as Vazov, Strašimirov, Todorov and Javorov producing actively, Bulgarian drama attained a pinnacle which has never been matched since.

V

FROM WAR TO WAR (1917-1944)

The span of some twenty-five years between Bulgaria's defeats in the First and Second World Wars was a time of political unrest, particularly in the early years, but also of notable literary productivity. Under the youthful Czar Boris (1894-1943), who ascended the throne after his father's abdication in 1919, the Bulgarian state somehow weathered the internal political crisis caused by the First World War and the formalization of its military disgrace by the treaty of Neuilly in 1919. The communists organized several transport and general strikes at that time, but by May 1920 the situation had been stabilized sufficiently to permit Aleksandar Stambolijski's peasant party to withdraw from a coalition arrangement and establish a government based on the premise that Bulgaria could be ruled by a party oriented toward the peasantry alone. Stambolijski introduced several needed changes, for example the Agrarian Reform Act of May 1920, and pursued a sensible foreign policy. He admitted the remnants of General Vrangeli's White army, driven from Russia after its unsuccessful attempt to unseat the Bolsheviks. Many of these Russians settled in Bulgaria and formed their own organizations there. In order to quell internal political opposition Stambolijski relied primarily upon extra-governmental groupings called the "Orange Guard" and secondarily upon the communists. By 1923 he realized that the communists were most interested in seizing power themselves and turned against them. His non-communist enemies seized this opportunity to stage a military *coup* on 9 June, 1923. The *coup* was relatively bloodless initially, but when Stambolijski attempted a counterattack he was captured on 14 June and brutally murdered.

All during the June events the communists did nothing to help their former ally. But when Moscow learned of the Bulgarian occurrences it issued urgent instructions for some sort of armed resistance. Therefore in August the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to organize an uprising in conjunction with Stambolijski's Agrarian Union even though the

suitable time for such a move had long since passed. The result was the abortive September uprising of 1923, which has remained in popular political folklore as a central event in Bulgarian revolutionary history even though it was sporadic (the large cities did not rise) and the government put it down without much trouble.

The political situation remained fluid for some time after the September uprising. The Bulgarian Communist Party and the Agrarian Union (especially its left wing) continued to collaborate and won almost one-third of the vote between them in the November 1923 parliamentary elections. In May of 1924 the Communist Party under the leadership of its more militant elements (its founder, Dimitar Blagoev, had died in that same month; Vasil Kolarov and Georgi Dimitrov had fled to the Soviet Union after the September uprising) resolved to pursue a policy of violence tailored to incite another rebellion. This gave the government an excuse to engage in outright terrorism in February and March of 1925, when the political opposition was gunned down on the streets by hired assassins. The communists retaliated with terror of their own: the most notable of their projects was the bombing of the Sveta Nedelja cathedral in Sofia at a time when numbers of high government officials were attending a funeral there. The government replied with further repressions in April and May, and some writers and political activists with known communist sympathies vanished at that time. These draconic tactics discredited the government enough to bring it down, but they also laid the groundwork for a political stability which had been lacking for some time previously and which would never again be seriously threatened until September of 1944. It is true that the world depression which began in 1929 had an unsettling effect upon Bulgaria's political equilibrium, but even so the situation never became so acute as it had been in 1923-1925. In 1931 a 'bloc' of parties assumed the reins of government but felt too unsure of itself to press any daring initiatives. When the bloc began to disintegrate, another coup was staged on 19 May, 1934 by the so-called 'Zveno' group of military officers. The new regime suppressed the parliament and all political parties; in foreign policy it oriented itself toward France and Yugoslavia, while at the same time extending diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. In 1935, however, the Czar ousted the 19 May government and instituted a personal regime which endured down to his death in 1943.

In the years before the Second World War Bulgaria attempted to stay clear of great power conflicts, and announced its neutrality after the German attack on Poland in 1939. In 1940 a new government was

formed under the art historian Bogdan Filov, who supported the country's neutralist policies. German pressure was intensified, however, and on 1 March, 1941 Bulgaria, having no genuine choice in the matter, officially allied itself with Germany. German troops entered its territory the following day. During the Second World War proper Bulgaria played a relatively passive role, though it supplied troops for the occupation of Thrace and Macedonia, which it considered legitimately its own, as well as a portion of Serbia. There had never been much antisemitism in Bulgaria, and only a few Bulgarian Jews suffered during the war. Bulgaria itself underwent little damage except for that inflicted by some pointless allied raids on Sofia in 1944. When the conflict began to go badly for the Axis powers, several successive governments were formed for the purpose of surrendering to the Anglo-American allies rather than to the Soviet Union, upon which in fact Bulgaria had never declared war. All such negotiations could only fail, however, since the western powers had by then decided that the Soviet Union should have Eastern Europe as its sphere of influence. On 26 August, 1944 Bulgaria proclaimed its neutrality. Soviet troops reached Bulgarian borders on 31 August, after Rumania's capitulation, at which point the Soviet Union declared war upon Bulgaria and invaded the country.

The direct consequence of the Soviet invasion was the *coup* of 9 September, 1944. Czar Boris had died suddenly and mysteriously after a trip to Poland in 1943, and his young son Simeon could furnish no effective opposition to a communist takeover. After a transitional period of coalition government between the communists and carefully chosen members of other parties, Bulgaria was formally declared a 'People's Republic' in September of 1946. The first openly communist government was headed by Georgi Dimitrov, who did not return to his native land from the Soviet Union until November 1945. Czar Simeon was exiled, and after further transitional upheavals a communist regime emerged in firm control of the country.

Since 1944 marks a major watershed in Bulgarian history — the end of the old order — and the communist era in literature and culture is still developing today, I shall not attempt to outline the history of Bulgarian literature since that date except to comment on certain individual authors prominent in the interwar years who continued to work after 1944. Suffice it to note here that Bulgarian literature from about 1946 to the end of 1956 was cast in the standard Soviet mold of Socialist Realism. Since 1956 some fresh currents have appeared, but we are still chronologically too close to these years to write an objective account of them.

Bulgarian literature and culture between the wars changed with political developments. In the years immediately following the First World War writers struggled to regain their feet. Works describing war experiences were prominent then. The years from about 1919 to 1925 may be termed the age of ideology *par excellence* in Bulgarian literature, for this period witnessed all manner of 'isms', from estheticism and symbolism on the right through expressionism and modernism to communism on the left. The unsettled political situation of the 1920s was mirrored in the flux of literary life, with writers forming group after group, founding periodicals, deserting symbolism for communism, abandoning communism for a freer art, and so forth. In time the ideological fever of the 1920s subsided. Some communists perished during the political terror of 1925, and symbolism ceased to exist as a coherent literary movement. There remained the comparatively non-ideological approach characteristic of the journal *Zlatorog* (Golden Horn), which, under the editorship of the critic Vladimir Vasilev, from 1920 to 1944 published nearly all the best writers in Bulgaria — the exceptions were mostly individuals who retained some strong ideological commitment. In general the period from the late 1920s to the early 1940s was one of ideological indifference. Certainly in *Zlatorog* one discovers few traces of either communist or fascist ideology. Even during the war, when Bulgaria was officially allied with Nazi Germany, there appeared a strikingly small number of literary or cultural works promoting the National Socialist philosophy. And this is true even though, unlike the Soviet Union, where extremely few scholarly books were published during the war, Bulgaria saw a burst of scholarly and cultural activity in the early 1940s.

During the interwar period lyric poetry attracted the best talents in the national literary life. Although Bulgaria boasted few outstanding poets deserving of recognition beyond her borders, she had many of considerable technical competence who had something to say. The ascendancy of the lyric poem in Bulgarian literature was a logical result of the Bulgarian propensity to produce little. An extreme instance of the unprolific poet in this period is Nikolaj Liliev: he lived a long life, but his total poetic output may be collected in a single volume of medium size.

The only genres rivalling lyric poetry in popularity between the wars were the brief prose forms, i.e. the short story and the sketch. Artistic prose became more important than it had been before the First World War, when there was a noticeable preponderance of poetry over prose. And if before 1914 there appeared few novels save Vazov's worth remembering now, in the interwar period more and better novels began

to be written. On the debit side, the drama went downhill despite the fact that the period could boast one major playwright and saw a few other talented authors try their hand at writing for the stage. Nevertheless, even a purely quantitative flowering of literature encouraged literary criticism. Dr. Kræstev was followed by several important critics and literary historians, and there appeared what was by contrast with the turn of the century a veritable swarm of workaday critics and reviewers. In sum, after the First World War Bulgarian literature came of age and developed rapidly in all directions.

The two most outstanding prose-writers of the interwar period were Elin Pelin and Jordan Jovkov. The former — who in the 1890s gave up his prosaic original name Dimităr Ivanov for the pen name Elin Pelin — published his best work in the prewar period, but attained his greatest renown only after the First World War.

The future Elin Pelin (1877-1949) was born in the village of Bajlovo near Sofia. His father was a farmer who had minimal material resources but great spiritual endowment, and whom his son admired. The writer obtained an elementary and secondary education in Sofia, Panagjurište and other cities, but never advanced beyond this and so acquired no broad literary culture. In the 1890s Elin Pelin was temporarily infatuated with socialist ideas, and sympathy for socialist doctrine always remained a component part of his personal outlook, which, however, was not very consistent or clear. In the last years of the 1890s he tried his hand at teaching and also wrote, printing his first stories and poems in 1895-1898 in such organs as *Vojniška sbirka* (Military Miscellany) and *Balgarski pregled*. The stories published in the former journal, one circulated to the military, were pieces set during the War of Liberation and the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885. They were harbingers of the stories he would produce in the course of the First World War.

Not knowing what career to choose, Elin Pelin returned to Bajlovo for roughly two years (1898-1899), during which time he absorbed impressions later to be useful in his writing, and began producing serious works. Among them were such stories as "Vetrenata melnica" (The Windmill) and "Napast Božija" (Divine Plague), which established him as a coming writer. Having thus discovered his vocation, Elin Pelin moved to Sofia in 1899, where he took literary odd jobs to earn a living. He worked for various journals and papers, published humorous short stories, and edited the populist journal *Selska razgovorka* (Rural Con-

versation) in 1902-1903. Then the Minister of Education, Ivan Šišmanov, furnished him a teaching post in Sofia and a position at the National Library. In 1906 this same mentor sent him and Pejo Javorov to Nancy and Paris to learn French and absorb European culture. After Šišmanov left the ministry Elin Pelin was given lesser positions in the library and elsewhere. Over this same period he belonged to the circle gathered about the humorous paper *Balgaran* (a distorted form of the word for 'Bulgarian'), a group which included cartoonist Aleksandar Božinov and actors Sava Ognjanov and Vasil Kirkov. Elin Pelin published a number of light sketches in *Balgaran*.

The primary collections of Elin Pelin's early work were two volumes of *Razkazi* (Stories), the first issued in 1904, the second in 1911. These pieces emphasized the unhappy condition of the peasantry of the 1890s and 1900s to such an extent that Dr. Krăstev dubbed Elin Pelin the "singer of rural misery". Certain of his early studies may be linked with the *bit* (*milieu*) writing of such populists as Mixelaki Georgiev and Todor Vlahkov. Though he was not interested principally in the detailed description of customs and settings and even claimed to oppose *bit* writing, the assertion that Elin Pelin was a *bit* writer had enough truth in it to keep it alive in the public mind. Another major project of the early years was the novelette *Geracite* (The Gerak Family). He wrote it from 1904 to 1909, publishing parts of it in journals and printing it entire in the second volume of the *Razkazi*. Simultaneously Elin Pelin garnered fame as a writer of humorous stories in the distinctive dialect spoken by the *šopi*, the peasants of the writer's native Sofia region. Elin Pelin is one of several prominent Bulgarian writers now associated with specific regions of their country. Even less serious than Elin Pelin's stories in the *šop* dialect were some frivolous sketches originally printed in newspapers and magazines and gathered in the volumes *Pepel ot cigarite mi* (Ashes from My Cigarettes, 1905) and *Ot prozoreca* (From the Window, 1906).

During the war years, and most particularly from 1912 to 1915, Elin Pelin wrote little fiction. He did undertake a trip to Russia in the summer of 1913 for the purpose of sounding out public opinion on Bulgaria after the First Balkan War. He was accompanied there by Prof. Aleksandar Balabanov, who in the 1920s became such a close associate of his that he was jokingly called the "administrator of Elin Pelin's fame". During the First World War Elin Pelin promoted the official patriotic line in several war stories collected in *Kitka za junaka* (A Wreath for the Hero, 1917), a book which was republished in 1942 and made to serve in yet another conflict. The *šop* writer then reverted to form with his 1918 collection

entitled *Pižo i Pendo*, made up primarily of stories in the *šop* dialect written between 1902 and 1908.

After the First World War Elin Pelin attempted to resume more ordinary literary production. From 1921 to 1923 he contributed to Balabanov's literary newspaper *Razvigor* (the name of a certain type of wind), one of *Zlatorog*'s few serious competitors. He attained the apogee of his career in 1922, when he published his second complete novelette, *Zemja* (Land), and celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his literary activity. But the climax was accompanied by a crisis.

Elin Pelin had always favored the brief literary genres. He took nearly five years to complete *Geracite*. Another longish piece, *Nečista sila* (Unclean Power), though printed in part as early as 1909, was never completed. The history of *Zemja*'s creation further illustrates his difficulties with longer works. While the novelette was coming out serially the author simply could not concoct a satisfactory ending for it. Finally the editor of the journal in which it was appearing wearied of his procrastination and stood over him as he wrote the conclusion, practically snatching each page from the desk as it was completed. Though the results were reasonably decent, this method of production *in extremis* was not to Elin Pelin's taste, and after 1922 his writing fell off sharply in quantity. One memoirist recalls that the surest way to anger him in the post-1922 period was to mention literature or the fact that some other author was turning out work, because he simply could not write.

Of course he did not merely sit around for the more than twenty-five years which elapsed before his death. He published a few things for adults, for instance the poems in prose collected in *Černi rozi* (Black Roses) of 1928. But many of these had been written before the war, and a large number of the remainder in 1921. In 1936 he put out two books with little in common. The first, *Pod manastirskata loza* (In the Monastery Arbor), was a gathering of charming little stories — some dating back as far as 1909, others written during the 1920s and 1930s — utilizing legendary subjects from saints' lives. The second, *Az ti toj* (I Thou He), was a group of belletristic *feuilletons*, separately published for the most part in 1933-1934, treating topical subjects. The literary value of these sketches was so minimal that the author later disavowed them, commenting that *Az ti toj* was "not a book at all but a rag of which I myself am ashamed".

Though Elin Pelin penned little for adults after 1922, he contributed much to other areas, particularly children's literature. From 1921 to 1931 he edited one children's magazine and published in others; in addition

he authored larger works designed for the juvenile market such as *Jan Bibijan* and *Jan Bibijan na lunata* (Jan Bibijan on the Moon). Since he could not support himself on his literary income, he obtained extra funds by writing textbooks on the side. He also received a salary as director of the Ivan Vazov Museum, established in 1926 in Vazov's former Sofia home. Elin Pelin retained this position from the beginning until 1 July, 1944, at which point he was pensioned off.

Elin Pelin exhibited some unpleasant personal characteristics during his latter years. He was bitter over the success of his more productive rivals, especially Jordan Jovkov, whom he once publicly accused of having plagiarized *Geracite*. He even envied his old friend and ally, the historian Simeon Radev, who recalled that once when somebody praised Radev's classic *Stroitelite na savremenna Balgarija* (Builders of Modern Bulgaria), saying "This is a book which will remain", Elin Pelin interjected, outwardly jokingly but inwardly seriously, "Remain unsold, you mean?"

All during the 1930s Elin Pelin lived off his accumulated literary capital, mixing with members of the highest political circles and often going hunting for amusement. In 1938 his friends and associates organized a jubilee celebration of his sixtieth birthday and the fortieth anniversary of his literary activity. In 1940, rather to his surprise, he was elected to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. All of this indicates that he was quite at home in prewar Bulgarian society.

This being the case, Elin Pelin might have been expected to encounter difficulties after 1944, but in the event he proved quite adaptable. Thus in December of 1944 he dispatched a letter to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences urging it to purge itself of 'fascist' elements forthwith. He also assisted in the establishment of the communist organization for the very young, as he had had experience in working with juveniles. Such activities as these, enhanced by the halo effect of his turn-of-the-century literary production, when his work could be at least partially interpreted as incorporating principles of 'critical realism', led the new regime to forgive him his former sins and even embrace him with a certain enthusiasm: in 1948 his seventieth birthday was celebrated with fanfare, and yet another jubilee was held for him in April of 1949. He died of heart disease on 3 December, 1949.

After 1944 Elin Pelin did not convert himself into an unquestioning supporter of the new order. He continued to slight adult fiction for the much less politically sensitive area of children's literature. Moreover, when he did discuss the subject of adult literature he sometimes empha-

sized points which sounded a trifle heretical at the time. Thus in a speech of May 1949 to the Union of Writers he spoke at length about his philosophy of creation. The transcript of his remarks, published under the title "Kak piša" (How I Write), contributes much to our understanding of his literary method. In the course of his talk the aging author attacked the brand of socialist realism then standard in Bulgaria, a literature which dealt only with production problems and machines. He rejected the view that one should write always about the external sinews of industry. "If you live in factories," he remarked pointedly,

you will get to know the life of the factory, you will get to know what happens in a factory, but you will not get to know the life of the individual man. You must study life as it is in its free moments, get to know what it is like outside the factory as well, get to know the shock worker not only as a shock worker, but also beyond the factory walls. . . . We write a great deal more about tractors than we do about people, But man is the tractor, and the plow, and everything. Nothing at all happens without man.

Thus did the "humanist of Shopsko", to use Vivian Pinto's phrase, assert his faith in the centrality of the human spirit at a juncture in history when it was not easy to do such a thing. Man had always been at the core of Elin Pelin's literary vision, and he believed strongly that man should continue to occupy this position in all literature which claimed to espouse realism, whether socialist realism or any other kind.

Elin Pelin's own literary method was assuredly realistic. His early stories of peasant life were designed as shocking presentations of the unvarnished truth of existence. In surveying the memoir literature on him scholars discover that his fictional characters were frequently modelled upon his acquaintances, though he was not especially autobiographical in his work. He often received literary inspiration from a genuine occurrence, though perhaps at a remove. A prime example of this is furnished by the history of the creation of *Geracite*. According to the author, the original idea for the novelette occurred to him once when, while hastening to be treated for a painful toothache, he encountered a stranger who told him the purportedly true tale of the disintegration of an entire family. Elin Pelin then elaborated the details, but the nucleus of the story came from somebody else's account of a supposedly true event.

Despite the fact that Elin Pelin's descriptions could be starkly realistic, he did not err in thinking that only the unpleasant is genuine. The citation usually proffered in support of this statement is a passage from a story of 1903, "Kosači" (The Mowers). One of the characters, Blagolaž, begins to tell a fairy tale but is rudely interrupted by a companion, Lazo, who

objects that the fairy tale is entirely concocted, that there is no "truth" in it. Blagolaž eloquently defends his artistic rights, arguing that the "truth" might consist of a description of "uncle Todor's ragged pants" or of mowers setting out on their weary way to Thrace, but who cares about this sort of truth? The people themselves have invented fantastic fairytales so that the wondrous might seem to be the "truth" to them, so that they might forget everyday reality at least temporarily. In practice Elin Pelin never abandoned himself entirely to fantasy in his adult writing, but the lyrical and the poetic occupied a prominent place in it. Indeed he composed some poetry, although it is little remembered. The lyric impulse also found an outlet in his prose poems, in one of which — "Pogledi" (Glances) — he remarks that *if* he were a poet he would write short songs, not about nature, the forests, the mountains, morning or evening, but rather about a human being's youth, which he fails to appreciate until it is past. Such songs, he goes on, he would entitle "Pogledi", to honor the glances of fair maidens. In other prose poems from *Černi rozi* (they resemble the prose poems of Ivan Turgenev, one of the greatest stylists in Russian literature, who also wrote poems in his youth) the author indulged in philosophical ruminations. In "Vəprosi" (Questions) he describes his love for all living things, even the most insignificant animals and insects. But then he sounds a jarring note by analyzing his bloodthirstiness: he is a hunter, he has killed birds at the height of their mating passion, wounded them and watched them die — and he feels no remorse. He can explain this split in his character only by postulating something of the "beast" in every man's soul.

There is a substantial dose of the unreal in the 'fables', to use the author's term, gathered in *Pod manastirskata loza*. In a small foreword the author recalls the many pleasant hours he has spent in conversation with the abbot of the monastery, Father Sisoj, mulling over the eternal questions of "God, the world, the vanity of life and the mystery of death". The stories in *Pod manastirskata loza* are narrated by Father Sisoj. One of the most moving among them is "Očite na Sveti Spiridon" (The Eyes of St. Spiridon). Spiridon, a youth of unblemished chastity, works as a cobbler. In order to guard against sexual temptation he always has his female clients leave their footprints in a box of sand from which he then takes their measurements. One day a brazen temptress comes to his shop and insists that he measure her foot directly. As Spiridon complies he realizes that he is in imminent danger of being overwhelmed by passion and quickly gouges out his eyes, thinking that in this way he can eliminate temptation. In the end, however, he discovers that the loss of his physical

eyes does not eliminate his trials. There rise before him all sorts of visions, in particular the memory of the temptress, whom he cannot expunge from his mind. In despair when it seems he will be as fiercely buffeted by evil as ever even though he has done everything he can to avoid it, he prays to God for a sign. When he arises from his knees, his eyes have been restored to him, as a mark that he must not negate the beauties of the physical world which God has created.

Despite its legendary tinge, "Očite na Sveti Spiridon" has a solidly realistic foundation, as is plain from the description of St. Spiridon's psychological difficulties, and especially the circumstance that his troubles are caused by a very earthly sexual passion. It is also sexual desire which — though in a crude form — motivates the plot of *Nečista sila* and recurs repeatedly in Elin Pelin's other short stories and novels. In *Nečista sila* the heroine manages, by utilizing her physical charms and particularly by displaying her ample breasts, to befog the minds of her admirers by arousing their lust, in order to deceive and exploit them. In his use of unadorned sensuality Elin Pelin resembles lesser prose-writers of the interwar years like Georgi Rajčev.

Social problems also drew Elin Pelin's attention, especially in his earliest and latest periods. We may consider "Čovekət, za kogoto vsički se grižat" (The Man Everybody Is Concerned About) as almost a random example of the satirical sketches of the 1930s comprising *Az ti toj*. The sketch describes an official committee convened to devise solutions for certain ill-defined social problems. The committee members avoid the real questions, preferring instead to deal with such matters as setting the time for their next meeting. One day a peasant, representing the class for whose benefit all these bureaucrats are supposed to be working, stumbles in by accident and is seized upon as a priceless specimen by the officials, who have never seen one before. He eventually dies in captivity because the committee neglects to feed him. If the committee could not take care of just one peasant, the author asks by implication, how could it possibly make decisions affecting the bulk of the country's population?

Though later on Elin Pelin preferred to forget works like "Čovekət, za kogoto vsički se grižat", he had less reason to be ashamed of the stories dating from his youthful, populist period. Representative of these sketches is "Napast Božija", set in a drought-ridden village besieged by sickness. The local priest interprets the plague as a sign of God's wrath and exhorts the population to repent of their sins. But an intelligent member of the younger generation realizes that the infection is surely spread from a polluted well used by the entire village. The priest anathematizes him for

this blasphemous notion, but with the aid of some supporters the hero closes off the well and prevents people from drinking from it. When the plague subsequently subsides, the people realize that the priest has grossly deceived them. The atmosphere at story's end is one of disconsolate impotence.

Other passions are at the root of some intrigues described by Elin Pelin. In "Ljubov" (Love) pride of social position impels a priest to forbid his daughter to marry a hired hand whom she loves, and the impetuous girl commits suicide. She knows a purity and intensity of passion which her parents' hearts had evidently never felt. In "Sälza Mladenova" (a girl's name) the heroine, who is engaged to be married, eagerly looks forward to an impressive wedding until she is informed by her future in-laws that this would be a waste of money. After overhearing a conversation in which her fiancé participates, she realizes even more clearly how central financial considerations will be to her marriage. Broken and disgusted by this revelation of her future husband's character, she weeps bitter tears but can discern no honorable way out of her predicament. An idealistic girl's illusions have been smashed through contact with unlovely reality.

Elin Pelin's novelettes treat certain less admirable facets of human psychology in detail. *Geracite* describes the gradual descent of the wealthy landowner Jordan Gerak from the apogee of wealth, power and influence which he had attained in his prime, the splitting apart of his sons and their wives, the chasms of selfishness and indifference which separate them all. At the end the old man is so totally ignored by his children that when he quietly dies one day while lying in the sun nobody discovers his passing until his corpse has turned quite cold. *Zemja* is a horrifying account of an individual's moral corruption stemming from greed for land. The hero, Enjo, is obsessed by a driving ambition to acquire the parcels of land needed to fill out his farm. As his brother owns one piece of land which cuts into his holdings, Enjo comes to regard him as an enemy. One day, his mind clouded by alcohol, Enjo assaults his brother with murderous intent and leaves him for dead, arranging things so that he appears to have been killed accidentally. His brother survives, but in the form of a human vegetable incapable of speaking or caring for himself. Enjo comprehends the enormity of his crime, sells off his property and lives out his life almost in poverty. He dies in the winter when the soil is frozen so hard it will not receive him. At the end his corpse catches fire as it lies with a candle in the church and is thoroughly scorched.

The author's perspective in *Geracite* and *Zemja*, as in many of his short

stories, is sufficiently cheerless to justify placing Elin Pelin in the pessimistic camp of Bulgarian letters. His pessimism is shallower than that of a Mixajlovski or a Javorov because it is generally devoid of any metaphysical foundation, but it remains pessimism nevertheless. He saw little hope for the improvement of a corrupt world.

The second great master of Bulgarian prose between the wars, Jordan Jovkov (1880-1937), was a man of quite a different mold. His outlook was fundamentally optimistic, and the keynote of his writing, as critics never weary of pointing out, was the wish to see the resolution of conflicts in Bulgarian society. Though he could describe scenes fully as ghastly as any Elin Pelin created, Jovkov felt that the world was nonetheless good. Those who preached doctrines of class warfare or analogous viewpoints could not stomach Jovkov; he was rather an author for those who valued a smoothly functioning society. He was also a fine stylist. His prose is so closely wrought that the unattentive reader may miss the whole point of a short story of his because he has skipped over a detail tucked away in half a sentence, but when read carefully Jovkov is one of the most rewarding of Bulgarian writers.

Jovkov was born in November of 1880 in the village of Žeravna, Sliven district. He received his elementary education in his native and other villages; then he attended the *gymnasium* in Sofia. In 1902 he entered a military academy in Knjaževo, a village near the capital, and stayed there for two years, but army life did not appeal to so mild a man. Consequently he abandoned the military and enrolled as a desultory law student at Sofia University, but soon left to teach in various villages in Dobruža, the region of the country with which his name is now inextricably linked. It was during this footloose time that he began to publish, initially some lyric poems of 1905 which he later omitted from his collected works, and a few short stories which he likewise considered substandard afterwards. His only prewar story to endure was "Ovčarova žalba" (The Shepherd's Complaint), whose subheading "Staroplaninska legenda" (A Balkan Legend) supplied him with the idea for his later collection *Staroplaninski legendi*.

Following his provincial period Jovkov moved to Sofia, where he joined a group of young writers and intellectuals, including Georgi Rajčev, Konstantin Konstantinov and others, who would make their marks in Bulgarian literature after the First World War. Jovkov attended the group's informal gatherings at a Sofia coffee house which was a great intellectual center in the capital at that time, and in fact remained a denizen of coffee houses and restaurants the rest of his life. A taciturn individual, Jovkov usually said little at such gatherings, though once he

got started he could tell a better story than most. But ordinarily he preferred to sit in silence, listening to others converse. The spoken word was not his favorite medium.

Jovkov's personality was highly self-contained. He revered the established virtues and verities, which is always easier if one is independent and alone. A similar outlook informed his married life. He held that a wife should be content to be homemaker and mother and not demand equality with her husband. It took him some time to find a person who answered to this requirement, but when he did get married, at the age of thirty-eight in 1918, it was to a woman who lived solely through and in him, who considered that her one aim in life was to see that her husband was comfortable, nurse him in his illnesses, and make it easier for him to write.

After the First Balkan War Jovkov was employed as an editor and librarian at the ministry of foreign affairs. Though he worked most of his life for this ministry, he was thoroughly unfitted for it, as he was not interested in foreign cultures: one cannot imagine his having written anything like travel sketches about trips abroad. During the First World War he served first at the front, then on the editorial staff of *Voenni izvestija* (Military News). At this time he wrote some of the war stories which are an important segment of his literary legacy. When he published two volumes of them under the simple title *Razkazi* (Stories) in 1917 and 1918, their high quality attracted official notice. After the vicissitudes of the wars and then his marriage, in 1919 Jovkov found himself in Varna with no means of material support. When his situation was no better by the following year, a friend interceded with the ministry of foreign affairs and obtained for him an appointment as press *attaché* at the Bulgarian Legation in Bucharest. Bucharest lies in the southern part of Rumania, close to the Bulgarian border, but though Jovkov lived there from 1920 to 1927 he never adjusted to life in a foreign city. In 1927 he was transferred back to Sofia, where he occupied a modest position at the ministry of foreign affairs until his untimely death in 1937.

Jovkov's literary career was more interesting than his personal life during these years. After issuing the novelette *Žetvarjat* (The Harvester) in 1920, in the middle of the decade he offered the public three major collections of short stories: *Posledna radost* (Last Joy, 1926), *Staroplaninski legendi* (Balkan Legends, 1927), and *Večeri v antimovskija xan* (Evenings at the Antimovo Inn, 1927). The stories in these three collections were of such a caliber that in 1929, upon the recommendation of the chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Jovkov was awarded the

Kiril and Metodij prize for literature. Jovkov all along received due recognition and encouragement from the scholarly and intellectual establishment.

By the beginning of the 1930s Jovkov was firmly established as an author, but he did not for this reason modify his modest way of life. He continued to work at the ministry. He sat around a great deal in Sofia coffee houses, especially the "Belgarija", claiming that they were his "second study" in which he carried on creative work and that life without them was inconceivable for him. In the 1930s, though Jovkov continued to write short stories, this genre's relative importance in his production declined. For one thing, he turned to the theretofore untouched area of the drama, composing four plays: *Albena* (1930), *Borjana* (1932), *Milionerat* (The Millionaire, 1932), and *Obiknoven čovek* (An Ordinary Person, 1936). The novel also claimed a portion of Jovkov's attention in the 1930s. *Žetvarjat*, labeled a *povest* (novelette), had been his longest work of the 1920s, though he had written some lengthy short stories, such as "Posledna radost". In 1930 he printed *Žetvarjat* in a second, revised edition; in 1934 he came out with his longest and best-known novel, *Čiflikat kraj granicata* (The Farmstead at the Frontier), a narrative set amid the events of the September uprising of 1923. Beyond that, by the time of his death he had composed portions of an amusing satirical work entitled *Priključenijata na Gorolomov* (Gorolomov's Adventures), a variant on the picaresque novel in which the hero encounters sundry mishaps and adventures in Bulgarian villages.

For all his efforts in the novel and the drama, Jovkov by no means abandoned the short story in the 1930s. A third volume of *Razkazi* appeared in 1932, followed by two other collections: *Žensko sërce* (A Woman's Heart, 1935) and *Ako možexa da govorjat* (If They Could Speak, 1936: animal stories).

At the same time Jovkov's health worsened. Suffering from gall bladder attacks, in the fall of 1937 he traveled to the spa of Xisara, only to suffer a severe attack there. Though quickly removed to a hospital in Plovdiv, he died on 15 October, 1937. His death was an unexpected blow for Bulgarian literary society and occasioned widespread mourning. Collections of articles and poems in his memory were published.

Until very recently Jovkov did not fare nearly so well as Elin Pelin in Bulgarian scholarship. The reason for this lies primarily in his "conciliatory" view of the life he described, his consistent efforts to blunt points of conflict rather than have them develop into sharp clashes and clear-cut tragedies. Jovkov also had no taste for literature with a social purpose.

We know a great deal about the way Jovkov worked thanks to his Boswell, the psychologist Spiridon Kazandžiev, who has published detailed notes on his conversations with Jovkov. A study of this and other sources shows that in his artistic approach Jovkov was what may be termed a 'visionary realist': that is, though his basic method was realistic, he ordinarily did not describe things which he had observed recently and directly. It was not essential, he argued, to maintain daily contact with "life" in order to be a successful realistic writer. If the mind and the imagination of the writer seemingly lolling in a coffee house were in fact engaged, then he was quite as industrious as he might be expected to be. Jovkov claimed that all the material he required for his writing had been stored up thirty years before during his *Wanderjahre*. All he had to do in the 1930s was summon up the past in his evidently extraordinarily vivid memory to obtain sufficient impressions for his work. If memory failed him, dreams sometimes came to his aid. Though once or twice he thought of creating a historical novel, he never followed through on such a project because he could write well only about that which he had experienced. He was incapable of evoking the spirit of times beyond his direct knowledge.

Jovkov usually worked at a remove in space as well as time, as may be illustrated by his attitude toward Dobrudža. After the Second Balkan War Dobrudža was almost constantly in Rumanian hands, so that Jovkov felt like an exile in his native land. Jovkov apparently never returned to Dobrudža after the 1913 war. This was not because he could not — after all he spent several years as a diplomat in Rumania — but because he was afraid to. In the 1930s he feared that if he revisited the area and discovered that it had changed to a greater extent than his spirit could tolerate, the shock might be disastrous for his art. It would be like awakening from a dream: all his visions would vanish irretrievably. Under the circumstances, he thought, the safest thing to do was to avoid the actual reality of the moment and thus escape what could have been a psychologically crippling disillusionment. It was for similar reasons that once when working on a story in which the Czar of Bulgaria figured, Jovkov deliberately let slip an opportunity to speak to him lest the "whole illusion [created in his mind] be destroyed by the living man, by his voice, by his conversation". In like manner he did not care to meet famous writers. He had revered authors enormously in his earlier years and later complained whenever he was not accorded analogous honor. He is reported to have fallen into an ecstatic trance when once he saw Javorov at a distance in a Sofia park. Ivan Šišmanov tried but never

managed to introduce Jovkov to Vazov. This may have been partially because the younger man was painfully shy, but it was also probably because he feared being disillusioned by meeting in the unimpressive flesh the author whose works he had so long admired. Jovkov preferred to live with a reality from which the coarse and unlovely edges had been worn by the soothing action of time and distance. He was a realist who refused to gaze firmly and directly at reality.

Jovkov was also a very Bulgarian writer, little influenced by foreign models, nurtured almost entirely by the native literary tradition. Though he lived most of his adult life in cities such as Sofia and Bucharest, urban themes are noticeably absent from his novels and short stories, which are ordinarily set in the village and describe rural *mores*. His heroes are tied to Bulgarian soil except for occasional brief forays into a foreign country. In this connection it is interesting to note the prominence of the border (usually the Rumanian border) in Jovkov's work. The action of his major novel occurs on a farmstead located near the border, and the border figures in several short stories: Some of his war stories have to do with border guards, and the hero of "Mečtatel" (The Dreamer) is a minor official at a border post. Jovkov's affinity for the seashore derives from his "border complex", which evidently sprang from the conviction that one feels the keenest sense of national pride at the line separating one's native country from a foreign one.

Jovkov's calm, conciliatory approach pervades all his writing. Even his war stories, which treat the sharpest of human conflicts, exhibit an important component of inner peace. Indeed several of them bear little relation to the cruel realities of war. For example the hero of the story "Svetata nošt" (Holy Night, 1917) loses himself in memories of his childhood, recalling how once he attended church with his mother on Easter Eve and his soul was filled with faith and trust in God. This powerful memory sustains him in times of trial such as those he is then going through. On the other hand, Jovkov does not entirely gloss over the horrors of combat in his war stories. The description of the chaotic battlefield after the battle in "Pred Odrin" (Near Odrin) — the motionless corpses in varying postures, the streams of dried blood, the dark birds wheeling ominously in the sky — is very gripping. But its effect is diminished when the narrator compares the scene with a famous painting by the Russian painter Il'ja Repin and adds that he perceived it all as if anesthetized, trapped in a "heavy and sick dream". Other tableaux of terror, not necessarily connected with war, are drawn with a species of fascinated detachment. In "Šibil", from *Staroplaninski legendi*, the bandit hero

Šibil comes from the mountains into the village for love of a beautiful girl, Rada, the daughter of a local *čorbadžija* who is plotting to destroy him. The ambush is successful: when Šibil appears on the main street he is shot down. At the last moment Rada runs to protect him and perishes along with him in a climactic scene narrated very tersely and pervaded with an atmosphere of impending doom. Jovkov employs analogous techniques for the denouement of "Postolovi vodenici" (Postol's Mills). The heroine of the story resolves to abandon her incapacitated husband for a handsome gypsy who has lingered in the village long enough to turn her head. The avenger, Marin, meets them as they are departing and, hesitating not a moment, with his tremendous strength hurls the cart in which they are riding from a bridge into a stream. The reader is not told so specifically, but it is clear that the lovers perish, appropriately punished for their misdeeds. Marin then goes calmly about his business as if nothing had happened.

Peaceful scenes came more easily to Jovkov than violent ones, however. "Pesenta na koleletata" (The Song of the Wheels) presents a master cart-maker who has devised a method of arranging pieces of metal on the axles of the carts he manufactures so that they will produce a pleasant musical sound as they move. "Leten dažd" (Spring Rain) is about a widower who rescues a woman from a summer flood. She turns out to be a widow herself, and when the widower takes her home to dry out her clothes she likes his family and decides to stay with him. The conflict between the generations, like most other clashes, is muted in Jovkov's fiction. In "Bašta i sin" (Father and Son) the father suspects that his son has been squandering his substance when the latter arrives home and claims to have been robbed of the money he was bringing from the market. One day shortly thereafter the father himself is returning home from the market. When he dozes off, the horses of their own accord pull up at a rural inn — plainly they know the way because the son has frequented the place. Upon entering the father discovers some old friends, particularly the beautiful female tavern keeper, upon whom even he is not averse to wasting money. When he returns home he lets his son know that he has been detected in his deception but does not punish him because he himself has enjoyed his escapade so much. Thus where other authors might have contrasted the older generation to the younger, Jovkov concludes that they are brothers under the skin. The instance of the greatest conflict suppressed in Jovkov is perhaps that central to *Žetvarjat*. The plot revolves about a quarrel over a piece of land between two prominent men of the village, one of whom will be ruined if he loses. Jovkov

settles the situation, not by the destruction of one of the rivals, but rather through a Christian reconciliation.

The most characteristic Jovkovic type is the daydreamer fit for little in the real world. The quintessential dreamer is Bojan Bojanov of the story "Mečtateľ". A minor official, Bojanov still hopes for family happiness with a lovely wife even though he is by now an unattractive middle-aged man. For a time he considers cultivating a local Russian girl who visits the post to write and send letters, but all thought of her vanishes when he meets the Lozev family, who spend one night at his border post. Smitten by the daughter of the family, Vjara, Bojanov manages to convince himself that she is interested in him when in fact this is not the case. After she departs the next day, Bojanov concocts fantastic daydreams of how Vjara will someday return to marry him and he will become Minister of Post and Telegraph. Before long his daydreams run so rampant that he becomes positively ill because of them, and at the conclusion it appears they may bring him to his deathbed. Thus a psychological trait which in Jovkov's other characters may be appealing, in Bojanov develops into something pathological. In any case people like Bojanov cannot be activists or preachers of great social truths: they are too firmly swathed in their private worlds to come to grips with an unpleasant reality.

Besides Elin Pelin and Jordan Jovkov, Bulgaria produced several other authors who specialized in the short story and the novel. Georgi Rajčev (1882-1947), for instance, represented the psychological trend in Bulgarian prose. Born in a village near Stara Zagora, he attended the *gymnasium* in the latter city without graduating. His lack of formal education allied him to Elin Pelin and Jovkov. Again, like these colleagues of his and unlike the preceding generation, he had no European aspirations: he did not attempt to study abroad and remained rather circumscribed in his outlook. Indeed Rajčev was more provincial than even Vazov, who was well read in French literature and traveled abroad on several occasions. A significant portion of Rajčev's generation reverted to something like cultural isolationism after the decline of the internationalist Slavejkov-Krăstev camp.

Rajčev could not live solely as a writer: the total sum he received for his published work was reportedly quite small. He filled some very ordinary jobs in Stara Zagora for a time, and commenced his writing career with a short story in Strašimirov's *Naš život* in 1907. In 1908 he moved to the capital and obtained a position in the Sofia school system.

There he joined the group of young Sofia writers to which Jovkov also belonged. After the First World War he worked as a journalist and a civil servant, ending up as an inspector of reading rooms under the Minister of Education. He found intellectual stimulation in the *Zlatorog* group. Rajčev died in 1947 after what was, from the external point of view, an uneventful career.

Rajčev was more colorful as writer than as bureaucrat. Though he published individual stories in the years before the First World War and brought out a collection of them in 1918 under a pseudonym, he was not recognized as a writer of talent until the publication of his novelette *Maničak svjat* (A Small World, 1919). Another novelette, written in 1910, appeared in 1920 under the title *Carica Neranza* (Czarina Neranza). Rajčev is remembered, however, as a short story writer, and it was during the 1920s that he published most in this genre, with such collections as the *Razkazi* (Stories) of 1923, *Pesen na gorata* (Song of the Forest) of 1928, and *Legenda za parite* (Legend of Money) of 1931. The short story was always Rajčev's *forte*, for even separately printed works like *Maničak svjat* could be classified as long short stories as easily as novelettes.

Rajčev was not oriented exclusively toward the short story, however. Having had poetic ambitions in his youth, in 1929 he put out a drama in verse titled *Elenovo carstvo* (The Stag's Kingdom); in 1937 he printed something approaching a short novel, *Gospodinat s momičeto* (The Gentleman and the Girl). Among his last collections of short stories was a grouping of three under the title *Zlatnijat ključ* (The Golden Key, 1942). His selected works came out in three volumes between 1940 and 1943. In addition Rajčev published a quantity of children's books over the years from 1925 until his death.

According to those who knew him, Rajčev had an exaggerated notion of his own literary significance and could not comprehend why Goethe in Germany or Penčo Slavejkov in Bulgaria were considered great national poets. For some reason he felt that he was competing with Dostoevskij because he treated many of the same questions as the Russian writer, and would fly into a rage upon discovering that Dostoevskij had already worked out some problem which had just occurred to him. At such moments he would jokingly accuse the Russian novelist of having "stolen his ideas". Though Rajčev was among the most ambitious of writers, he was not among the most gifted even in the context of a minor literature. He may be paradoxically described as one who took a shallow view of the depths of the human psyche. His stories are intriguing on first reading, but as a rule they do not bear up beyond this.

Rajčev set his stories in both the village and the city because the social ambience in which his characters moved was not important. His gaze was fixed upon his heroes' inner world, and usually upon its more pathological aspects. Rajčev's is a universe of uncontrollable passions leading to the extremes of personal violence, such as rape and murder. Like Stamatov's, his descriptions tend to be hyperbolic and horrific. As one critic (Simeon Sultanov) has commented, his stories often describe a day or an instant in which a man's whole life is altered catastrophically. Rajčev, again like Stamatov, lacked any solid religious or philosophical foundation for his view of life and so floundered about in a sterile nihilism then to be found among a certain segment of the Bulgarian intelligentsia. There are no such things, Rajčev maintained, as honesty, goodness, self-sacrifice: there are only self-interest, the urge for material comfort, and crass sexual drives.

Rajčev was influenced by decadent modernists like the Russians Leonid Andreev and Mixail Arcybašev and the Pole Stanisław Przybyszewski. His concern with the night side of human nature is obvious from his short stories' very titles, which frequently consist of only one word: "Strax" (Fear), "Ləža" (Falsehood), "Smərt" (Death), "Bezumie" (Insanity), "Grjax" (Sin), "Sənovidenija" (Dreams), "Merzavec" (Scoundrel). His superficially diabolic short stories of the 1920s abound in murders, suicides, sick dreams, and other abnormal phenomena. The primary cause of all social and personal disorders is simple sex, an irresistible force which leads to tragedy. The power of woman over man derives both from her sexuality and her mystery. The hero of one of Rajčev's more diabolic stories ("Karnaval") remarks of a woman:

She changed roles so rapidly and so expertly that, bemused as I was by her words and intoxicated by the caresses of her liberated flesh, it seemed to me that in those instants I could see with mystical perception the very essence of that mysterious creature woman, whom we love or hate, destroy her or perish at her hands, still without ever knowing or understanding her.

The story "Grjax" chronicles a tempestuous affair between a school-teacher named Stan and the wife of his idiot brother. Stan realizes the danger of his situation but is unable to control himself, for the passion between him and his mistress borders on madness. "Reconciled to the thought of his grievous adultery, he no longer sought any connection between silly human concepts of good and evil." The whole relationship between them continues like an "enchantment" until finally the spell is

broken when the brother, furious at being cuckolded, murders Stan with his bare hands. Sexual passion at a remove lies behind a subtler murder in "Ləža", the chief personages of which are a couple named Najden and Nona. Nona had left her husband to live with her lover for a month but then returned and smoothed things over. When she bears a child a few months later, Najden is extremely happy until the suspicion is sown in his mind by others that the child is not his, but the lover's. His close attachment to it turns to bitter ashes, and one day he more or less allows it to fall to its death in a well which he had subconsciously willed to leave uncovered. After the deed is done he discovers that the child was in fact his. Nona sincerely repents of her adultery and the two are reconciled through their child's death. The source of the tragedy in such stories is the power of sex, which, though it may be strictly physiological in its origins, is still mysterious, an "enchantment" which entraps those subject to it.

Rajčev usually wrote of sex in the raw, but he occasionally treated love romantically. The long short story "Pesen na gorata" is a moving tale of the love of an older man for a younger girl whose days are numbered by illness. He takes her to the healing forest and their affection flowers in the midst of nature, but this is not sufficient to save her — indeed in a way their attachment even hastens the girl's demise. The novelette *Gospodinat s momičeto* also depicts a more idealized love affair than one might expect from Rajčev. Though still pessimistic, his approach in such stories is not so nihilistic as elsewhere.

Although Rajčev is mainly a psychological writer unconcerned with political questions, social currents occasionally intrude into his work. This is perceptible in embryo in a story like "Vragove" (Enemies), where the heroes, at odds for personal and political reasons, are reconciled after one risks his life to save the other. "Nakraj grada" (At the Edge of the City) is even more social in content, describing as it does an elderly man who is an outcast from society. Nevertheless, the author is more interested in his hero's psychology than in the social *milieu* in which he moves.

Another representative of the psychological current in Bulgarian prose of the interwar period was Dimitar Šišmanov (1889-1945). Since he was highly placed under the old regime, Šišmanov was executed after the communist takeover and has since become an 'unperson' in modern Bulgarian literature. He attracted public notice at the beginning of the 1920s with what remains his best novel, *Xaj-lajf* (Highlife). After writing other novels in the 1920s, in the 1930s he turned to the short story, a number of which he printed in *Zlatorog*. Being a diplomat, he wrote for

the most part about the social and political *élite* both in Bulgaria and abroad, as the titles of some of his stories indicate: "Edno zasiedanie na Obštествoto na narodite" (A Session of the League of Nations) or "Ku-Lin, Čembærlen i Erio" (Ku-Lin, Chamberlain and Herriot). Šišmanov, the son of Ivan Šišmanov, educated at the University of Geneva, man of international connections, occupies a unique niche in the history of Bulgarian literature.

For all that Šišmanov moved in the highest circles, at the beginning at least he was a writer of intellectual honesty, unsympathetic toward the artificial ways of his associates. This attitude is quite apparent in his novel *Xaj-lajf*. The good-hearted Jovkov is said to have upbraided Šišmanov for it on the grounds that an author should love his characters, which Šišmanov did not. This short novel is in large measure an attack on the Sofia *beaumonde* and all its empty occupations, superficial relationships and occasional viciousness. The hero, Stojan Tanev, is an honorable man in rebellion against his world. At the end, when he lies dying in the hospital after being wounded in battle because some of his associates saw to it that he was placed where the fighting was fiercest, he for a time thinks he has misjudged the humanity of his set when several of his friends, those "beautiful people" of the Bulgaria of the 1920s, come to visit him. However, he is soon deserted by all his erstwhile colleagues and realizes that he has viewed them correctly all along. But *Xaj-lajf* is also a psychological work because most of it is set in the form of a diary, kept by Tanev, recording his unrequited passion for Xristina, a genuine member of the highlife set who never does anything more than flirt seriously with him. The book is essentially an account of Tanev's agonized attempts to decide whether Xristina cares for him at all. After a side-romance which seemingly confirms his opinion about the rottenness of high society types, he follows Xristina to a fashionable resort where, much to his surprise, she welcomes him warmly and even gives herself to him. But when he speaks to her of love and eternal togetherness she becomes furious and leaves him: though willing to have a casual affair with him, she could not possibly be his wife. Instead she marries a Spanish diplomat and departs for Madrid. After Tanev's death the diary is sent to her there, only to be returned with the communication that she has left for India and the Philippines and it is uncertain when she will be in Madrid again. On this callous note ends an absorbing study of a man sincerely in love in a corrupt *milieu*. It is clear that, far from being an apologist for high society in a novel like *Xaj-lajf*, Šišmanov condemns it heartily, and with the knowledgeability of an insider.

Šišmanov and Rajčev were straightforward writers, offering little that was stylistically new. Nikolaj Rajnov (1889-1954) — a man of remarkable physical gauntness and intellectual adaptability — differed from them in this area, though he also investigated his characters' psychology and subconscious motives in some of his best works. In the 1920s he was one of the few representatives of symbolism in prose.

Rajnov was the son of a minor official in a village in the Tŕrnovo region. His mother died when he was young and he was left to shift for himself. After studying in a theological seminary he declined to be consecrated priest because he was repelled by the behavior and character of many churchmen whom he had observed, but in later life he was much interested in the esoteric and the occult. Rajnov studied philosophy at Sofia University for a year; after a time he took courses at the Art Academy.

Rajnov's first book, *Bogomilski legendi* (Bogomil Legends, 1912), brought him renown as a writer of symbolist prose. During the First World War he worked as a correspondent, but apparently he used his spare time during the conflict to advantage, since he published several books soon after the war's end, including *Videnija iz drevna Bŕlgarija* (Visions from Ancient Bulgaria, 1918), *Kniga za carete* (Book of the Czars, 1918), and *Gradŕt* (The City, 1919). As may be surmised from the first two titles listed, Rajnov had a mystical perception of the glories of medieval Bulgaria. He loved to evoke the shades of ancient kings and queens while wandering in fancy among their graves. Indeed, he deliberately separated himself from the reality of his day to such an extent as to declare once that "contemporary life cannot yield any material for fictional prose or poetry".

A man of Rajnov's temperament would naturally be attracted to symbolism, and in 1925 he contributed to late symbolist verse with his *Korabŕt na bezsmŕrtnite* (Ship of the Immortals). At roughly the same time, however, new trends had appeared in his best collection of short stories, *Siromax Lazar* (Poor Lazarus, 1922). Ever the irrationalist, in these pieces Rajnov preached the supremacy of 'direct vision', or feeling, over reasoned analysis. He was especially fascinated by the mystery of death, which he discussed frequently and in detail. As Rajnov was a conscious stylist (in the 1920s he published theoretical articles on stylistic questions in *Zlatorog*) treating rather complex problems and situations, the reader may find it difficult to grasp the essence of his mystical outlook. At its core, however, it seems to be reducible, according to the critic Georgi Canev, to a philosophy of totally self-sacrificing love. Christ in

Rajnov's work tells his followers that they should not be content with merely giving the shirts off their backs to their brothers: they should be ready to yield up their very souls for them.

From the 1920s until his death the prolific Rajnov produced books of the most varied types at an astounding rate. He kept on writing fiction, such as the stories included in *Otdavna, mnogo otdavna* (Long, Long Ago, 1939), but he also produced many scholarly works. After being appointed head of the Plovdiv Public Library in 1922 he studied documents on Bulgarian folklore. In 1925 he traveled to Paris to work on classical art and culture, later returning to Bulgaria to accept a position as professor of the history of art at the Art Academy. In ensuing years he labored over his twelve-volume *Istorija na plastičnite izkustva* (History of the Plastic Arts) as well as his multi-volume *Večното v našata literatura* (The Eternal in Our Literature, 1941), an anthology of the best writing by Bulgarian authors. Thanks to his prodigious diligence, by 1939 he was the author of some sixty original and scholarly books and the compiler of roughly thirty anthologies. At the same time he was so out of favor with the regime that a jubilee celebration for him could not be held in that year, but by 1949, under quite different conditions, he had so managed to atone for his idealist and symbolist past as to be granted a gala anniversary celebration by the government. After 1944 Rajnov spent most of his time doing research in the history of art, preparing the initial volume of a *Vseobšta istorija na izkustvoto* (General History of Art) and a monograph on the first important Bulgarian painter of modern times, Nikolaj Pavlovič. He was writing a large book on wood carvings when he died in 1954, by which time his significant contributions to Bulgarian artistic literature were thirty years and more in the past.

Among the prose genres of the 1920s and 1930s, the historical novel reached a prominence which it has retained down to the present. One of the first major historical novels to appear after the First World War was *Xljab naš nasuštnij* (Our Daily Bread, 1926) by the prolific Stojan Čilingirov (1881-1962). But by far the most memorable body of historical fiction in the interwar period and after 1944 was produced by Stojan Zagorčinov (1889-). Born in Plovdiv, Zagorčinov graduated from Sofia University and settled in the capital, where he taught French at a military academy. He acquired a reputation in 1926 with the publication of his novelette *Legenda za Sveta Sofija* (Legend of St. Sofia), but the outstanding work in his canon is *Den posleden, den Gospoden* (The Last Day, Day of the

Lord), published in three parts from 1931 to 1934 (in 1949 it was issued in a second, revised edition with the title truncated to *Den posleden*, no doubt for ideological reasons). Both *Legenda za Sveta Sofija* and *Den posleden, den Gospoden* were set in the period of medieval Bulgaria's flowering, and since 1944 Zagorčinov has continued to concentrate upon this era with such books as *Praznik v Bojana* (Festival in Bojana, 1950) and especially *Ivajlo* (1962), which describes the great peasant revolt of the late 1270s. Zagorčinov has also written plays and sketches.

In his four principal historical novels Zagorčinov remains within the limits of approximately two centuries, from the time of the painting of the famous Bojana church near Sofia in the twelfth century (one critic has termed *Praznik v Bojana* a 'belletristic monograph' about the painter of the striking Bojana frescoes) through the upheavals of Ivajlo's uprising and down to the fall of the Second Bulgarian Empire in 1393. The tragic dramatism of this last, culminating moment fascinated the writer, just as it fascinates the reader of *Den posleden, den Gospoden*. In this novel Zagorčinov succeeded remarkably in recapturing the spirit of an epoch long past, largely by means of incarnating the intellectual currents of the time in individual characters and then causing them to interact with one another. The monk Teodosij adheres to the doctrines of the leading religious movement of the time, Hesychasm. Some critics have chided Zagorčinov for paying excessive attention to this mystical school, but it was surely worthy of note as the intellectual expression of a culture which had reached toppling height. The main active characters are the czar, Ivan Aleksandër, and the rebel Momčil, each of whom in his blindness hastens the downfall of the Bulgarian state. Momčil is so obsessed with the revolution as not to comprehend that the Turkish peril is an even greater evil than the existing Bulgarian order. For his part, Ivan Aleksandër deludes himself into thinking that the Turks will merely crush his enemies and then depart, as they have done before. He therefore refuses to join any anti-Turkish alliances and consequently goes down to defeat. Both Momčil and Ivan Aleksandër act intelligently and according to their best judgment, but each turns out to have been tragically unaware of the possible results of his policies. The reader can only watch helplessly as each makes decisions leading to catastrophe.

The trend in the 1920s and 1930s toward historical novels designed to glorify the Bulgarian past also caught up Fani Popova-Mutafova (1902-). Educated in Sofia, she studied music in Germany before turning to writing. In the 1920s she built up a modest but secure reputation for herself by means of short stories with delicate treatments of the feminine

psychology. Such works formed the backbone of the volumes *Ženata s nebesnata roklja* (The Woman in the Blue Dress, 1927) and *Ženata na prijatelja mi* (My Friend's Wife, 1929). The title story of the latter collection pictures an apparently mousy woman who is about to lose her husband's affection precisely because of her total devotion to him. It is only when she discards her self-abnegation and begins hewing out an artistic career for herself that she regains her husband's esteem, although once she has accomplished this she abandons her career for his sake. Popova-Mutafova is a feminist of a special stripe. She does not advocate separating women from home and family but instead demands respect for woman in her role as wife and mother.

Today Fani Popova-Mutafova is thought of as a writer of historical novels, although she kept publishing short stories all through the 1930s. Some of her chief historical works are *Solunskijat čudotvorec* (The Miracle-Worker of Salonika, 1929-1930), *Dăsterjata na Kalojana* (Kalojan's Daughter, 1936), *Joan Asen* (1937) and *Poslednijat Asenovec* (The Last of the Asens, 1939). These novels glorified the 'bourgeois' Bulgarian past. After 1944 the author repudiated this chauvinistic purpose, and when her works are republished now they are supplied with apologetic forewords. Still, Popova-Mutafova's reputation as a historical novelist is assured, although it is barely possible that eventually her literary fame may rest more heavily upon her short stories than it has up to now.

Another well known historical novelist of the 1920s and 1930s was Dobri Nemirov (1882-1945), the author of a trilogy (*Bratja* [The Brothers, 1927]; *Parvi brazdi* [First Furrows, 1929]; and *Prez oğanja* [Through the Fire, 1931]) which set out to describe the Bulgarian society of Rakovski's day, then bring the story down first to the years around the liberation, and finally to the time of writing.

The communist authors of the interwar decades, like the symbolists, produced a body of literature based upon relatively well defined assumptions. Two of the most outstanding communist prosewriters were Ljudmil Stojanov and Georgi Karaslavov. To be sure, in 1920 Stojanov could still assert: "To be a realist, someone has said, means to be nothing", and he at first assisted Trajanov and Radoslavov in publishing *Xiperion*. He castigated Geo Milev when the latter began to slip from the symbolist orbit, and for a period continued writing verse which by and large ran on the symbolist tracks and was collected in such volumes as *Pramajka* (Urmother, 1925) and *Svetaja svetix* (Holy of Holies, 1926). But Stojanov

was clearly swayed by the events of 1923-1925, and even in his earlier short stories, for instance those written from 1918 to 1925 and gathered in *Bič Božij* (The Scourge of God, 1927), one discovers 'critical realist' strains interwoven with decadent ones. Among his better known tales of this period is the gruesome "Miloserdieto na Marsa" (The Mercy of Mars, 1923), supposedly based upon war experiences. The piece describes several individuals in occupied territory who are unfairly and summarily sentenced to death. The narrator realizes the complete injustice of the sentence but, bound by military discipline, cannot prevent its being carried out. Furthermore, as the soldiers are forbidden to use their rifles, the condemned must be executed with knives. This is a messy task which revolts and dehumanizes those who must see to it.

His critical articles show that by about 1926 Stojanov had transferred his allegiance to the radical camp. He continued to write absorbing short stories, for instance those collected in *Ženski duši* (Feminine Souls, 1929). If the content of these stories was not totally acceptable from the communist point of view, that fault was remedied in novels like *Xolera* (Cholera, 1935). In the 1930s Stojanov published quantities of criticism, novels, short stories, poetry, plays (many with classical titles), and biographies or fictional biographies of such figures as Vasil Levski (1930) and Georgi Benkovski, the revolutionary leader of 1876 (also 1930). Stojanov's conversion from symbolism to communism, though not abrupt, was thorough. Since 1944 he has received numerous honors, including the presidency of the Union of Bulgarian Writers, membership in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the national parliament. He is now the unofficial patriarch of Bulgarian letters, his distant symbolist past being recalled as infrequently as possible.

Georgi Karaslavov (1904-) was from the beginning a consistent communist writer. After a checkered early career which included participation in the September rebellion of 1923, he departed to study agronomy in Prague in 1929. While there he labored as a construction worker in a Prague suburb, putting his experiences to literary use in his proletarian novel *Sporžilov* (the name of the suburb; 1931). The critics paid much more attention to *Sporžilov* than they had to a few earlier collections of his short stories, but it took another novel, published in 1938, to establish him as an author of stature. Entitled *Tatul* (the name of a poisonous herb), the book chronicles the iniquities of bourgeois society as illustrated in a plot to commit a secret murder by poisoning. Since 1944 Karaslavov has been a literary wheelhorse of the regime, occupying positions as director of the National Theater, editor of the literary journal *Septemvri*

(September), member of the national parliament and of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He has written literary studies, journalistic tracts, short stories and novels, of which the extensive *Obiknoveni xora* (Ordinary People: part one 1952; part two 1956; part three 1963; part four 1966) is the most important.

The best known humorous sketch writer in Bulgarian letters is Čudomir (pseudonym of Dimitar Čorbadžijski, 1890-1967). Čudomir spent the early years of his life studying art, thereafter becoming an art teacher and director of a museum in Kazanlak, where he lived most of his life. Early in the century he belonged to the younger set of writers and intellectuals in Sofia and began publishing political cartoons in 1910. Later he printed humorous verse under various *noms de plume*, including the one which he eventually adopted exclusively, Čudomir. Although he wrote one isolated prose *feuilleton* in 1911, it was not until years later, when searching for some employment other than teaching, that he by chance started seriously composing comic sketches for the daily newspaper *Zora*. In 1935 he published the first of several collections of his stories under the title *Ne sam ot tjax* (I'm Not One of Them). There followed: *Našenci* (Ours, 1936), *Alaminut* (Cooked to Order, 1939), *Koj kakto ja naredi* (Each Arranges It as Best He Can, 1940), *Konsul na Golo-bardo* (The Consul of Golo-bardo, 1947), and *Panair* (The Fair, 1957). Nearly all these collections have been republished. About 1940, though, Čudomir largely ceased writing after a spiritual crisis, so that the collections printed since then have drawn upon his earlier sketches.

Čudomir works in a comparatively rich native tradition, created by Aleko Konstantinov, Elin Pelin and Mixalaki Georgiev. His language is lively and replete with colloquialisms. He tends to avoid satire and concentrate upon humor, although he works within a framework of social criticism akin to satire. His heroes are frequently the downtrodden and frustrated of this world. His "Urok po istorija" (The History Lesson) describes a teacher who, while his world history pupils drone on about the history of Babylonia, is desperately calculating how to purchase the food his wife has asked him to buy with the money he has available. The high price of groceries drives him so wild that finally, to the astonishment of the class, he exclaims: "Beans are eight *leva* per kilo! It's scandalous!" and rushes from the room. Čudomir rather gently attacks the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality in "Dopustimo" (It's Possible). Here one couple discovers that another couple, whom they have always considered a model

pair, have been deceiving each other: the husband, a doctor, has arranged meetings with his mistress through telephone calls supposedly from patients, while the wife has had an affair with their boarder, an uninspiring type whose sole contribution to any conversation consists of the phrase "It's possible." Another species of Čudomir sketch is the humorous essay on small themes from everyday life. "Starijat vestnik" (The Old Newspaper) nearly reduces to a catalogue of the uses to which newspapers may be put after they have been read: "An old newspaper is a great necessity. For instance I always carry one in my pocket because I never know when and for what I may need it. Some peasants use it as a billfold, others as a handkerchief, fishermen dry fish in the sun on it." All through this and other sketches Čudomir exhibits an amused detachment which does not grant the possibility of anything much being substantially altered in this world. He is philosopher enough to accept things as they are, and humorist enough to find them funny.

Vladimir Poljanov (1899-: not to be confused with the proletarian poet Dimitar Poljanov) produced short stories which were anything but humorous in the 1920s. After obtaining a teutonic higher education in Graz, Vienna and Munich, he worked as a civil servant. He also was employed at the National Theater and since 1944 has continued active in the theatrical world. He first published as early as 1917, and later was one of the *Zlatorog* group. His early collections of short stories included *Momičeto i trimata* (The Girl and the Three Men, 1926), *Ricari* (Knights, 1927), and *Kradecat* (The Thief, 1927).

Poljanov was attracted by the bizarre and mysterious, and many of his stories from the 1920s grip the reader by virtue of their sensationalism. Thus in "Požar" (Fire), while bystanders despair of saving several persons trapped in a burning building, a mysterious stranger appears, has himself doused with water and plunges into the flames. The assembled onlookers anticipate a miraculous rescue, but instead the hero simply vanishes, and afterwards his charred corpse is found among the ashes. In another story the hero, having exhausted all his resources — his family is starving and he can find no employment — contrives a circus act to consist of his hanging himself and then reviving from the dead. Announcement of the forthcoming feat draws an immense but skeptical crowd. Dispatching his advance payment to his wife, the hero does indeed hang himself in public, but there is no question of his being revived, for he is quite dead ("Posledna komedija" [The Last Comedy]).

Later on Poljanov published one significant novel, *Černite ne stavat beli* (Black Do Not Become White, 1932), though at the same time he did not

abandon the short story. The several dramas he wrote in the 1930s left no special mark in the history of the Bulgarian theater.

Konstantin Konstantinov (1890-) has also contributed much to the Bulgarian short story. A native of Sliven, he studied law in order to enter the legal career which he pursued for much of his life. Literature was always his avocation, however, and he refined his literary tastes early by reading the work of such masters as Hugo, Maupassant, Čexov and Bunin. After settling in Sofia in 1908 he there joined the circle of young writers so often mentioned already, and later became its chief memoirist. He contributed to journals like *Balgaran* and *Balgarska sbirka* and assisted in managing *Zveno* in 1914. It was not until 1920, though, that he first gained literary repute through a collection of short stories entitled *Kъм blizkija* (To My Neighbor). His initial efforts were feeble, and even a later collection, *Ljubov* (Love, 1925), was criticized for the artificiality of its subject matter and style.

Perhaps because Konstantinov was among the more intellectual writers of modern Bulgaria, he reached maturity late. The novel *Krāv* (Blood) of 1933, which dealt with the revolutionary events of 1925 while arguing the uselessness of social conflict and preaching doctrines of non-violent change and reconciliation through love, was still not entirely up to his best standard. Konstantinov genuinely made his mark as a short-story writer only in the 1930s, with the collections *Treta klasa* (Third Class, 1936), *Den po den* (Day by Day, 1938), and *Sedem časot zaranta* (Seven O'Clock in the Morning, 1940).

Despite this, Konstantinov is less renowned as a short-story writer than as a producer of memoirs and travel sketches. As early as 1930 he published travel sketches under the title *Po zemjata* (Over the World), and worked the same vein closer to home in *Našata zemja xubava* (Our Beautiful Land) of 1940. Konstantinov employed his talents as a memoirist to greatest effect in *Pät prez godinite* (Way Through the Years), an enthralling account of Bulgarian intellectual and cultural life at the beginning of the century.

Konstantinov's approach to fiction is exemplified by one of his best stories, "Prez stenata" (Through the Wall). The narrator arrives in a small town and secures a room at its only hotel. He keeps to himself but carefully observes the other people staying there, particularly a troupe of actors then giving performances in the town. A girl member of the troupe occupies the room next to his, and he can overhear almost everything that goes on there through a closed door. He is only idly curious about her until one morning he is awakened by her singing, followed by heart-

rending sobs which he realizes come from the "uttermost depths", when a person has reached the limits of his endurance. So near and yet so far from her, he decides there really is nothing he can do for her. A few hours later he learns that the actress has poisoned herself, but experiences only a vague regret over the situation as he leaves the town forever.

On occasion Konstantinov displays more humanity toward his characters than he does in "Prez stenata". In "Den po den" he pictures the dreary life of a small-town prostitute awaiting the return of a traveling salesman for whom, in her own dull way, she feels great affection (the first time he visited her he paid her but suddenly decided not to avail himself of her services after recalling his wife). Then her dreams of temporary happiness are destroyed when she learns that the salesman has been killed in a bus accident, but she must stifle her anguish and entertain a bunch of men who are swinishly calling for girls. Though Konstantinov does not make everything explicit, it is obvious where his sympathies lie.

As a short-story writer Konstantinov treats some of the great moments and passions of life, but in banal settings which diminish their significance. His skeptical detachment both prevents him from making esthetic gaffes and makes him sometimes appear unconscionably cold-blooded. But even if he declines involvement with others, neither is he so self-centered as to concentrate solely upon his own reactions. He is a highly intelligent, observant, independent reporter.

Konstantin Petkanov (1891-1952) was a prolific and pretentious novelist of the 1920s and 1930s. His books were widely read at that time and he even had a following among the critics, but a few years after his death his reputation is in almost inverse proportion to the number of pages he saw into print. He is nonetheless worth mentioning because of his quondam repute.

Born in a village in the vicinity of Lozengrad, Petkanov attended the *gymnasium* in Odrin, housed in a building with which Dr. Petar Beron had been connected several decades before. He studied Slavic philology at Sofia University before leaving to teach for several years in various small towns. Being temperamentally a regionalist, he became a devotee of Thrace, and his relationship to that area resembles Jovkov's link with Dobrudža. He participated in the First Balkan War and in 1916 was wounded slightly during the First World War. After the cessation of hostilities, opposing the widespread tendency among writers to migrate to the capital, he settled in the Black Sea port of Burgas, where he held such non-literary positions as librarian of the local library, assistant to the mayor, and official in charge of food supplies. This mundane employment

could not absorb his entire energies, however, so he taught the violin and generally promoted music in the city in addition to editing the newspaper *Strandža* in 1921. His editorial work was a harbinger of the more than twenty books he would write over the next two decades. During the 1930s he wrote in many areas of prose, including the short story, children's books, novelettes, but especially the novel, including the historical novel, and published at least one major work every year. A famous trilogy of his was *Staroto vreme* (The Old Days, 1930), *Xajduti* (Partisans, 1931), and *Vjatər eči* (The Wind Echoes, 1932); later more novels were added to the series. His other books include *Bez deca* (Without Children, 1927), *Vəlnolom* (Seawall, 1937), and *Kirpičenata kəšta* (The Brick House, 1939). After 1944 Petkanov worked for a while as an editor of the journal *Balkanski pregled* (Balkan Review) and as a cultural functionary until his death in 1952.

Petkanov thought of himself as a man with a mission. Not only did he write novels replete with national uplift, he also published articles analyzing the pressing problems of contemporary life. In some of these, such as "Xarakterni čerti na bəlgarina" (Characteristic Traits of the Bulgarian) and "Inteligencijata kato rožba i otricanie na bəlgarskoto selo" (The Intelligentsia as the Product and Negation of the Bulgarian Village) he discussed these questions directly; in others, for instance "Zadačite na bəlgarskija roman" (The Tasks of the Bulgarian Novel) and "Zemjata i čovekət v moite romani" (Earth and Man in My Novels) he attempted to define ground rules for the Bulgarian novel or explain his own writings. Petkanov was centrally concerned with the problem of the Bulgarian national spirit. In his view it was the novelists' task to delineate this unique spirit and present it to the outside world, for the latter's benefit. Petkanov wrote that the principal Bulgarian types were the "eternal type of freedom, the type of faith and love, the type of work and the family the type of mercy and the type of rebellion". The task of the Bulgarian novel, he thought, was "to expose all the depths of the Bulgarian soul, to penetrate to its roots, to link it with heaven and earth". The earth, incidentally, was something of a fetish with Petkanov, who was oriented toward rural Bulgaria. In "Zemjata i čovekət v moite romani" he replied to critics who accused him of promoting a "cult of the earth". He did no such thing, Petkanov argued: his only cult was one of man, for the earth without man was nothing. His trilogy *Staroto vreme*, *Xajduti* and *Vjatər eči*, he continued, was intended to demonstrate the following: "The earth is bought with money, labor is a gift of God, freedom is attained with bloody sacrifice, and enlightenment — with money and labor, with

God's aid and with bloody sacrifice." As may be seen from even such brief citations, Petkanov's philosophy, rooted in a vague religiosity and a drive to discover the characteristics of the "Bulgarian soul", was cloudy, but it was also sufficiently idealistic and overblown to gain considerable currency. His pretentiousness is evident in a novel like *Vǎlnolom*. The seawall of the title is evidently supposed to symbolize something, though just what is unclear; the characters deal with great philosophical problems in lengthy discussions intended to be profound; and the author employs many unconvincing or inappropriate similes. The novel leaves an impression of clutter designed as complexity. All in all, Petkanov now reposes in appropriate obscurity even though some of his novels have recently been republished.

Bulgaria boasted several respectable prose writers in the interwar period, but poetry, and especially lyric poetry, was generally superior to prose over these years. To be sure, the most comprehensive poetic school of the prewar years, symbolism, fell apart in the 1920s. In particular, several former symbolists made an intellectual pilgrimage from symbolism to communism, as we have already seen in the cases of Xristo Jasenov and Ljudmil Stojanov. The motives behind this evolution are not always clear, but both intellectual fashion and the need for a framework for one's beliefs were probably most significant among them. Some had obviously joined the dominant symbolist movement before the war out of conformism, because it was 'modern' to write symbolist verse. Thus when symbolism passed out of fashion it was promptly deserted by its adherents. On a more serious level, symbolism did supply poets a theoretical underpinning for their writing. But after a time symbolist theory lost its attraction for the practical Bulgarian intellect, and many writers concluded that they could discover a better intellectual anchor for themselves in communist doctrine, which gained renewed currency after the October Revolution.

Symbolism did not wither away immediately. Paradoxically, it was just at the stage when the movement had lost its influence that there appeared the longest-lived and most unabashedly symbolist journal in the history of Bulgarian letters, *Xiperion* (1922-1931). From its inception *Xiperion* was managed by Teodor Trajanov and Ivan Radoslavov, as well as Ljudmil Stojanov until his defection. But even such an unrepentant symbolist as Radoslavov soon recognized that he and his few allies were fighting a rear-guard action. Thus in an article on Bulgarian symbolism published in *Xiperion* in 1925 Radoslavov admitted that the

movement had passed its peak and was now on the decline, so that the faithful had no recourse but to reconcile themselves to its eventual dissolution.

Even Teodor Trajanov's poetic outlook was radically modified during the First World War. If before the war he was a gloomy mystic composing in a minor key, during and after the war, though still a mystic and still inclined to melancholy, he wrote in a major key befitting this martial period. The poetic fruit of the First World War were the *Bългарski baladi* (Bulgarian Ballads), frequently seized upon by hostile critics as proof that the Bulgarian symbolists were fundamentally chauvinists. In fact the *Bългарski baladi* illustrate only Trajanov's personal tendency toward chauvinism, in which connection we should recall that the non-symbolist Vazov also produced very patriotic poetry at that time. The series of military disasters suffered by his fatherland moved Trajanov to hark back to other calamities of Bulgarian history, summarized in the following striking sequence of dates: 1018: fall of the First Bulgarian Empire; 1393: fall of the Second Bulgarian Empire; 1913: end of the Second Balkan War; 1918: conclusion of the First World War, with all its evil consequences for Bulgaria. Hoping to brace the buckling Bulgarian morale, in a poem like "Pesen na trite moreta" (Song of the Three Seas) the poet proudly recalled the time when the Bulgarian empire had extended to all three seas bounding the Balkan peninsula. The author of *Bългарski baladi* then described scenes of destruction and defeat, only to emerge confident that the day of Bulgarian triumph would dawn once again. He voiced this conviction in such pieces as "Starobългарski psalom" (Old Bulgarian Psalm) or "Pobednijat marš na българите" (The Triumphant March of the Bulgarians), which ends: "Rejoice, oh Bulgarian people, / the Bulgarian days are numberless! / Fate roams above the Bosphorus, / the bells of Ohrid sound! / The Aegean roars at the great day, / gleams, reflects thy countenance, / the five sacred rivers sing to it / in the marvellous Bulgarian tongue!"

The overwrought tone of *Bългарski baladi* remained characteristic of Trajanov in the poems comprising his most interesting collection, *Panteon* (Pantheon, 1934). In a brief afterword to *Panteon* the poet explained that his aim in writing these pieces had been the "seeking of a universal synthetic personality" to combine the "triumphant thought" of the western mind, with its skeptical hue, and the Slavs' "elemental striving", which was "free, credulous and foreign to any dogmas or systems". In short, Trajanov hoped the Slavs would in future contribute to the creation of a magnificent European culture.

After a dedication, *Panteon* proper begins with an invocation to "the poet", who can be promptly recognized by his "regal brow", his "firm gaze, permeated by ire and pity", by his "countenance, burned about by Hell". The poet is the bearer of the new word which will bring the new world into being. After further invocations (to Beauty, to the Sword-bearer, to the Crownbearer, to the Apostle), the author offers poems dedicated to great poets of world literature, including Villon, Rimbaud, Rilke, Dehmel, Poe, Whitman, Shelley, Debeljanov, Botev and Javorov. The poet's role in creating the new earth is described in "Sørce na sævestta" (Heart of Conscience), honoring the memory of the Russian poet Nikolaj Nekrasov, seen as a forerunner of the 1917 revolution. Curiously, Trajanov interprets the October Revolution as God's handiwork: He it was who uncrowned the Kremlin, and the star which now gleams over the heart of Russia is the star of Bethlehem! In general the *Panteon* poems are written in the exalted tone of invocations to the Almighty and to the spirit of man at his greatest, as poet. The book was quite out of tune with the intellectual atmosphere of the 1930s and remained an isolated literary phenomenon, though Trajanov considered adding further poems to it, thinking it analogous to Vazov's *Epopeja na zabravenite*. After *Panteon's* appearance Trajanov published little for what remained of his life.

The Bulgarian symbolist considered a poet's poet was Nikolaj Liliev (pseudonym of Nikolaj Mixajlov, 1885-1960). A native of Stara Zagora, Liliev began his career in a most mundane way by studying in a commercial high school in Svištov and working as a bank clerk in Stara Zagora. The publication of his first verses in 1905 brought him enough largesse from the Minister of Education, Ivan Šišmanov, to enable him to study in Lausanne from 1905 to 1907; in 1909 he spent some time in Paris. Despite all this he did not yet abandon the workaday world, for he graduated from a commercial academy in 1912 and was subsequently employed as a teacher in Plovdiv and Svištov. During the wars he was a correspondent; thereafter he took different positions in government and the publishing business before discovering his true calling in the theater. He held the post of *dramaturg* (artistic director) of the National Theater from 1924 to 1928 and again from 1934 to the end of his life.

Liliev (he adopted the pseudonym in 1908) was extraordinarily unprolific. He published a small collection of verse, *Ptici v noštta* (Birds in the Night) in 1918, following that in 1922 with his only other original collection, *Lunni petna* (Moonspots). A third volume, *Stixotvorenija* (Verse, 1932), was made up largely of poems from his previous collections.

After 1944 Liliev produced next to no original verse, instead devoting his energies to translations from such European authors as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Stefan George and Verhaeren. He also translated several classic plays from the world repertoire (*King Lear*, *The Cid*, *Hernani*, *Electra*) for the National Theater.

Liliev's reputation as a poet's poet is based not upon the universality of his themes — he was always an isolated man — but upon the formal perfection he achieved. Liliev was a lyric poet who rarely attempted anything extending beyond a few stanzas, but he would not release a song until it had been exquisitely polished (very little idea can be given in English of the complex interplay of rhyme and assonance of which Liliev was such a master). His formal achievements were probably made the easier by his narrow thematic diapason, however. His poetry revolves in the same unextensive circle of subjects and attitudes, and the number of words he utilizes in his poetry is so small that the reader can frequently predict, say, what adjective will be attached to a given noun. In a word, Liliev took the symbolist penchant for a limited lexicon to an extreme. Consequently those who do not care for Liliev and think him "bloodless" — they are many — may still be captivated by his formal expertise, while those who like him cannot read much of him at one sitting. Liliev has many admirers but few imitators.

Liliev's poetry is characteristically symbolist in that it is pervaded by a pensive melancholy, frequently seems otherworldly, and is very literary. On the other hand, his writing is usually clear, and it is partly for this reason that he could influence poets who were not symbolists and is still read in Bulgaria today. The poet as it were stands off from himself and observes his own thoughts and emotions: more precisely, he follows the tremblings of his soul, which either is poetic harmony or else emits poetic harmony in the form of songs. Liliev's songs are endowed with independent life, as in the title poem of *Ptici v noštta*: "My memories, / birds in the night, / wander homelessly, / wander in reverie / beyond the world. / My songs, / shadows without direction, / flare up unheard / in the melancholy autumn — and / fall silent once more." The poet compares his soul to a bird wheeling freely in the skies in the first stanza of "Nebeto e bezumno sin'o": "The heavens are insanely blue, / the fields are ringing joyously, / and my soul will pass there / into the unknown distance."

Almost all the themes a lyric poet ordinarily treats are absorbed in Liliev into a generalized preoccupation with the self. For instance the final stanza of "Kəm slənceto" (To the Sun), like the rest of the poem, stresses the sun's effect upon the beholder: "Your glitter burns us, / your

power inebriates us, / strikes up a hymn in our souls / to dreamed-of sunrises." Again, when the poet speaks of love he treats it fundamentally in terms of his suffering soul. The persona of a poem always strives to retreat from an unbearable reality and wander in melancholy freedom about the world. This tendency toward withdrawal is clearly connected with the *leitmotif* of Liliev's verse: loneliness. The poet spoke of himself as "drunken on the wine of loneliness" and portrayed himself as "lying in the unpeopled wildernesses / of my own cold frozen loneliness"; he wrote such poems as "Kəm samotata" (To Loneliness), where the solitude which on the one hand weighs upon his soul is in another sense his only salvation: "Dark, repentant, I return to you, / oh distant mother, sacred solitude! / I embrace your mystery humbly, / your mystery is my dream. / ... I am rejected, forgotten, neglected, / with calm enjoyment I noiselessly destroy / the drowsy structures of past glory / which once warmed an insane soul." It is understandable that Liliev, being of such an outlook, preferred the night season to all others. The night theme appears in numerous individual poems as well as the titles of his two collections, *Lunni petna* and *Ptici v noštta*. A religious element is joined to it in the poem beginning "Oh Lord, bless Thou the night / of Thy son without a name or native land." The motif of death also appears frequently in Liliev. One of his few longer poems, "Axasfer", treats the Christian legend of the man who cannot die until Christ's second coming because he did not assist Him in His hour of need. Written in a shifting combination of meters, "Axasfer" poignantly depicts the despair of a man doomed to wander indefinitely over the face of the earth, eagerly awaiting news of the Lord's descent. But the word never comes, and Axasfer can only endure and pray for a death which will not be vouchsafed him.

The world of Nikolaj Liliev, with its passive suffering, melancholy visions, vague poetic malaises, and sense of solitude, lacks broad appeal. The man who created it shrank from everyday reality but still discovered within himself the capacity to fashion miniature poetic masterpieces.

Geo Milev (1895-1925) was the most intriguing of the symbolist converts to communism. To the eye of the external beholder his career seems muddled indeed, although a closer investigation might well reveal that he followed certain firm principles all his life. Born in a small village in the vicinity of Stara Zagora to M. G. Kasabov, an intelligent man interested in book-selling and publishing, the future poet attended the *gymnasium* in Stara Zagora from 1907 to 1911. During this period he wrote verse for manuscript journals, evidently considering Javorov and especially Penčo Slavejkov his poetic mentors. Since he was always quick to follow

the latest intellectual fashions, he was also influenced by foreign and native symbolism, particularly around 1910-1912.

In 1911 Milev enrolled at Sofia University to study philosophy and literature. The following year he departed for Leipzig, where he remained until 1914, eagerly keeping up with the latest cultural developments. During his Leipzig period (it should be recalled that by 1914 he was still under twenty) the main outlines of Milev's literary enthusiasms emerged. He was engrossed by Nietzsche's philosophy, considered modernism the only acceptable literary approach, and disapproved of naturalism and to a considerable extent even realism in literature. He began a dissertation on the German symbolist poet Richard Dehmel and proclaimed his approval of modernist trends in an article entitled "Moderna poezija" (Modern Poetry), published in *Zveno*. In 1915 he put out five pamphlets with five translations from foreign decadent poets dedicated to five of his symbolist colleagues: Liliev, Trajanov, Debeljanov, Stojanov and Rajnov.

Despite all this, Milev's later conversion to communism was not incompatible with his character in the prewar period. As early as 1914-1915 he displayed an ability to commit himself deeply to a cause in which he believed — he could be strongly committed to symbolist disengagement — as well as a spirit of political rebellion (cf. an antimonarchist poem of 1914 which was not printed for many years). The chaotic rebelliousness of his soul was the chief link between the Milev of 1914 and of 1925, although the forms assumed by that rebellion varied over time.

In 1915, having returned to Bulgaria from abroad, Milev was drafted into the army. During the hostilities he was severely wounded and lost his right eye; it is therefore no chance matter that his most famous portrait shows him in a turbulently romantic pose with the entire right side of his face in deep shadow. In February of 1918 he traveled to Berlin for a series of operations on his eye, remaining in Germany for more than a year. During this time he participated actively in German literary life, contributing to the Expressionist journal *Aktion*, and observed the contemporary political upheavals in Germany. His war experiences failed to alter Milev's ideological orientation immediately, however, and upon returning to Bulgaria in March of 1919 he propagandized symbolism and modernism. This he did in several ways. To begin with, he himself wrote symbolist poetry, much of which was brought together in the volumes *Žestokijat pršten* (The Cruel Ring, 1920) and *Ikonite spjat* (The Icons Are Sleeping, 1922). Amid their symbolist vagueness, these poems

contain some comprehensible and striking lines, for instance the stanza: "Oh rain, oh rain abundant and melancholy / — water dancing along the sidewalks! — / Drunken, bare, free, bacchanalian — / but with a black mask — you dance the senseless dance of grief." In addition to writing symbolist poetry, Milev transformed himself into a tribune for the movement, visiting Sofia and provincial cities to deliver lectures so effective that one impressed the ageing Vazov, who was reported to have exclaimed once after reading some symbolist works: "These people must be insane, but what perfection of form!" But the chief instrument through which Milev disseminated his views was the journal *Vezni* (The Scales, a title borrowed from a well-known Russian modernist periodical of the beginning of the century). While preparing to launch *Vezni*, in August of 1919 Milev wrote to his father that he had in mind "something between *Misal* and *Xudožnik* [the modernist journal of the years 1906-1907], but most of all like certain modern European journals: internally simple but still beautiful".

Milev was surprisingly successful in carrying out his program for *Vezni*, which first appeared on 15 September, 1919. Each slender issue was attractive in format and printed on good paper. *Vezni* published poetry, articles and reviews by its guiding spirit as well as by other symbolists, particularly Ljudmil Stojanov. In addition it offered reproductions of modernistic art, for example paintings by Edvard Munch, and translations from such modernist theoreticians as Oscar Wilde. Milev never did things by halves, and his allegiance to modernism at this time was so thorough that he published an article under the title "Protiv realizma" (Against Realism) stating the case for modern estheticism. Certainly his esthetic bent emerged plainly in the attention he paid to art in general, to the layout of *Vezni*, and to the format of several books published by *Vezni* in the series "Books for Bibliophiles" (*Žestokijat prasten*, printed in this series, is externally quite attractive). Milev's esthetic sensibility was another constant in his life.

In the early 1920s Milev modified his basic intellectual and political assumptions. He knew personally some of the symbolists who had become communists, and in late 1920 he contemplated attempting to increase *Vezni*'s circulation by distributing it through communist outlets. By the time *Vezni* started its third year it was obvious that its orientation was shifting. An article of Milev's of October 1921 had hinted at change, and a month later he indicated that he was searching for an art less alienated from life than symbolist art. It should be noted that Milev had not been completely apolitical even when most committed to modernism:

in his own peculiar way he had accepted the October Revolution and had published a calendar for 1921 containing prose poems of a decidedly political character. But as the 1920s wore on Milev became ever more involved in current events.

His ideological shift led Milev to close *Vezni* down in March of 1922; in the same year he came out with poems like *Ad* (Hell, designed as the first part of a *Divine Comedy* more earthbound than the original) and "Den na gneva" (Day of Wrath), both of which dealt with social topics. In 1923 Milev applied unsuccessfully for admission to the Bulgarian Communist Party. In spite of his rebuff by the communists, other events of 1923 accelerated his leftward evolution. On 15 January, 1924 he brought out the first issue of the journal *Plamək* (Flame), which promoted the communist line. It was in *Plamək* that he printed the beginning of *Ad*, *Grozni prozi* (Ugly Prose Pieces), and *Septemvri* (September). *Grozni prozi* consisted of prose sketches treating mostly revolutionary subjects such as the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, or occurrences witnessed by the author in Berlin in 1918-1919. In style these pieces are completely expressionistic: the sentences are elliptical and designed to create an emotional atmosphere. The brief "Pogrebenie" (Burial) may be taken as typical:

Victims of the revolution. Fourteen hearses, covered with wreaths. A procession of a million with red banners. A throng along the sidewalks; indifferent faces, nestled in warm sable collars. An important gentleman turns in confusion: 'Hats off! — a funeral is passing,' a worker's coarse voice is saying to him.

Here in a few lines the author evokes the vast gulf between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the triumphant class of the future.

The poem *Septemvri* is Milev's masterpiece. Dedicated to the September uprising, it showed that Milev's heart, if not his head, was in the right place from the communist point of view. *Septemvri* was strongly influenced by the work of the Soviet poet Vladimir Majakovskij in style, tone and content. Many of its lines consist of a single word, placed in a lengthy series of similar words. The author experiments with typography, using spacing, capitals and the stepped lines reminiscent of Majakovskij. The poem is a disjointed tribute to a disjointed event: the people, as the protagonist of the poem, simply become disgusted with things as they are and irrationally, like a flood or a wild animal, set out to destroy the old order. Directed by no guiding thought, the rebellion is an elemental revolt of the masses. The sole individual revolutionary hero is a priest named Andrej who wheels his cannon around to fire his last shot at the

church which he had theretofore served. He is seized by the victorious bourgeoisie and hanged summarily. But he is prepared to give his life, as the death of one individual is relatively unimportant, and can only be of some significance if it aids the flow of history. Quite aside from the fact that the poem's only individual hero is a priest, there is a significant religious element in it. Initially the people march with God's name on their lips, certain that their cause has the Divine blessing. Even Andrej is but half liberated from his shackles: though he rejects the visible church, he dies with the cross of Christ upon his breast. At the end, however, the people's emancipation from religious deception is complete. They storm the heavens crying "Down with God!", and He is slain and cast down from the heights, after which the celestial paradise is transformed into an earthly one. The poet concludes *Septemvri* with a passionate confession of secular faith: "Everything written by philosophers, poets — / will come true! / — Without God! without master! / September will be May. / The life of man / will be an endless ascent / — upwards! upwards! / Earth will be a Paradise — / it will!" In such fashion Milev, even as he preached a rationalist ideology, remained true to his old irrational self, for *Septemvri* speaks of emotion and faith rather than reason.

Milev never did free himself totally from his old intellectual trappings, for as late as 1923 he put out collections heavily tinted with symbolism, and his letters to his father dating from 1923 and 1924 show that he was still much concerned with problems of modernist esthetics at that time. But for Milev, as for many other intellectuals at that time, the communists furnished the most consistent opposition to what appeared to them an inhuman social order. Had he lived longer, however, he would probably have recognized communism's neo-orthodoxy and parted company with it as an organized movement, for his attraction to it derived largely from his romantic temperament.

The publication of *Septemvri*, however, ensured that Milev would never face such a crisis. *Plamak* was closed down by the government in January of 1925 and Milev himself was haled into court to answer for his poem. He defended himself on esthetic rather than political grounds, maintaining that his only 'purpose' in writing had been to depict "events, actions, feelings, thoughts ... without concern for the way in which this depiction would be interpreted by different readers". This argument was at the least disingenuous, for the author of *Septemvri* promoted certain conclusions which his readers could hardly have missed. No doubt realizing this, Milev ended his appeal to his judges with a plea for artistic freedom: "Art can blossom only on the soil of freedom. Do not persecute

the writer so as not to kill art!" Milev's judges were little concerned with the sanctity of art under the circumstances, and so on 14 May, 1925 sentenced him to a year's imprisonment, fined him 20,000 *leva* and deprived him of his civil and political rights for two years. He was arrested before he could appeal the sentence and vanished forever during the wave of governmental repression in mid-1925. It was learned later that he had been murdered and buried in an unmarked, collective grave. This was the worst instance of outright repression of a writer to occur in Bulgaria between the wars.

The hard-core communists among Bulgarian poets were a different breed from the mercurial Milev. Marxist doctrine had begun to attract substantial numbers of adherents in the 1890s, especially after the founding of Dimitar Blagoev's *Novo vreme* in 1897 and other shorter-lived but more literary publications. Many Bulgarian writers temporarily adopted socialist notions in that decade, though most largely discarded them within a few years. In the first ten or fifteen years of the twentieth century the communists were unable to win and hold any writer of talent.

There were, though, untalented writers who served socialism in that era. Among them was Dimitar Poljanov (Dimitar Popov, 1876-1953), now regarded as the fountainhead of socialist poetry in Bulgaria. Poljanov conceived an interest in socialism in his student days in Sliven and in 1892 participated in a socialist study group. He commenced his career in 1894 by publishing a poem in the socialist journal *Den* (Day). In 1895 he printed his first verse using the pseudonym Poljanov. Supporting himself by working as a teacher, a civil servant and later as editor and contributor to various communist publications, he continued to write verse and some prose, collected in volumes like *Morski kapki* (Sea Drops, 1907) and *Železni stixove* (Iron Verses, 1921). His literary output was appropriately orthodox, denouncing bourgeois oppression and abounding with joyous predictions of the day when the victorious proletariat would sunder its chains and create a terrestrial paradise. Poljanov's literary gift was of such an inferior order, however, that communist critics of today claim no more than historical significance for him as the leading communist poet of the early part of the century. His poems were esthetically weak, being essentially political tracts with meter and rhyme added.

In the years after the October Revolution the communists could boast of some better writers. Perhaps the best of these was Xristo Smirnenski (1898-1923). Born Xristo Izmirliiev in the Macedonian town of Kukuš, he received the rudiments of an education in his native town and continued his studies in Sofia until family difficulties forced him to return to Kukuš

in 1910. When much of Macedonia was wrested from Bulgarian control during the Second Balkan War, the Izmirlievs took refuge in Sofia, where Xristo resumed his studies, first in a technical school and then, in 1917, in a military academy. But he had no interest whatever in either a technical or a military career — his calling was literature. In the precocious Bulgarian tradition, he had begun publishing as early as 1915 under such whimsical pseudonyms as Vedbal, Xrizantema and Lord Džems Šoking (Lord James Shocking). In 1916 he joined the staff of the established humor magazine *Balgaran* and later the newly founded *Smjax i səlzi* (Laughter and Tears). It was here that he first employed the pen-name Smirnenski.

Smirnenski published his initial collection of verse in 1918 under the pseudonym Vedbal and the title *Raznokalibreni vāzdiški v stixove i proza* (Varicalibre Sighs in Verse and Prose). The title was doubtless inspired by the military *milieu* in which the author found himself at the time. After he left the military academy in November of 1918 he supported himself by writing journalistic articles and quantities of lyric verse, usually with a social purpose. In 1919 he contributed to the communist journal *Červen smjax*, founded by his friends Krum Kjuljavkov and Xristo Jasenov. From 1920 on he wrote for communist organs, including *Červen smjax*, *Rabotničeski vestnik* (Workers' Gazette), and *Mladež* (Youth), participated in political demonstrations organized by the party in Sofia, and traveled about the country appearing before youth groups, whose members were often astonished to discover that such a prominent poet was so young. Indeed Smirnenski somehow always embodied the essence of youth and vigor. Photographs of him show a handsome man of piercing eyes burning with an inner fire. Although here external appearance probably corresponded to internal essence, any impression of physical well-being was deceptive, for Smirnenski was constantly in poor health. His final illness — tuberculosis — took his life before his twenty-fifth birthday. Toward the end Smirnenski was aware of the seriousness of his situation, but could always joke about it. For instance, a little more than a month before his death, he ended a personal letter with the litany: "Long live the Third Communist International! Long live the government of workers and peasants! Down with the bourgeoisie! Down with the temperature!" Simple cheerfulness could not avert the inevitable, however, and he died on 18 June, 1923.

Despite his poor health, Smirnenski's last years were busy and productive ones. In October of 1921 he returned to *Balgaran*; from November 1922 to May of 1923 he ran almost single-handed the newly founded

journal *Maskarad* (Masquerade), which ceased appearing when he was no longer able to write for it. His most important publication of the time was the collection *Da bade den!* (Let the Day Dawn!) of 1922, which sold out rapidly and was issued in a second edition the same year. Smirnenski's death deprived the communist movement in Bulgaria of one of its most luminous personalities and unique literary influences, one whose talent was recognized even by those completely opposed to his beliefs.

Though primarily a poet, Smirnenski did write prose *feuilletons* for the journals to which he contributed, but these were ordinarily so topical as now to be largely incomprehensible to anyone except specialists in the period. Of course the large fraction of his verse which treated topics of the day is now also of only minimal interest to the average reader.

The rest of Smirnenski's poetry, which still retains its appeal, is marked by both his publicistic bent and his orientation toward the humor magazines. There was a prominent satirical strain in his verse, and he composed some sharp epigrams: one describes a man at the Last Judgment who tries to deceive and flatter his judge, his excuse being that on earth he was a journalist. As a socialist Smirnenski always sought out the hideous essence of bourgeois society for satirical attack. The political tenor of this satire may be illustrated by "Pro Patria", which describes a Bulgarian patriot who gives money to support the anti-communist Russian refugees in Bulgaria but is too impoverished to help a Bulgarian war veteran. Smirnenski's scorn was also directed against the hypocrisy of personal relationships in the bourgeois world, especially those between the sexes. In "Amor omnia" he offers a humorous picture of a husband who, upon returning home unexpectedly, discovers his "faithful wife" dallying with another man. Instead of blaming his spouse, he upbraids himself for having appeared without warning, since otherwise he would not have discovered his wife's infidelity. The poet concludes that "love is a very tragic joke, gentlemen". Smirnenski placed a high valuation on feminine purity: one of his female characters remarks that "when a woman falls a love dies" ("Margaritki za Žaneta" [Daisies for Janet]). The realization that women often failed to live up to his ideal caused him to criticize them sharply, as in the last stanza of "Na zlatnite kədri" (To Golden Locks): "Why am I not ivy, to entwine / that marvellous, marble figure, / just as once she entwined / and sucked dry my purse!" Smirnenski did occasionally write straightforward love lyrics, though.

A favorite device of Smirnenski's was the snapper at the conclusion of a poem. A poignant instance of this is to be found in the short "Sədba" (Fate). The poet notes a recent obituary on a fence (in Bulgaria it is still

the custom to post obituary notices all over town) and reflects sadly on another soul's departure from this vale of suffering. Unlike the poet, however, other passers-by are indifferent to the fate of this individual, and the wind finally blows the obituary onto the pavement, where it suffers a final, cruel indignity: "And the obituary stayed there for long / unnoted, seen by none, / but here a scraggy cur approaches calmly, / sniffs at it and lifts his leg." Such was the tragedy of the individual in bourgeois society, as Smirnenski saw it. It had nothing to do, he would have maintained, with any universal human condition.

Smirnenski was a lyric poet who made himself over into a political poet. Therefore even a poem with a lyrical title such as "Night" or "Autumn" frequently turns out to have a strong social component: for instance the night will envelop a mother grieving for her offspring who have fallen in the class struggle. The poet criticized contemporary society, not as a nihilist like Stojan Mixajlovski or Georgi Stamatov, but as an advocate of a communist society based on reason and justice. It was from this viewpoint that he composed such pieces as "Pərvi maj" (May-day), a lyrical prophecy of the world of the future, or "Utrešnja den" (Tomorrow). Characteristically, in such poems Smirnenski does not describe the future paradise in its being. He can visualize it only in its becoming, in the pangs of birth: "and there along the stony road / of the struggle of many centuries, / smothering its powerful fate / against its granite breast, / humankind approaches / the doors of a new life". What lay beyond those doors Smirnenski could not say, but he was persuaded that it was splendid. And through the power of his poetic talent he helped convince others that this undefined future was eminently worth fighting and dying for.

If Smirnenski was a martyr for communism in intent only (he died of natural causes and was not especially persecuted by the regime), Nikola Vapcarov (1909-1942) was a martyr both in intent and in deed. Born in a village in the Pirin mountains, Vapcarov in 1924 entered the *gymnasium* in Razlog, where he engaged in such extracurricular activities as organizing a temperance society. Two years later he began training at an institute for naval mechanics in Varna. The communist propaganda to which he was exposed while there made him consider emigrating to the Soviet Union. Unlike Smirnenski, Vapcarov worked as a common laborer, devoting his spare time to organizing his fellows. In 1936 he was dismissed because of his political activities and moved to Sofia, where he was employed as a locomotive fireman, a fireman in a mill, a slaughterhouse technician.

Although Vapcarov's employment was not conducive to literary endeavor, he could associate with other communist writers in the capital, for instance Georgi Karaslavov and Xristo Radevski. And then he did do some literary work, such as editing newspapers. In 1940 he published the one collection of verse printed during his lifetime, under the title *Motorni pesni* (Motor Songs) and the pseudonym Nikola Jankov. But Vapcarov was too much of an activist to content himself only with writing. In 1940, after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Soviet Union offered the Bulgarian government a treaty of peace and friendship. When Bulgaria declined the proposal the Bulgarian Communist Party undertook to mobilize public opinion in support of the treaty. Vapcarov headed the campaign and was briefly arrested as a result. Following his release he was given the important assignment of organizing communist guerrilla activity in the country. Subsequently he was taken into custody on 4 March, 1942 and executed on 23 July. On the eve of his death he wrote two brief poems, which furnish proof of both the staunchness of his faith and the power which the clichés of communist rhetoric exerted over him at the most critical point of his life: "A deadly shot — and worms — forever after! / That's simple, logical, what can we do! / Yet in the storm again we'll be together, / Because, my people dear, I loved you so!"

Vapcarov's poetic talent, though genuine, was of a lower order than Smirnenski's, but Vapcarov was ideologically more orthodox than his predecessor. He was a proletarian poet who wrote of socialist construction before the fact. He is always deadly serious, unlike Smirnenski, and occasionally displays a crudity of mind and deficiency of tact repellent to fastidious readers. Of course the fact that he was a common laborer enhances the value of his work in the eyes of contemporary Marxist critics.

Vapcarov's verse is imbued with an intense belief in the communist cause, wrath against oppressors, sympathy for the downtrodden, and an unmistakable death-wish which links him to Xristo Botev. The proletarian poet expressed his admiration for his radical forerunner in the poem "Botev", where he decided that Botev was as inexplicable as life itself. The two men were similar in several important ways. Like Botev, Vapcarov faced the problem of love for a wife in conflict with his larger social duty; like Botev, he left his wife unhesitatingly when duty demanded it. The lyric tendency in his soul led him to compose love poems on a few occasions, but he always remembered where his primary obligation lay. As Botev had done, he treated nature lyrically, but at the same time in a politically appropriate way. Thus in "Spomen" (Memory) he gives a

moving description of a fellow worker who died because of foul working conditions, without seeing the spring he longed for. Lyric and social strands are intertwined in the brief "Prolet" (Spring): "Oh spring of mine so white! / Oh once again but let me see you soaring / and giving life to squares so desolate, / oh once again but let me see your sunlight, / and let me die then on your barricades!" Vapcarov likewise presses the traditional theme of patriotism into the service of social justice. The poet loves his fatherland, but with a passion which is agonizing because of the suffering visited upon the common people: "My land! Oh my own, my beautiful land! / Steeped in blood and rocked by insurrections!" ("Zemja" [Land]). In short, as the poet says at one point, love — whether love of woman, love of nature, or love of fatherland — is perverted into its antithesis, hatred, by the injustice of the social order: "You teach me with parables, mother, / to love everyone as I do you. / I would love them, mother, I would, / but I must have freedom and bread" ("Imam si rodina" [I Have a Fatherland]).

Vapcarov was a communist poet who thirsted to live in a proletarian state but never saw the dawn. He would have been a pillar of socialist realism under the new regime, for while living in bourgeois society he wrote poems like "Šte stroim zavod" (We Shall Build a Factory), which is at least partly in the tradition of the literature of socialist construction, and "Kino" (Movie), where the poet angrily denounces an American movie for picturing life in completely rosy — and therefore false — colors. Such poems as these were composed quite along the lines which the post-1944 regime wished to see followed, and it is logical that Vapcarov has now been enshrined along with Smirnenski as an immortal representative of communist poetry and true proletarian dedication in the arts.

Of the important communist poets of the 1920s and 1930s, the only one who lived to see the new order was Xristo Radevski (1903-). Radevski studied romance philology at Sofia University and first published in 1924 in a humor magazine. Thereafter he contributed to several journals, wrote children's books, and continued to turn out lyric and satirical poetry gathered in the volumes *Kam partijata* (To the Party, 1932), *Nie sme pravova strana* (We Are a Country of Law and Order, 1933), and *Puls* (Pulse, 1936). After 1944 Radevski was rewarded for his unwavering loyalty with important positions. In particular, he was responsible for keeping the Union of Bulgarian Writers in line as its secretary from 1949 to 1958, only to be ousted when its structure was liberalized. He was for some time editor-in-chief of the journal *Septemvri*.

During the 1920s and 1930s Radevski's poetic achievements gained

him some admiration. He was renowned for his mordant satires on the political regimes of the 1930s and for his devotion to the communist ideal. His stance required a certain amount of courage at a time when the Bulgarian Communist Party was suppressed. His loyalty to the party was so intense as to bestow some esthetic value to his poems on party subjects. Traditional religious attitudes — only reversed — are still alive in Radevski: he is ready to rip down the old icons and replace them with pictures of communist saints. For him Lenin is almost divine: see the concluding lines from "Malkijat bezbožnik" (The Little Atheist): "In the little portrait on the farther wall / Lenin smiles contentedly. / He smiles, and a wondrous light / illuminates his smiling eyes". Other prominent communist figures emerge as prophets or martyrs. Beyond this, Radevski attempted imagining how the communist paradise of the twenty-second century would look in "Mečta" (Dream, 1940). But even here his imagination soon failed him, and he was reduced to generalities. As long as Radevski and his party were out of power, his poetry had some merit. His work of the communist period, however, is strikingly inferior to his pre-1944 poetry. It is the writing of a literary bureaucrat, with no spark left in it.

Not all the leading communist writers of the 1920s remained in the movement. The most spectacular collective defection occurred in 1925 when several writers formerly associated with the communist periodical *Nov pat* (New Way) publicly left it, announcing their intention to seek greater freedom in art. The group consisted of the critic Georgi Canev, the poets Nikola Furnadžiev and Asen Razcvetnikov, and the prose-writer Angel Karalijčev. All four of them were alive in 1944 and all were to a greater or lesser degree eventually forgiven their apostasy of 1925.

Asen Razcvetnikov (1897-1951) was born in the vicinity of Gorna Orjaxovica and received his elementary education in his native village and his secondary education in nearby Tŕnovo. He graduated in law from Sofia University in 1925, studied in Vienna and Frankfurt and then returned to Bulgaria to teach in Gabrovo and Sofia for a time. He became known in the first years of the 1920s as a contributor to the communist periodicals *Rabotničeski vestnik*, *Červen smjax* and especially *Nov pat*. His initial verse collection, *Žertveni kladi* (Sacrificial Pyres, 1924), was welcomed by the radical press, but things changed when he deserted the leftist camp for *Zlatorog* and proclaimed his poetic emancipation in the short narrative poem *Dvojnĭk* (The Double, 1926). Razcvetnikov thereafter attempted to blaze his own philosophical path, but he lacked inner resources and retreated into the pessimism which colored his entire collection *Planinski večeri* (Mountain Evenings, 1934). During

the 1930s he occupied himself with the production of children's books, especially pieces based on riddles and folk tales, as well as translation work. After 1944 he partially conformed to the new situation and died in Moscow, where he had been sent for his health. At bottom, however, his literary approach was certainly incompatible with communist doctrine.

To be sure, some social protest could be found in Razcvetnikov's poetry of both the earlier and the later periods. In "Molitva" (Prayer), inspired by Xristo Botev's piece, the poet implores the evening to cradle those who have been mortally wounded "in the struggle for truth and for freedom", to close their eyes and wipe away their last tears. Some time later, in 1933, Razcvetnikov grieved over the violence which was then engulfing his country and expressed the helpless feeling of one in a doomed vessel "which is racing along into the unknown / across the fatal, endless depths" ("Sofija — 1933"). The appearance of such a strain in a poem of protest supports the critic Malčo Nikolov's characterization of Razcvetnikov as a "skeptical, Hamlet-like spirit, disillusioned with the world, with the triumph of evil, because he has believed very deeply in the good". Razcvetnikov's notion that man is morally obligated to fight for justice even though he cannot prevail is important in *Dvojniki*. The author's double here is the naive Don Quixote, who is eternally prepared to join the unequal struggle for the right despite the fact that he is always beaten. The author can offer his valiant double only dispirited solace and admiration for his valor: "Don Quixote, Don Quixote, my double, cruelly mocked and crushed, / let me kiss the blood on your broken helmet and iron mail." The poet's double ends a suicide.

In other instances Razcvetnikov, yielding to the philosophical nihilism typical of his predecessors such as Javorov, describes the horror of utter loneliness. He can detect no meaning in life and thinks it pointless to ponder the question of life's significance. In "Step" (Steppe) the poet lies in a dull torpor amid a great plain while the wind plays over him: "I have not a live spark nor a drop of faith in my breast, / I have nowhere in the world a brother nor a beloved ... / I lie in silence, I do not think, and want nothing." Occasionally he rouses himself from despondency to seek an answer to the mystery of existence, but discovers none. In the poem "Na straža" (On Guard), written on the occasion of his standing watch at Jordan Jovkov's bier in 1937, he asks the Divinity in desperation "why He sends us hungry to the earth / and then cuts us down in midpath?" But there is no one to reply to his question, and the poet reverts to metaphysical despair: "And I am silent and wait. And tremble. / In vain. A dream. A lie. Eternity. Nothingness."

Even Razcvetnikov's love poetry is mired in depression. The end of a love affair is the subject of "Tova e kraj na taja stranna povest" (This Is the End of the Strange Tale). The persona, once again abandoned to his solitude after a period of companionship, exhorts himself to bear up under this trial and consoles himself with the thought that "everything in this world is merely smoke", that the only joy in life is "silent, endless peace". From time to time Razcvetnikov looked beyond himself to the verities of religion or the beauties of nature, as in his poem describing Vitoša, the majestic mountain near Sofia, but he could never persuade himself that life was anything more than a senseless tragedy. Human suffering might be alleviated, but never eliminated.

The career and literary viewpoint of Nikola Furnadžiev (1903-1968) parallel Razcvetnikov's to an astounding degree. Like Razcvetnikov, Furnadžiev was slow to complete his formal education. He studied medicine for a time, then transferred to philology, but finished a course in philosophy and pedagogy only in 1930. He had published for the first time long before that, at the age of sixteen in 1919. In the early 1920s he worked for *Nov pat*; in 1924 he composed the radical verses of *Proleten vjatar* (Spring Wind, 1925), the analogue of Razcvetnikov's *Žertveni kladi*. Furnadžiev's poems of the period immediately following his break with communism were gathered in *Doga* (Rainbow, 1929); finally, his verse of the 1930s was brought together in the volume *Stixotvorenija* (Verse, 1938). In the post-1925 era he was a prominent contributor to *Zlatorog* and later to Canev's *Izkustvo i kritika* (Art and Criticism). Again like Razcvetnikov, Furnadžiev wrote for children, especially after 1944. In his last years Furnadžiev was a faithful supporter of the regime and occupied a number of important posts in the literary bureaucracy.

A reading of Furnadžiev's poetry of the 1920s and 1930s reveals significant affinities between him and Razcvetnikov. Both men incline toward nihilism, though Furnadžiev does not go so far as Razcvetnikov. In his youth Furnadžiev could be markedly pessimistic, but at the same time he had at least a vague faith in the future: "How gloomy my soul is, / with what pain do I repay, / but then spring is sending to the earth / cranes and the warm wind" ("Søvest" [Conscience]). Later he continued the quest for faith, but without finding anything very substantial in which to believe: "Oh I believe in the world, I believe in the bright torture of blows, / I believe in thee, love, I believe in the pure morning hour!" ("Utro" [Morning]). An optimistic strain occasionally relieves the gloom of his verse, as in the poem of 1938 "Svetlini" (Lights): "And I set out, my heart beats freely, / beneath me is the soil, above me the heavens" (this

last image, symbolizing the poet's communion with the universe, occurs more than once in his poetry).

Despite all this, the prevailing tone of Furnadžiev's verse is dark: he often uses words like gloom, darkness, winter. A poem like "Balada" (Ballad), written in January of 1940, illustrates his depression over current happenings. Even in these contexts, though, his pessimism was personal, as witness his Liliavian lines of 1941: "I would storm again / not fortresses — what good is it to struggle with iron? / — but my own solitude and my own darkness" ("Pred neizvestnostta" [Before the Unknown]). The influence of symbolist melancholy is discernible in poems like "Nokti" (Claws), which describes the poet's unenviable lot: "I went along and was oppressed by dread grief, / because I was now alone and homeless, / because that yellow, swollen disc [the moon] / in the heavens was as if an invalid's face." Depressed though he may be, Furnadžiev somehow keeps moving, in the hope that eventually he will emerge from the gloom of his situation, whereas Razcvetnikov in a similar position would have been transfixedly immobile in his depression.

The prose-writer among the *Nov pat* defectors, Angel Karalijčev (1902-), has had a checkered literary and political career. He began to publish at seventeen and moved in communist circles in the early 1920s. In the latter part of the 1920s and all through the 1930s he wrote numerous books, including children's books. He worked mainly in the brief prose sketch or short story. Karalijčev's interests in Bulgarian history and travel meshed very neatly in a travel sketch of his on Macedonia — published at the beginning of the Second World War, when Macedonia had just been retaken by Bulgaria — where he gave his readers a sensitive description of the contemporary state of that land, taking into account the history of its various regions. The titles of his collections give indications of his major themes: *Car Ivan Šišman* (Czar Ivan Šišman, 1928), *Smertta na xan Kruma* (The Death of Khan Krum, 1929), *Ləžoven svjat* (Deceptive World, 1932), *Srebərna rəkojka* (Silver Shock, 1935, characteristically subtitled "Travel notes, moods, short stories"), his travel notes of 1939 entitled *Zemjata na bəlgarite* (Land of the Bulgarians).

In his writings of the 1920s and 1930s Karalijčev combines elements reminiscent of his predecessors and contemporaries in the native literary tradition: a concern with style and folk motifs which hark back to Petko Todorov; a patriotism and sensitivity to the beauties and history of his native land which recall Ivan Vazov; a tendency toward social reconciliation which links him with Jordan Jovkov. For example, the short "Otče naš" (Our Father, 1926) describes a partisan who has come down from

the mountains to tell with horror of the cruelty inflicted upon the Turks and has to be reminded that his own family is subjected to reprisals from them when he is gone. The title story of one collection, "Rosenskija kamen most" (The Stone Bridge on the Rosica, 1925), utilizes the folk tradition of walling up a human sacrifice in a structure in order to ensure its stability which we have already encountered in Todorov's *Zidari*. The tale has many supernatural elements — for instance, it is indicated supernaturally to the builder that he must sacrifice his beloved for the sake of the bridge, to serve all the people. He makes the sacrifice, but only at the price of assuming a heavy burden of guilt. The murdered woman appears to him in spirit and tries to suffocate him with her hair, after which he falls ill and can think only of gaining her forgiveness. Karalijčev's tendency to minimize social conflicts is evident in "Zagubenata rodina" (Lost Homeland), a prose-poem written in 1926, the fiftieth anniversary of Botev's death. "Zagubenata rodina" celebrates the heroism of the Bulgarian people, the beauties of the Bulgarian land, and especially the feats of Xristo Botev, who, the author feels, could not really have been so full of hatred for oppressors as he appeared to be.

After 1944 Karalijčev, making amends for his error of 1925, adjusted rapidly to changed conditions, writing both adult and juvenile literature. He has been employed in various literary and editorial capacities.

Emanuil Popdimitrov (1887-1943), though a partial symbolist poet with communist links, avoided becoming excessively involved in literary disputes or succumbing too enthusiastically to literary fashions. The future poet was born into an established ecclesiastical family (the *pop* in his surname signifies that his father was a priest) and was raised in a religious household. He was by nature inclined toward the contemplative, scholarly life. While at school in the provinces he read writers like Puškin, Lermontov, Dostoevskij and Nietzsche. After a teaching stint he enrolled at Sofia University as a philosophy student while simultaneously attending the Art Academy. After the university crisis of early 1907 he departed first for the University of Belgrade and then to France in 1907-1908 and Switzerland in 1909. While living abroad he took up symbolism in literature and idealism in philosophy. In 1912 he issued his first volume of verse, entitled *Sanjat na ljubovta* (Dream of Love). His early poems, influenced by Kiril Xristov and Penčo Slavejkov, often dealt with the theme of chaste love in a mystical spirit. In the early 1920s Popdimitrov was appointed instructor (*časten docent*) in comparative literature at Sofia University, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Popdimitrov was not wholly an unobtrusive scholar and poet who

remained enclosed in his own private world. Swayed by the revolutionary fervor of the early 1920s, he injected enough social criticism into his verse collections *Korabi* (Ships, 1923) and *Vselena* (Universe, 1924) to cause them to be welcomed by the radical press, something which would never have happened with his self-centered earlier collections such as *Dnevnikat na samotnija* (Diary of a Lonely One, 1913). In the 1930s, however, he treated social themes more infrequently. In the inter-war decades he periodically put out small volumes of verse, for instance *Zlatna žetva* (Golden Harvest, 1928) and especially *Esenni plamaci* (Autumn Flames, 1935), marking the thirtieth anniversary of his literary activity. Popdimitrov also tried his hand at narrative poetry with *Zlatni nivi i bojni poleta* (Golden Fields and Battle Grounds, 1928), an unsuccessful treatment of the Balkan War. A more readable effort was the satirical narrative poem *V stranata na rozite* (In the Country of Roses, first published in 1939, substantially revised in 1943). An entertaining though disjointed 'rogue poem' chronicling the career of an opportunistic social climber, *V stranata na rozite* displays a lightly sardonic touch vaguely reminiscent of Puškin's *Evgenij Onegin*. Aside from these items, Popdimitrov authored dramatic poems, prose works and several scholarly books on literature. In general, though, he remained an intimate poet, the sort whom present-day Bulgarian critics would largely ignore if he had not cooperated with the Bulgarian Communist Party during the Second World War until his death in 1943.

But then again Popdimitrov might be studied today for the social elements in such poems of the 1920s as "Narod" (The People) — where he proclaimed that he drew his strength from the masses and was prepared to sacrifice himself for them — or "Sadbā" (Fate), in which he announced his readiness to mount the barricades: "I go with the people / even where they are killing — / to be killed", where he could pour out "the life-giving potion, / the sacred liquor — / blood!" Still, though radical social motifs were certainly in evidence during portions of his career, the main tenor of his poetry was personal and even metaphysical, quite foreign to the violence of the class struggle. His intellectual processes utilize religious imagery to such an extent that even when he is describing the beauties of nature or the delights of love his thoughts automatically run in religious channels. In "Ikionostas" (Iconostasis) he marvels at a sunset, kneeling before the wonders of nature and invoking the Virgin. In the brief "Šatər" (Tent) he writes of a meal for two consisting of bread and wine, the elements of communion. The poet's religious sense informs his approach to the deepest attachments and tragedies of life, as in "Zimna panixida" (Winter

Requiem), written at the death of his small granddaughter. He celebrates the mysteries of family love and the interlinking of generations in a 'triptych' of poems dedicated to the three most important women in his life: his wife (addressed consistently as "Madonna"), his mother and his daughter. In "Pradedi" (Ancestors) the poet speaks of the endless series of generations from which he has sprung. He also recognized his own responsibility for the continuation of the race: in the unusual poem "Začatie" (Conception) he chastely evokes the sexual act, including the arousal to climax, the return to innocence and — most important — conception: "And a new human being has now set out toward earth / from the other shore of eternity" (in a poem to his daughter he refers to her as having arrived "from the other shore" and terms her his "hope for eternal life"). Human love was a major theme of Popdimitrov's lyrics, for instance in a series of romantic evocations of individual women, each bearing a feminine name as title: Laura, Lisxen, Ema, Efrosina, Iren. Even when he verged on raw sensualism, as in "V kopalnjata" (At the Bath), his approach was still elevated. For the most part his poetry of the 1920s and 1930s was clear, comprehensible, and little contaminated by symbolism, although a portion of his work (e.g. "Bezumen pastir" [The Insane Shepherd]) ran along symbolist lines. Popdimitrov always remained faithful to his search for answers to the deeper questions of existence, though he was on occasion forced to use mystical language to express his insights.

Nikola Rakitin (1885-1934), a lyric poet of quiet charm, is almost unknown outside Bulgaria and enjoys little renown even in his native country. Ejected from the University of Sofia upon its closing in 1907, he visited Switzerland before returning to Bulgaria in 1908 to complete his formal education. He was then given a teaching assignment at a *gymnasium* in Pleven, a sizable provincial city in northwestern Bulgaria. He ended by living the rest of his life in Pleven, remaining on the sidelines of literary life and consciously passing up opportunities to move to the capital.

Rakitin first began publishing poetry in the landmark year of 1905 and put together his initial verse collection in 1909 under the title *Pod cāfnalite višni* (Beneath the Blossoming Cherry Trees). In the First World War Rakitin fought on the Rumanian front and later printed collections of war poetry. In the course of his life he published more than twenty-five thin volumes of verse bearing such titles as *Predi da sāmne* (Before the Dawn, 1920), *V tišinata na dalečnija grad* (In the Silence of the Distant City, 1921), and *Prolet pri Vit* (Spring by the Vit [a river near Pleven], 1929). Most of them were no more than booklets; many were printed in Pleven.

Being a lyric poet, Rakitin was out of his depth when he attempted longer poems, such as *Štarčeto gnezdo* (The Stork's Nest, 1924), or prose, for example the stories gathered in *Rusalska poljana* (The Waternymph's Meadow, published posthumously in 1938). He was happiest in the bosom of his family, busy with his teaching duties, writing brief lyrics. In 1933 he was given a jubilee celebration and appointed director of a museum in Pleven. But this relative success proved his downfall, for later he was dismissed from his position for no good reason and had difficulty in finding another. Ultimately he decided that things were too much for him and committed suicide on 2 May, 1934 by jumping from a train as it passed through a tunnel. He left his poetic epitaph in "Kovarstvo s podlost me srazixa" (Guile and Baseness Have Struck Me Down), the last stanza of which reads: "Farewell, thou my native land, / farewell, oh golden autumn expanse. / With a free soul, oh Lord, / I come before Thee proud and pure."

The poet who faced his own dissolution with equanimity described his life and work with sensitivity. In "Žitie" (Saint's Life) he says of his poems that "I picked them from my soul, / quiet as the autumn skies, / responsive as a forest echo, / pure as the first winter snow, — / quiet songs, filled with the scent / of the flowers that grow in our native land." A simple faith in God, a calm attachment to everything Bulgarian, a deep love of nature and the countryside imbue Rakitin's verse. Taught by the ancient Balkan mountains, as he phrased it, Rakitin was devoted to his country, especially the fertile plains around Pleven. He never tired of describing in straightforward but eloquent verse the changes of the seasons or the play of light upon a sea of ripening grain. Even his religious consciousness was nourished by the countryside: in the poem "Xristos" (Christ) he writes that a Christ returned to earth would be "barefoot, with a face deeply tanned by the sun", His eyes reflecting the "expanse of the fields with their eternal hopes".

Rakitin was a contemplative poet, and the theme of silence often occurs in his writing (cf. the title *In the Silence of the Distant City*). Rakitin's silence is not absolute, for through it he can detect the city's distant murmur or the sound of a bell drifting through the air, reminding him that life is near at hand though not insistent. "My world", he wrote, "is the wondrous silence of a house closed and shuttered", a house which reminds the poet of life just as do sounds in the distance. Rakitin seeks silence at night. In the poem "Noštta e moja den" (The Night Is My Day) he dwells lovingly on the night, when he is able, "locked in my room, a pale hermit", to write, create and think. He is still enveloped by the

world, but now it is in a state of suspended animation. But then the night holds terrors as well, especially when the writer's mood changes from one of pensive cheerfulness to one of gloom and despair. Thus he remarks that he fears the bustle of the world but is even more frightened by the "silence of his lonely room" which "oppresses his soul" and compels him to recognize his own "aimlessness in the world and all the insignificance of life". At such times he felt that something within him was warped so that even in solitude he could not liberate himself from a generalized distrust. Such notes as these in his work help explain how a poet who on the surface seemed so balanced and life-affirming could finally end his own existence.

An extraordinarily unprolific poet of the interwar years whose poetic achievement has been fully recognized only recently but who has greatly influenced the younger Bulgarian poets of the 1960s is Atanas Dalčev (1904-). A native of Macedonia, Dalčev studied at Sofia University and later lived for a time in France and Italy. On the whole his life has been an uneventful one, punctuated by the appearance of thin collections of his verse entitled *Prozorec* (Window, 1926), *Stixotvorenija* (Verse, 1928), *Pariž* (Paris, 1930), and *Angelat ot Šartar* (The Angel of Chartres, 1943). His entire original poetic production can easily be fitted into a volume of under 150 pages.

In much of his work Dalčev is very prosaic, which is perhaps an advantage for a poet writing in a little-known language, since his lines can be more adequately translated. His verse has a colloquial quality and is deceptively simple; in fact some of his poems seem almost banal, and their deeper significance becomes apparent only after repeated readings. Dalčev is a bookish poet in the sense that his books and scholarly pursuits are at least as important to him as 'real life'. As he wrote in a four-line poem on Paris, "Na zaminavane" (Leaving): "What is there to regret? I had / neither mistress nor friend; / I walked along and tipped my hat / to the winds alone in this city." The image of the window occurs time and again in Dalčev's poetry, so it is fitting that his first entire collection should have been titled *Prozorec*. He withdraws from the world, but not wholly, for he loves to stand at the window where he can himself be seen but still be sheltered from the elements and human passions while he observes the life going on outside. Windows are given especial prominence in the Parisian cycle of poems, written during a period when he was particularly separated from his fellow men. Through his window he can witness the bright and the everyday — for instance a young woman washing windows as the sunlight reflecting from them sends lightning flashes into

his dark room ("Pladnja" [Noon]) — or else the corrupt and perverted, as an "old debauchee with a semi-child" who enters the hotel opposite ("Nošt" [Night]). The window sometimes enters into a symbiosis with the poet, as when he views the gloomy night through his own reflection in the glass ("Nošt"), or threatens to "stick his tongue out at the world, / hanged above the black window" ("Djavolsko" [Diabolic]).

In certain ways the poet's ideal is the stone, which never changes and is holy because it cannot sin: "only the dead is eternal and sainted, / the living lives in sin" ("Kamək" [Stone]). Dalčev is incapable of transforming himself into an inanimate object, so he decides to vegetate in solitude and live in his dreams and memories, while time passes monotonously until he fades out of existence: "We die constantly and slowly vanish / now from this place, then from that, / until at last we disappear completely" ("Večer" [Evening]). The end of time is death, and no rooms or doors, however solid, can protect one from "Her — the eternal bandit" ("Vratite" [Doors]).

Although Dalčev's verse is overwhelmingly personal and almost other-worldly, some topical elements creep in occasionally, particularly in the Paris cycle. In one poem, "Rabotnik" (Worker), the poet watches through a window a Parisian worker eating his supper at night accompanied by his family, with the "lighted lamp shining above his head like a halo". A sterner note is sounded in a piece describing those unfortunates who earn a few pennies by carrying advertisements around. The poet is repelled by the callousness of the arrangement: "Man is not a brother for us, but a wall / upon which are pasted advertisements" ("Nosači na reklama" [Carriers of Advertisements]). But such thoughts as these distract Dalčev only momentarily from his absorption with the overarching questions of time, memory, life and death.

One Bulgarian poetess deserving of mention at this point is Dora Gabe (1886-), the widow of the literary historian Bojan Penev. Born in Dobrudža, she became almost as enthusiastic a celebrator of her native region in verse as Jordan Jovkov in prose, writing a number of poems on Dobrudža between 1916 and 1940. A cultured woman, she studied in Varna and later in places like Geneva and Grenoble. Though she first attracted notice in 1908 with a volume entitled *Temenugi* (Violets), her more mature work appeared in such collections as *Zemen pət* (Earthly Way, 1928) and the longer poem *Lunatička* (The Sleepwalker, 1932). A member of the *Zlatorog* circle, Miss Gabe was also a prolific writer of children's books. Since 1944 she has continued to produce children's books and is now an orthodox supporter of the official literary line.

Dora Gabe's verse, though not especially profound, is sufficiently good to mark her as an important minor poet. She has a feminine liking for common household objects as aids to contemplation: in "Starinen portret" (Old Portrait) the poetess, inspired by a portrait, falls to musing on the question of existence, convinced that she can derive strength for her present life from the purity of those who have gone before her. The notion of physical isolation is central to the poem "V stajata" (In the Room), where the persona huddles in the middle of a room as if the walls could protect her from death itself, while simultaneously she wishes to be joined with life, whose muffled echoes she can hear. In the poem *Lunatička* the speaker wanders through the nocturnal city in a somnambulant state, observing all manner of unhappiness and woe but excusing herself from trying to assist by arguing that she is merely a disembodied spirit, a sleepwalker. The poetess is both bound to the world by a feminine fondness for material things and desirous of escaping from it physically or psychologically.

The best woman poet Bulgarian literature has yet produced is undoubtedly Elisaveta Bagrjana. Born in 1893 in Sofia, she is still active in literature. After completing a *gymnasium* course in the capital, she taught for a year before enrolling at the University of Sofia to study Slavic philology under Bojan Penev. Being a trifle younger than the group of writers who began publishing in the years 1905-1907, as well as a slow developer, she had written verse for some time before her friend Jordan Jovkov divined that she was a poet, insisted upon reading her work, and placed her first poems in the journal *Savremenna misal* (Contemporary Thought) in 1915.

After the First World War Bagrjana taught and contributed to different journals, in time becoming a leading member of the *Zlatorog* group. Collections of her verse appeared periodically and always went through several editions. These included *Večnata i svjatata* (The Eternal and the Sacred, 1927); *Zvezda na morjaka* (The Sailor's Star, 1932); and *Serce čoveško* (The Heart of Man, 1936). Further, like many of her colleagues she wrote juvenile books. Since 1944 she has continued to write, modifying her poetry to suit current conditions if compelled to. In 1953, during the Stalin era, she published *Pet zvezdi* (Five Stars), a collection of poems dealing with such subjects as the new Soviet woman. *Pet zvezdi* turned out to be something of an anomaly in her development, however, for her most recent collection, *Ot brjag do brjag* (From Shore to Shore, 1963), is comprised of pieces which for the most part recall her more personal poetry of the pre-1944 period. At present Bagrjana serves as poetry editor

of the literary journal *Septemvri*. Single-volume selected editions of her work have been put out in recent years, and she ranks as one of the best living Bulgarian poets.

Bagrjana's world is at once modern and traditional, and in any case feminine. She views reality through a woman's eyes and has thought much about woman's place in the scheme of things. In this regard she may be associated with the Russian poetesses Anna Axmatova and Marina Cvetaeva, some of whose work she has translated. Bagrjana has no significant feminine predecessors in Bulgarian poetry, but certain facets of her character (e.g. her love for the sea, her wish to travel to exotic places, her hedonism) bring her close to Kiril Xristov, though her hedonism is modified by a religious sense of the tragic quality of life, foreign to him.

A major component of Bagrjana's outlook is a cult of youth, although one not taken to ridiculous extremes. For her, youth is a golden time of life, for then a person is least burdened with family and social responsibilities, least afflicted by physical or spiritual malaises, most free. It was the urge for freedom which impelled Bagrjana to write lyric 'songs' celebrating youth and beauty, especially her own.

The poet's obsession with freedom appears in several forms. It emerges in its most elemental shape in the poem "Stixii" (The Elements, 1925). Can one block the wind, she asks rhetorically, as it races across the squares and fences of her native town, can one stop rivers as they gather in the spring freshets, can one retard the fermentation of native wine? Of course not. In like manner, then, she, "the free one, the wanderer, the unbowed — / the sister of the wind, the water and the wine" cannot be kept from visiting distant places. A more metaphysical concept of human freedom is expressed in her later poem "Penelopa na XX vek" (Penelope of the Twentieth Century), where she speaks of the way in which every human being is embedded in history, inextricably linked both to those endless generations from which he has sprung and to the descendants to follow him. Yet unlike Emanuil Popdimitrov when he wrote of similar things, Bagrjana rebels against this bondage. She wants to see herself just once in her metaphysical nudity, stripped of her historical trappings: "I would like with one insane leap into infinity / to sunder all knots — and to see — / myself, freed — my very self — my own countenance / without the past, without a pedigree, without an age or name!"

Realizing full well that the totally liberated personality is an unattainable ideal, Bagrjana seeks an approximation to it in the spirit of the wanderer. The most poignant symbol of the free spirit for her is the sea,

whose "light and free" horizon summons young people from the stifling cities like a "hidden passion" ("Zovət na moreto" [The Call of the Sea]). In another poem she asserts that one who has never felt the "temptation of the distance, / the ecstasy of motion, / the shudders of danger, / the drunkenness of open space / and the fatigue of wandering" cannot genuinely comprehend the depths of existence or even properly appreciate the joys of home ("Pticata s motornoto sərce" [The Bird with the Motor Heart]). Bagrjana did not restrict herself to dreaming about travel: she visited a number of European cities, dedicating to Paris and Venice cycles of poems in which she emphasizes the works of men's hands and the history these cities have witnessed. She gives another motive for her traveling in a poem from the "Zovət na moreto" cycle: in a foreign land she can come closest to divesting herself of all life's encumbrances. If only she were a man, she writes, she would take ship as a sailor, journey from harbor to harbor without sinking any roots, wander about streets "without friends, without acquaintances, without comrades, / ... among strangers — a stranger and unknown". When she leaves each port it would become, as she says in "Posleden den" (Last Day, 1926), "merely a dream that has been dreamt".

The impulse toward freedom is only one thematic strand, albeit a very important one, in Bagrjana's verse. When she is at home she is tied to those about her by invisible but powerful threads which are sources of bittersweet emotions. One of her principal shackles is love, a force which on occasion well-nigh enslaved her. In "Intérieur" (1923) the poetess contemplates small objects in the room which remind her of her beloved and muses upon her involuntary servitude to him. She has repeatedly told herself that she would not keep an appointment with him but each time "I go to him obedient, / as if enchanted in some mysterious hypnosis. / And I return broken and weary, / humiliated and bitterly repentant." On occasion she thinks to save herself through separation from her lover, but this seldom proves wholly effective: "How peaceful it is here without you, / how peaceful and — empty, alas!" ("Na dača" [The Summer Place]). Even when separation seems to have worked, just one chance meeting and "again I am wholly, wholly yours" ("Ti" [You]). Bagrjana describes the bondage of love eloquently in the last stanza of "Sədba" (Fate, 1925): "Invisible threads entangle / and tug my will, my hands and feet and eyes. / I no longer think, and start off, and do not ask / in what house I will awake, and where it is and whose." Love can thoroughly subject the free-thinking and freely moving young woman of "Pticata s motornoto sərce" to another's will.

Sexual love is not the only constraint upon Bagrjana's freedom. The state of motherhood, for instance, also restricts her severely. Yet she comprehends that only through such restraints can she be truly human. Woman is the source and keeper of life, Bagrjana writes in "Ženata" (Woman); she is the wellspring of all that is good in an existence which begins and ends with the word "mother". The poetess is conscious of her universal femininity, as is clear from the final lines of "Penelopa na XX vek": "Look at me — / pure in the pure light, / look at me — the first and last — me, / your wife and eternal woman!" The notion of woman as the "first and last" may be connected with birth and death. Although at times Bagrjana rebels against death — "I do not want any earthly doubts: / there is no death, parting and grief, / there is no past nor even any future" ("Requiem") — and at other times treats it with fitting melancholy — as when she comments that she has watched so many people dear to her die that she is almost persuaded of her own immortality, or asks in agony whether a person's ability to reconcile himself to another's death is not "the most terrible human despair" ("Smǎrt" [Death]) — in still other instances she grasps at a possible explanation for death while recognizing that nothing can be done about it, it can only be accepted. In "Žertvata" (The Sacrifice, 1925) she describes a miracle of healing effected through a mother's profound understanding. With her child dreadfully ill, the first day she prays that health may be restored to him; the second day she requests that her own life be taken and given to him; but on the third day, in the wisdom of resignation, she asks for death to end her child's sufferings, at which point he is miraculously restored to life. Bagrjana's religious consciousness and breadth of spirit enable her to see the tragedies of life, but her vitality causes her eternally to struggle against them and seek to circumvent them.

Another characteristic of Bagrjana is her simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from many aspects of modernity, coupled with a deep sense of history and eternal human values. She composed poems or cycles with quite modern titles, such as "Pticata s motornoto sǎrce" or "Seizmograf na sǎrceto" (Seismograph of the Heart). But the impersonality of these images conflicts with the humanity of her general approach: as she wrote with distaste in 1940, we must "live like concrete in the age of concrete" ("Dnes" [Today]). In short, she takes cognizance of the achievements of a technological society and welcomes some of them, but she wishes to alleviate as far as possible the dehumanizing effects of industrialism. To the extent that this is a central problem of the contemporary world Bagrjana is among the most modern of Bulgarian poets.

By contrast with prose and especially poetry, Bulgarian drama subsisted on a low level between the wars. Many plays were written then, but few now retain much interest. Still, the only noteworthy author of the modern period who gained prominence solely as a playwright, Stefan L. Kostov (1879-1939), did his primary work in the inter-war period. Kostov was born and educated in Sofia. After teaching for a time he continued his studies in 1907 in Vienna and later in Germany, his fields of interest being philology and ethnography. He wrote several ethnographical studies and was made an official of the Ethnographical Museum in Sofia in 1909 and its director in 1923.

Kostov is of concern here, however, not as a scholar but as a playwright, and more specifically as a writer of comedies. He began publishing humorous stories and sketches as early as 1903, but he made a reputation only at the start of the First World War, with the appearance of his *Məžemrazka* (Manhater, written in 1914). The heroine of *Məžemrazka*, appropriately named Androfoba, incites her female associates against men. At the same time, hypocrite that she is, she is herself involved with a man, and the exposure of this fact leads to her humiliation.

Məžemrazka was a reasonably successful first effort, but then the war so disrupted the theater that Kostov did not come into his own until the 1920s. His play *Pred izgrej slance* (Before Sunrise), premiered in 1921, has a hero known only as "The Teacher". He has attracted a circle of believers in his powers as a medium, connoisseur of the occult, and preacher of progressive social doctrines, including free love. His adherence to the latter creed nearly proves his undoing, for when he attempts to persuade a married female follower of his to yield to his desires for its sake, she recognizes him as a fraud and denounces him. The Teacher's other disciples, however, are too gullible to lose their faith in him. In such plays as *Pred izgrej slance* Kostov so to speak investigated the 'ethnography' of the Bulgarian upper classes, who could be nearly as primitive in their credulity as the veriest savages. On the other hand, though Kostov attacked the foibles of contemporary society, he was also dependent upon that society for his audiences. Therefore he either had to choose more or less exotic subjects or else attach a properly inspirational ending to his plays, which sometimes violated their artistic integrity.

These approaches are illustrated in two of Kostov's best-known comedies of the 1920s: *Golemanov* (written in 1920, first performed in 1927) and *Zlatnata mina* (The Gold Mine, premiered in 1926). The personages in *Golemanov* (a name derived from the adjective *goljam* 'big') are depictions of certain types who may certainly have existed in Bul-

garian society but whom no contemporary audience would have regarded as anything but caricatures. The action occurs at a remove in time, during the Balkan Wars, and the plot is rather aimless. The hero, Golemanov, a man greedy for political power, is prepared to marry his daughter off to an elderly suitor in order to advance his career. At various times he thinks he will be appointed Minister of Education, of Trade and of Agriculture, and he is ready to employ the same vacuous clichés in any of these posts, as he is equally unqualified for all of them. One exchange in the play goes: "What does Golemanov know about agriculture?" "It doesn't matter ... He is the minister." Eventually Golemanov is informed that the government has abandoned the attempt to form the cabinet in which he would have been included and he is left with nothing. But he refuses to accept this outcome and insists upon being addressed as "Mister Minister", ringing down the curtain with the tirade: "Here I am a minister ... I am the chief ... I am the Czar! ... Period!" This final outburst makes it obvious that Golemanov has almost lost his mental equilibrium and therefore is not to be taken seriously. *Golemanov*, incidentally, is a variation on Vazov's *Službogonci*, though in the latter play the hero is actually a minister and is happy to leave office.

Kostov's best comedy was *Zlatnata mina*. The characters are not only more credible than those in *Golemanov*, the plot is also clearer and more entertaining. The central character, Xadžiev, hopes to enrich himself speedily by investing in a gold mine, a project being run by others as an outright swindle. Certain that he will soon be wealthy, he pressures his daughter not to rush when she becomes engaged to the teacher Ljubenov, the play's positive hero, arguing that she can find a much better husband before long. In the end Xadžiev discovers that not only will he not become rich from the mine, he has been ruined by it. He is promptly deserted by the "friends" who had been extraordinarily attentive to him when they thought he was on the upward trail, only to be unexpectedly rescued by Ljubenov, who appears to announce that he has set things right if Xadžiev will but abandon all his fantastic schemes. Xadžiev rather improbably accedes to this demand, declaring that "wisdom is more valuable than any earthly riches", and is saved. If Xadžiev's conversion to righteousness at the conclusion seems forced, Ljubenov as positive hero is also a weak element in the play. In the first act he is all but tongue-tied until he gathers the courage to tender his marriage proposal; immediately thereafter he is called away to his dying father's bedside and thus is absent during most of the play until he reappears at the end. However, despite its flaws *Zlatnata mina* remains an excellent psychological study of the social climber.

In the later 1920s and all through the 1930s Kostov turned out an average of one play per year. These included *Člen 223* (Article 223, 1931) and *Komedija bez ime* (Comedy Without a Name, 1938). None of the later plays now enjoys the status of his earlier ones.

Aside from Kostov few playwrights worth detailed mention were active during the interwar period. One dramatist who emerged briefly but dazzlingly during this time was Račo Stojanov (1883-1951). In 1927 he published a first-rate play, *Majstori* (Master Craftsmen), a well-constructed drama of personal and professional rivalry between two ambitious men; he then was scarcely heard of again. Another prominent playwright of the day was Jordan Jovkov, even though the drama was only a secondary interest, one to which he came late in his career. His first play, *Albena*, was published in 1930, to be followed in the same year by the comedy *Milionerat* (The Millionaire), in 1932 by another drama, *Borjana*, and finally in 1936 by a second comedy, *Obiknoven čovek* (An Ordinary Person). The first three plays are of the greatest literary interest.

Jovkov's literary approach previously had not been especially dramatic, for he made relatively little use of dialogue, preferring to write lengthy descriptions and analyses. He nevertheless made the transition to the stage with minimal difficulty, having acquired a few tricks of the trade which make his plays theatrical enough in a quiet way. Like his short stories, the plays exhibit Jovkov's tendency to look unblinkingly into the depths of human depravity but then to resolve the sharpest of conflicts in a spirit of Christian reconciliation.

The central theme in *Albena* is that of the damage which physical beauty can wreak. The heroine Albena, the most beautiful woman in the village, wife of the crude and unattractive Kucar, is carrying on an affair with the miller Njagul while simultaneously fending off the attentions of the besotted Senebirski. Though not an evil woman, Albena is as it were cursed by her beauty, which attracts men quite independently of her wishes. Njagul is willing to go to any lengths, including murder, to free himself from his wife and Albena from Kucar. When Kucar dies suddenly and mysteriously, Albena and Senebirski come under suspicion and are taken into custody. Albena wears her finest apparel as she is escorted away, and her loveliness causes many bystanders to demand her immediate release. The situation is resolved dramatically when Njagul appears upon the scene to confess that he alone was responsible for Kucar's death. Albena wordlessly confirms his guilt as the curtain falls. *Albena's* plot line thus moves cleanly to the end, at least if one ignores Senebirski's unjustified arrest, which is necessary in order to set up the denouement. The

dialogue is lively, and the entire play makes an absorbing rural drama.

Jovkov's second drama, *Borjana*, treats a theme of family intrigue: the sons know that their father, Zlatil, is hoarding a great amount of wealth which he will not admit to having and are determined to obtain it for themselves. In outline the plot is reminiscent of that of *Geracite*. But even if Jovkov did obtain his initial inspiration from *Geracite* — Elin Pelin thought he had done more than this — he developed his subject differently, especially at the end. In Jovkov's play the situation is made more complicated by the fact that Zlatil has himself gotten his wealth unethically from his own father. When one of the sons succeeds in making off with the money the others, enraged, seek to wreak violent vengeance upon him. At that point Borjana, the beloved of one of the sons, comes on the scene and through the healing influence of her beauty and honesty persuades Zlatil to agree to an equal division of his estate among his sons, and the brothers to forgive one another. Zlatil feels that he has atoned somewhat for his crime against his own father, the brothers purge themselves of their greed and hatred, and the play concludes with a general spiritual renovation brought about by Borjana, whose beauty, unlike Albena's, works for the good.

In his comedy *Milionerät* Jovkov mocks the shortcomings of established society even as he refuses to condemn them entirely. The hero, Dr. Kondov, is a veterinarian of no position whom society is not at all eager to receive until the word spreads that he has inherited a fortune. The rumor is the result of an error, but no matter how vigorously Kondov protests that he is no millionaire, he is not believed: instead he becomes the most desirable of matches in homes which would hardly have admitted him before. Consequently, it is possible for him to marry the girl he loves, who comes of an exclusive family, and it is only after the marriage that his calculating father-in-law is persuaded that the doctor had indeed been telling the truth about his finances. *Milionerät* was designed as a light comedy. Kondov as the positive hero is an attractive person, but even those with whom he must contend and who turn out to be such hypocrites where money is involved are not evil but simply ridiculous in their transparent maneuverings.

During the decades between the First and Second World Wars Bulgarian literary scholarship and literary criticism both attained maturity. Where Dr. Krāstev had been nearly alone as a critic before the First World War, after it there appeared many of them, and in addition the demarcation

line between writer and critic became sharper than before. The greatest literary historian before the war was Ivan Šišmanov (1862-1923), but after it his work was continued by several successors who have greatly expanded our knowledge of Bulgarian literary and intellectual history.

One of Šišmanov's chief followers as a literary historian (though he did not survive him by much) was Bojan Penev (1882-1927), whose productive life ended abruptly after an operation. A member of the *Misal* and *Zlatorog* groups, Penev studied Slavic philology at Sofia University. In 1909 he was engaged as a *docent* in Bulgarian and Slavic literatures at Sofia University, rising to full professor at that institution two years before his death. Penev's erudition and industry were enormous. Although he also investigated Polish culture and authored a Polish grammar, he worked mainly on the history of Bulgarian literature, especially the Renaissance period. He did separate studies of Paisij Xilendarski, Rakovski, Botev and other important literary figures, but his most lasting monument was the posthumously published *Istorija na novata balgarska literatura* (History of Modern Bulgarian Literature, 4 vols., 1930-1936), which for all its bulk makes its way only partially through the Bulgarian Renaissance. Unique in its scope and depth, Penev's history will long be consulted by scholars writing on the period which it covers. Penev also went beyond the Renaissance, writing a monograph on Aleko Konstantinov as well as some general theoretical articles on the state of contemporary Bulgarian letters. One of his *fortes* was the composition of essays analyzing the links between literature and the social and intellectual forces of a given epoch: he never tried to divorce literature from the era in which it was written. In addition he had a keen esthetic sense, though much of the literature he discussed was worth relatively little as art.

The current dean of Bulgarian literary and intellectual historians is Mixail Arnaudov (1878-). Arnaudov, who first began publishing in 1895, is an extraordinarily productive scholar. After graduating in Slavic philology from Sofia University, he continued his literary studies in Germany and later in Prague. In 1908 he joined the faculty of Sofia University as a comparative literature specialist, holding the post of professor from 1919 to 1944. In addition, for many years he edited the scholarly and intellectual journal *Balgarska misal* (Bulgarian Thought, 1924-1943). Because he served as Minister of Education for a time during the Second World War, he narrowly escaped execution after 1944. Since 1944, and especially in more recent years, he has published many scholarly works even though he has refused to give his work a Marxist slant and

has insisted upon adhering to the highest standards of objective scholarship as he understands them.

The areas of Prof. Arnaudov's competence are numerous. He has contributed extensively to the study of the intellectual history of the Renaissance with books, usually quite bulky, on such figures as Rakovski, Neofit Bozveli, Aprilov, Sofronij Vračanski, and the brothers Miladinov. He has done yeoman service in the investigation of Bulgarian folklore with works like *Očerki po balgarskija folklor* (Sketches on Bulgarian Folklore, 1934). He has written of authors to whom he was a contemporary and sometimes friend, notably Vazov and Javorov. His intimate association with Javorov, incidentally, stimulated his interest in the question of the psychology of the writer and led to the production of his classic *Psixologija na literaturnoto tvorčestvo* (Psychology of Literary Creativity, 1931), based upon materials drawn from the experience of the greatest representatives of European and Bulgarian letters.

Several perceptive literary critics wrote during the interwar years. One of the most original was Vladimir Vasilev (1883-1963). Vasilev unfortunately never collected his critical articles, which must therefore be ferreted out in periodicals. It is to be hoped that some of them will eventually be brought together and made more accessible to the general reader. Vasilev contributed to *Misal* in its last years and later maintained its traditions in *Zlatorog*, of which he was editor and guiding spirit. *Zlatorog* was the leading intellectual and literary periodical of the interwar period, printing verse, short stories, reviews, critical articles and essays on subjects of general interest. Vasilev himself was the journal's head critic, penning gentle impressionistic studies in which he sought to guide contemporary authors along those lines which seemed most suitable to each. Vasilev's criticism was elegant, stimulating and undogmatic. But as he uncompromisingly defended the artist's autonomy, particularly against the Marxist critics, and after 1944 would not repudiate all he had stood for for so many years, he fell into disfavor and could publish only very occasionally. *Zlatorog* is now ordinarily condemned as an organ of "bourgeois reaction" and its services to Bulgarian literature minimized, but in time its importance surely will be recognized.

Aside from Vasilev, two other critics of the *Zlatorog* group were Georgi Canev (1895-) and Malčo Nikolov (1883-1965). Canev migrated to *Zlatorog* after defecting from *Nov pät* along with Razcvetnikov, Furnadžiev and Karalijčev in 1925; in 1938 he in turn left *Zlatorog* to found the journal *Izkustvo i kritika* (Art and Criticism), which supplied worthy competition for *Zlatorog* until both ceased publication in 1943.

In the 1930s Canev tended to produce reviews, studies of individual authors, and occasionally investigations of literary movements. Most of his books are collections of critical articles rather than book-length studies. Unable to support himself solely as a critic and journalist, Canev also taught literature in Sofia *gymnasiums* for a number of years. Following 1944 he was appointed professor of Bulgarian literature at Sofia University and director of the Institute of Bulgarian Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, thus ending as a power in the Bulgarian literary and scholarly establishment.

The critic Maľčo Nikolov always emphasized the works themselves in his approach to literature. He has written appreciations of such figures as Jovkov, Vazov, Botev, Penčo Slavejkov and Javorov, as well as one of the best single-volume histories of modern Bulgarian literature, *Istorija na novata bŕlgarska literatura* (History of Modern Bulgarian Literature, 1941 and later editions), which treats the period from Petko Slavejkov through the First World War.

Symbolist criticism in Bulgaria was represented principally by Ivan Radoslavov (1880-). In such writings as his book *Bŕlgarska literatura (1880-1930)* (Bulgarian Literature [1880-1930], 1935), Radoslavov interpreted the entire history of his native literature as a process culminating in the phenomenon of Bulgarian symbolism, of which Trajanov was the High Priest. Radoslavov's interpretations are now of little interest to any but students of symbolism.

Finally, the chief communist critics of the interwar period were Georgi Bakalov (1873-1939) and Todor Pavlov (1890-). Bakalov was the wheel-horse of communist literary journalism in Bulgaria, the day-to-day critic and literary historian. He began editing communist organs as early as 1893 and translated the classic works of Marx, Engels and Plechanov. He also managed a series of communist periodicals later on, including *Nov pŕt* in the middle 1920s. Following a period of exile in the Soviet Union he returned to Bulgaria in 1932 to resume his journalistic activities. By the time of his demise he was the author of orthodox Marxist studies of Vazov, Smirneniski, Botev, Aleko Konstantinov and others, as well as more general works including polemical articles defending Marxist literary theory. By contrast to Bakalov, Todor Pavlov is a more abstract, though still quite orthodox, Marxist philosopher and esthetician. The author of an incredible number of books and pamphlets on questions of Marxist philosophy and esthetics, he suffered imprisonment and torture as a communist activist during the 1920s and again during the Second World War. Since 1944 he has been the fountainhead of Marxist philos-

ophy in his homeland, editing the journal *Filosofska misal* (Philosophical Thought) and serving as president of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (he has also been active in general political life). He has continued to deal prominently with esthetic problems in his writing.

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