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## A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE RECEPTION OF JOHN MILTON IN THE SOUTH SLAVONIC COUNTRIES<sup>1</sup>

*Abstract:* The essay discusses the evidence of the knowledge of John Milton and the studies devoted to him in the South Slavonic countries (except Bulgaria) from the first mentions to the present time. Special attention is paid to the earliest references found among the unpublished papers of the Dubrovnik intellectuals of the eighteenth century, because they have been overlooked by earlier researchers. This is followed by a brief review of the earlier studies of this subject. The second part of the paper is devoted to a critical analysis of the most recent contributions to the study of the reception of Milton in this region.

References to, translations of and the influence of the greatest English epic poet John Milton (1608-1674) in the South Slavonic regions have been discussed in several studies, sometimes very thoroughly and competently.

This paper seeks to complement the picture known so far and to include some early evidence which escaped previous researchers. The findings which have already been published or discussed in scholarly literature will be only briefly reviewed in order to save space, but the interested reader will find full references to these works in the footnotes.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a part of the research project „The Reception of English Classics in South Slavonic Countries“, organized by the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade.

a) *The Earliest Attestations of the Knowledge of Milton*

Although deeply rooted in a spiritual tradition almost completely alien to the South Slavonic regions, John Milton has attracted considerable attention of the readers, translators and critics in this area. The interest in his works is evidenced already in the 18th century, and it has proved persistent, for, according to the reports of the National Library in Belgrade, Milton was the third most widely read English author (after Shakespeare and Byron) in Serbia in mid-20th century.<sup>2</sup>

Milton's presence in the territory of former Yugoslavia in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century has been thoroughly discussed by Dušan Puhalo in his doctoral thesis „Milton i njegovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim knjizevnostima“ (Milton and His Traces in Yugoslav Literatures), submitted to the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade.<sup>3</sup> His findings have been supplemented by some new contributions by Snežana Kićović-Pejaković.<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of the part of the discussion of the reception of Milton in the territory of former Yugoslavia, Puhalo says: „I have found no evidence before the beginning of the 19th century that any of our authors or intellectuals knew anything about Milton's name or work... Towards the end of the century the belated Dubrovnik classicists included some who knew English and French literature (English literature, for example, was known to Bruno Ferić, Junije Resti-Rastić and Toma Kerša-Chersa), but Milton remained outside the sphere of their interest.“

Seeking to explain this apparent lack of interest in Milton, Puhalo stresses that the Dubrovnik and Dalmatian literatures were dominated by the influence of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and that their representatives

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<sup>2</sup> M. Matarić, *Engleska književnost kod Srba 1900-1945. kroz književne časopise*, unpublished doctoral thesis, submitted to the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade in 1980, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Published in the Series „Monografije Filološkog fakulteta Beogradskog univerziteta“ in 1966. The second part of Puhalo's thesis, which concerns the reception of Milton in the South Slavonic regions, was published, in a partly revised form, in the *Anali Filološkog fakulteta*, sv. 1, 1961, Beograd, 1962, pp. 67-107. This revised version has been mainly used here.

<sup>4</sup> *Engleska književnost u Srba u XVIII i XIX veku*, Beograd, 1973, pp. 129-134.

were primarily interested in Italian and Latin literatures.<sup>5</sup> The literature of Slavonia and north-western Croatia did not have broad horizons and gravitated towards German literature; the Slovenes were strongly influenced by Catholicism, while „Serbian intellectuals relied mainly on Russia and Josephinism“.<sup>6</sup>

Puhalo's findings concerning the beginnings of the interest in Milton in Serbia have already been pushed further back, to 1838.<sup>7</sup> The most substantial corrections should be made, however, in our knowledge of the interest in Milton in Dubrovnik, for the earliest evidence comes from that cultural ambience.

The most outstanding person among the Dubrovnik intellectuals acquainted with English culture and literature in the 18th century was Toma Basiljević (Bassegli). He was a descendant of a family which came to Dubrovnik from Kotor in the early 14th century. His father, Jacobica Basiljević discharged various public duties in the Dubrovnik Republic and managed the family estate. Toma's mother, herself a well-educated woman who knew Latin, was the sister of Miho Sorokočević (Sorgo), one of the leading Dubrovnik intellectuals of the time, the founder of an academy in Dubrovnik (1723) and a man who had a considerable knowledge of English.<sup>8</sup>

Toma was born in 1756 and he left his native Dubrovnik when he was sixteen in order to study in Bern, as it was suggested to him by Abbè Alberto Fortis, the famous Italian traveller and natural scientist, who was a close friend of the Basiljević family. Two years later Toma went from Bern to Göttingen, which belonged at that time to the Hanoverian Electoral Principality. Between 1714 and 1837 that town was ruled by princes who were also kings of Great Britain. Consequently, Göttingen was an important centre not only of German, but also of English culture.<sup>9</sup> This presumably motivated Toma to decide to learn English, and he informed his parents of his

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<sup>5</sup> It is interesting, however, that there is certain evidence that Milton was very popular in Italy at this time, and it is a well-known fact that Dubrovnik was strongly influenced by the Italian literary taste. Cf. Arturo Graf, *L'anglomania e l'influsso inglese in Italia nel secolo XVIII*, Torino, 1911, pp. 250-251.

<sup>6</sup> Puhalo, *Milton i njegovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima*, p. 263.

<sup>7</sup> S. Kičović-Pejaković, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Ž. Muljačić, „Prinove u dubrovačkom Državnom arhivu, II“, *Arhivist*, 2 (1952), pp. 77-83; idem, *Toma Basiljević-Baselji, predstavnik prosvjećenja u Dubrovniku*, Posebna izdanja SANU, knj. CCXCIX, Odeljenje literature i jezika, knj. 8, Beograd, 1958.

<sup>9</sup> Ž. Muljačić, *Toma Basiljević-Baselji*, p. 13.

wish. The reply of Toma's father, written in Italian on 1 March 1784, has been preserved: „If you wish to take a teacher of the English language, do so, and I shall be glad to pay him.“<sup>10</sup>

Thus Toma began to learn English, and already in 1785 we find him quoting four verses in English.<sup>11</sup> Upon his return to his town after several years' absence, Toma joined the circle of the Dubrovnik intellectuals associated with Sorkočević's academy. One of his friends in Dubrovnik was the anglophile Džono Rastić, so that the two of them, together with Miho Sorkočević constituted a group interested in English and English culture. There is evidence that Basiljević also maintained direct personal contacts with some Englishmen.<sup>12</sup>

Basiljević's notes and papers contain other testimonies of links with England. Thus an interesting note, written in his hand, has as its heading „Suicide“ and contains excerpts from Cicero, Plutarch and Montaigne, as well as a prose translation into German of Hamlet's soliloquy „To be or not to be“. The note is not dated, but it is almost certain that it was made at the end of the 18th century. Shakespeare was very little known and read in the South Slavonic regions at that time, so that this note may well represent the earliest quotation from *Hamlet* in this area.<sup>13</sup>

An even more interesting testimony of Basiljević's knowledge of English authors can be found in his „Florilegium“, the notebook which contains Toma's reflections on various topics and quotations from other writers in connection with them, arranged in alphabetical order.<sup>14</sup> The notebook is in French, but it is evident that the books from which quotations were taken were in other languages as well. In the section dedicated to „Freedom“ (La liberté) Basiljević paraphrases closely a fairly long passage from Milton's

<sup>10</sup> „Se volete prendere un Maestro di lingua Inglese, prendetelo, che volontieri ve lo pagarò.“ Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku. Arhiv Bassegli, C2/9, Letter no. 65; there also is a brief reference to this in Letter no. 66.

<sup>11</sup> Ž. Muljačić, *Toma Basiljević*, p. 18, note 73.

<sup>12</sup> Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku, Arhiv Bassegli, C2/6/2; C2/10 (the letter is dated 21 December 1798); C2/8 (draft, in French, of Toma's reply to an English antiquarian).

<sup>13</sup> Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku, Arhiv Bassegli, C2/8. Before that time there is a brief reference to (not quotation from) *Hamlet* in Slovenia (in a letter of A. Linhart). Cf. D. Moravec, *Shakespeare pri Slovencih*, Ljubljana, 1965, p. 182.

<sup>14</sup> Naučna biblioteka u Dubrovniku, MS - R-3. The notebook dates, as a passage (f. 113) shows, from c. 1802.

*Paradise Lost* (XII, 79-104). The paraphrase is close, but there are certain indications that Basiljević had read Milton in a German translation.<sup>15</sup>

Basiljević refers to Milton in another passage, where he discusses the difference between the republic and the monarchy.<sup>16</sup> It is, however, difficult to pin down the exact text that he has in mind because it might have been taken from any of the numerous prose writings produced by Milton as the official advocate of the Republic in the time of the Civil War.

Two more members of the Dubrovnik community of whose interest in English culture we have clear testimonies were the Krša (Chersa, Kersa, Kerča) brothers. They were plebeians and they came from Pelješac. The elder brother, Antun, was born in 1779, and the younger, Toma, in 1782. Both studied philosophy and rhetorics with F.A. Appendini, and then law, also in Dubrovnik. After that they travelled in Italy, and upon their return they became members of a circle of liberal-minded intellectuals.<sup>17</sup>

Some letters written by the brothers Krša from Dubrovnik to their friend Bizzaro in Venice concern orders for the purchase of English books. Thus Toma Krša asks Bizzaro on 22 December 1801 to buy for him in Venice or Florence good editions of some works of English authors, the list of which he encloses.<sup>18</sup> The list itself has not been preserved, but one of Toma's subsequent letters shows that Milton's *Paradise Lost*, both in the original and in Italian translation, was included.<sup>19</sup> A few months later Toma reminds Bizzaro of his request: „I believe that you bear in mind my request concerning Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which I should definitely like to have in the original“.<sup>20</sup>

The history of the later interest in Milton in this area is known and it has been discussed in the existing studies (referred to in the notes), so that

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<sup>15</sup> The title is in English, but the canto (in Milton *book*) is designated as *Gesang* - f. 110v.

<sup>16</sup> F. 105.

<sup>17</sup> Most of the biographical information on the brothers Chersa has been generously given to the present author by the well-known Dubrovnik scholar dr. M. Foretić.

<sup>18</sup> Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku, Arhiv Bizzaro, 1.A-C, no. 11.

<sup>19</sup> Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku, Arhiv Bizzaro, 1.A-C, no. 11b. The letter was written on the 10th of February 1802.

<sup>20</sup> Historijski arhiv u Dubrovniku, Arhiv Bizzaro, 1.A-C, letter dated 27 April 1802. Cf. V. Kostić, „Zračenje engleske književnosti i kulture u Dubrovniku krajem XVIII i početkom XIX veka“, *Književna smotra*, XXI (1988), nos. 69-71, pp. 22-24.

the following account will focus on recent evidence, which has not been considered so far.

*b) The Influence of Milton on South Slavonic Writers*

Dušan Puhalo's book on the influence of Milton on South Slavonic literatures supplemented the previously known evidence of Milton's impact on Njegoš and Preradović and suggested that there may have been some echoes of *Paradise Lost* in the work of Pasko Antun Kazali (1815-1894) *Trista Vicah udovicah*.<sup>21</sup> The analogies which Puhalo adduced in support of his claim have not been recognized as sufficiently specific or persuasive so that his suggestion has not induced later historians of literature to search for possible further testimonies of Milton's influence on Kazali.

Neither has the question of Milton's influence on Preradović been re-considered in recent times. The relationship between Milton and the famous Montenegrin epic poet Petar Petrović Njegoš, however, is still of great interest to South Slavonic critics and literary historians. An outstanding place belongs to the very stimulating studies of Miron Flašar, which point out that it is necessary to establish the French, or, rather, Russian, translations which served as an intermediary text between the *Paradise Lost* and Njegoš's *Luča mikrokozma*, and which may have been a factor of modification of Milton's theological conceptions and of their adaptation to a non-Protestant outlook.<sup>22</sup> Flašar's essays certainly point to a line of investigation which is likely to prove fruitful.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. „O prevodu-posredniku, Miltonu i Njegošu“, *Književna smotra*, XXI (1988), no. 69-72, pp. 98-105; and, a considerably more developed version, „Književna recepcija i prevod iz druge ruke - Njegoš - Milton - Vergilije“, *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik*, knj. 36, sv. 3 (1988), pp. 343-366. Cf. D. Puhalo, *Milton i njegovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima*, pp. 327-335.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. „O prevodu-posredniku, Miltonu i Njegošu“, *Književna smotra*, XXI (1988), nos. 69-72, pp. 98-105; and a considerably more elaborate version, „Književna recepcija i prevod iz druge ruke - Njegoš - Milton - Vergilije“, *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik*, knj. 36, sv. 3 (1988), pp. 343-366.

<sup>23</sup> Flašar's leads have been followed by Slobodan Vukobrat („Proučavanje Njegoćeve engleske lektire“ in *Petar II Petrović Njegoš - ličnost, djelo i vrijeme*, Naucni skupovi CANU, knjiga 35, Podgorica, 1995, pp. 369-383, and „Prevod kao posrednik“, *Pobjeda*, Podgorica, 2. oktobar 1993, p. 10, without contributing however, anything new as regards either research evidence or interpretation. The latest paper of the same author (S. Vukobrat, „Naša novija prevodna recepcija Miltonovog *Izgubljenog raja*“, *MSC*, 26. Medjunarodni naucni sastanak slavista

In recent times Slobodan Tomović devoted considerable attention to the relationship between Milton and Njegoš.<sup>24</sup> Tomović does not think it essential to establish specific borrowings and analogies; he considers that it is more important to define ideological similarities and differences between the two poets. Tomović's analyses and comparative evaluations do not deny Milton's poetic gift, but the English poet fares rather poorly when the vigour of philosophical thought and the depth of his erudition come to be compared with Njegoš. „The motivation of Njegoš's Satan is ... more profound and has more solid philosophical foundations“; Milton's Satan does not use „such powerful ontological arguments“ as Njegoš's: „Satan in the *Luča mikrokozma* is defined in a stronger philosophical light“; Milton's Satan „hardly reaches the philosophical visions, references to existence and the meaning of being, which the Satan of *Luča* expresses with facility“. The discreet and sober warnings of D. Puhalo regarding the danger of indiscriminate patriotism in the study of the relationship between Milton and Njegoš<sup>26</sup> seem to have gone unheeded. Besides, it can hardly be said that Tomović's own scholarship inspires great confidence. It would be vain to seek in his studies some specific quotations from Milton or even precise references to any of Milton's texts, so that his reader remains in the dark not only as regards the edition he is supposed to have used, but also whether he had any direct knowledge of the English original. Consequently, Tomović's interpretations and arguments are not verifiable and can hardly claim any serious scholarly attention.

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u Vukove dane *Srpska književnost i Sveto pismo*, Beograd-Manasija, 1996, pp. 70-72) is also disappointing because it does not make any contribution to the discussion of the subject dealt with in this essay, primarily because of the great discrepancy between the comprehensiveness of the title and the very restricted scope of the paper itself, which merely illustrates the well-known classical analogies of two lines from Milton's conventional invocation.

<sup>24</sup> „Miltonova i Njegoševa kosmogonija“, *Ovdje*, 1970 II, 12, pp. 22-23; „Milton i Njegoš o pobuni na nebu“, *Prosvjetni rad*, 1 and 15 April 1971, XXI, pp. 7-8; „Satana kod Njegoša i Miliona“, *Književna kritika*, 1972 III, 1, pp. 71-86; *Rat bogova i titana*, Titograd, 1988.

<sup>25</sup> „Satana kod Njegoša i Miliona“, pp. 71-72, 73, 79, 81. Njegoševa luča, Titograd, 1971 (cf. esp. pp. 53-54, 55-56 in connection with the remarks made above). The style in the quotation is that of the author. The studies of S. Tomović are discussed in detail in Bojka Djukanović, *Engleska književnost u crnogorskoj periodici*, Nikšić, 1989 (doctoral thesis submitted to the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade in 1988), pp. 54-68, 156-157.

<sup>26</sup> *Milton i njegovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima*, pp. 320-325; „Miltonovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima“, *Analni Filološkog fakulteta*, sv. 1, 1961, Beograd, 1962, pp. 89-92.

*c) Critical and Historical Studies and Comments*

The most important study of Milton's presence in the South Slavonic regions is the (already mentioned) doctoral thesis of Dušan Puhalo „Milton i njegovih tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima“. Its first and longer part (pp. 9-260, i.e. about three quarters of the entire text) is a general account of Milton and his work, based on standard English biographical and critical studies. This part of the book gave the Yugoslav public the first exhaustive account of Milton and it should be therefore regarded as one of the most important contributions to the knowledge of the reception of Milton in the South Slavonic regions.

The extensive knowledge and persevering interest of Dušan Puhalo in English studies are known to all Yugoslav English scholars, and his knowledge of Milton in general and of the influence of his works in the South Slavonic regions should be respected and fully recognized. When, however, Puhalo departs from the factographic and literary-historical sphere and strays into critical interpretation and evaluation, the reader begins to follow him reluctantly. We get a clear indication of Puhalo's critical approach in the remark that the right understanding and appreciation of Milton was greatly facilitated by the „translation of the Soviet History of English Literature (1950)“.<sup>27</sup> At least twenty past generations of Yugoslav students of English literature are blissfully unaware of the very existence of this book, and it is to be hoped that it will remain buried in the oblivion it deserves. Puhalo's studies bear, however, unmistakable belated marks of the dogmatic school inaugurated by that translation: „Milton's life illustrates exquisitely the human virtues best appreciated precisely by our revolutionary generation: the lifelong dedication to the progressive spiritual goal, uncompromising loyalty to the revolutionary ideal, and highly principled spirit both in victory and defeat.“<sup>28</sup> It is therefore quite understandable that Puhalo's book is very closely associated with the time in which it was written and that it is characterized by a repertory of concepts and terms which exhale a very archaic ideological aroma - „not dialectical“, „progressive“, „reactionary superstructure“ - and that it contains irrelevant, but pious references to Karl Marx and the notoriously mediocre Yugoslav communist ideologist Boris Žiherl. Puhalo's conclusion concerning Milton's spiritual attitude is:

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<sup>27</sup> *Milton i njegovih tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima*, p. 277.

<sup>28</sup> *Ib.* pp.258-259.



Milton was not an anarchic rebel, but a constructive revolutionary: he rebelled and fought in the name of the future empire of God - not Satan - on the earth... he was motivated by the ideal of a society in which the intellectually and ethically accomplished individual, willingly subjecting himself to the society, achieves, precisely by doing this, the fullest freedom, because he submits himself to the norms of a society in which freedom is achieved by the appreciation and acceptance of the rule of law. Because of that, Milton's ideal, though different as regards the specific historical circumstances in which it was born, is ideologically and emotionally close to the ideal of the communist revolutions of our time. It is not by accident (though it is not quite justified) that Prof. Grierson calls Milton „a bolshevik“.<sup>29</sup>

D. Puhalo's thesis gives a general survey of English critical studies of Milton and an exhaustive list of earlier studies, references and translations of Milton's works in former Yugoslavia. His account is factually accurate, but because of Puhalo's ideological exclusiveness the reader soon finds that the results of his researches inspire greater confidence than his critical judgments. Thus the article of Svetislav Stefanović „O mistici i mističarima engleske poezije“<sup>30</sup> is said to „represent an arbitrary and superficial adaptation of English poetry to the reactionary ideological mould in the spirit of Dostoyevsky's literature of a new kind, very popular at that time among our bourgeois intellectuals“.<sup>31</sup> The next few lines claim that it is an elementary truth that Henry Vaughan does not belong to the „pronounced mystics“. Even if did not come from the pen of the man who is probably unsurpassed in Yugoslavia in encyclopaedic knowledge of English literature, such a statement would be hard to explain. Svetislav Stefanović, an excellent translator of Shakespeare and other English poets, was not able to respond (being judicially murdered by the communists in 1945), that Vaughan's mysticism is apparent even to those who are familiar only with his anthology pieces and that numerous studies had been written on the subject. As opposed to such denigration of Stefanović's (very competent) knowledge, we are recommended an example of „progressive literary criticism“ and as a representation of „English literature in a more correct light than usual“ in an anonymous article, which is, even Puhalo admits, „rather confused“ and, moreover, instructs the innocent reader about a non-existent work by Milton!<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Ib.* p. 239.

<sup>30</sup> *Letopis Matice srpske*, 1921, sv. 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Milton i njegovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima*, p. 274.

<sup>32</sup> *ib.*, p. 276.

On the other hand, such an approach to writers from earlier times and different ideological climates certainly secured great advantages to the critical school embraced by D. Puhalo. When reading Puhalo's studies of Milton, one can only envy the author whose loyalty to the ruling ideology gives him such a feeling of intellectual superiority that he calls (not once) such a superb and erudite mind as Milton's „naive and childish“ and even expects this remarkable „discovery“ to be taken as one of the most original contributions of his Ph.D. thesis.<sup>33</sup>

Puhalo's major study was published in its entirety eight years after it was accepted as a doctoral thesis, but some of its parts had appeared in print even before that time. The somewhat abridged and revised second part of the thesis, dealing with the reception of Milton, was published in 1962,<sup>34</sup> and an abbreviation of the first, general part was included in the first volume of Puhalo's comprehensive history of English literature.<sup>35</sup> In this latter form, Puhalo's study gained a wide reading public and powerful influence, since his history of English literature was for more than two decades the only university textbook of its kind in former Yugoslavia and numerous generations of students of English acquired knowledge and adopted critical views from his book.

Puhalo's study „Milton i mi“ also dates from these years.<sup>36</sup> It is actually the report on a survey conducted among the students of English Language and Literature at the University of Belgrade, designed after the then fashionable model of I.A.Richards.<sup>37</sup> The students were given the text of Milton's short poem „On Time“ and were asked to make critical comments on it. The aim of the questionnaire is explained by Puhalo himself: „I wanted to test on the basis of one example my conclusions concerning the problem of the literary value of works based on obsolete and scientifically superseded ideologies.“ Judging by the answers (which Puhalo publishes in full), the results were disappointing, as regards both the number of students who responded and the anticipated denouncement of „scientifically superseded ideologies“.

Dušan Puhalo's studies of Milton are of twofold importance. They are important as a detailed, highly professional and reliable survey of the

<sup>33</sup> Cf. particularly, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> „Miltonovi tragovi u jugoslovenskim književnostima“.

<sup>35</sup> *Istorija engleske književnosti od početka do 1700. godine*, I ed. Beograd, 1963, pp. 149-179.

<sup>36</sup> *Zivi jezici*, 1960, knj. II, sv. I, pp. 29-38.

<sup>37</sup> I.A.Richards, *Practical Criticism*, London, 1956.

reception of Milton in the territory of former Yugoslavia and as the document of a critical approach. They give us the first complete general account of Milton's life and works in the South Slavonic regions. The second part of Puhalo's thesis represents a careful synthesis of the earlier research, gives a reliable evaluation of its value and offers a sober general conclusion concerning the much-discussed relationship between *Paradise Lost* and Njegoš's *Luča mikrokozma*. In his critical account of Milton's works, Puhalo's studies often offer penetrating comments which have helped our students of English to understand better this classic of English literature. His studies are the expression of a sincere, well-informed and self-consistent approach, determined to confront its task in an honest way, but an approach formed within a mercilessly exclusive ideological matrix. It represents an exceptionally explicit and detailed testimony, a critical attitude and a specific repertory of critical concepts and terms which marked the reception not only of Milton's works, but also of the writings of many other great West European authors in a bygone, but not brief phase of the cultural history of these regions. Therefore these critical works, though the fruit of persistent and thorough research, appear today more obsolete and outdated than some other critical studies of Milton written in the other parts of the world half a century earlier.<sup>38</sup>

In the next history of English literature to appear in former Yugoslavia, published almost twenty years later, Milton is given comparatively little space, but the account of his work (by Marta Frajnd) is balanced, free of extra-literary considerations and in harmony with contemporary views.<sup>39</sup>

Some interesting problems of the reception of Milton in the South Slavonic regions are discussed by Svetozar Brkić in his article „Oko jednog mogućeg načina prevodjenja Miltonovog *Izgubljenog raja* na srpskohrvatski“. <sup>40</sup> Brkić asks the question: „Why is Milton insufficiently known outside the narrow circle of professionals, and why he has been only partly translated?“

The first explanation Brkić offers is that the critical appreciation of Milton has varied in England and that it has been at its lowest ebb precisely

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<sup>38</sup> For, W. Raleigh, *Milton*, London, 1900; Stopford Brooke, *Milton*, London, 1916; and, sepecially, Denis Saurat, *Milton Man and Thinker*, 1925.

<sup>39</sup> V. Kostić (editor), *Engleska književnost* I, Sarajevo-Beograd, 1979, pp. 293-304.

<sup>40</sup> Prevodna književnost. Zbornik radova Četvrtih beogradskih prevodilačkih susreta, Beograd, 1980, pp. 95-102.

in the present century because of the adverse criticism of T.S. Eliot and F.R. Leavis. Their views were indeed fashionable for quite a time in English academic circles, particularly among the younger people, but they have been finally relegated to the monuments of „bizarre criticism“, as Brkić justly says, only in recent decades. It is not very likely, though, that their opinions influenced the reception of Milton in the South Slavonic regions, for the number of readers in these parts who are familiar with T.S. Eliot's comments on Milton and, particularly, with the criticism of the controversial Leavis was and still is negligibly small. It is certainly smaller than the number of those who could have formed a more favorable opinion of Milton on the basis of their own reading or of critical works less deliberately unorthodox.

The other reasons adduced by Brkić are more plausible. One of them is the fact that Milton's works are based on a specific system of ideas and values and express „an individual national theology“ which does not have an immediate appeal for Serbian readers.

Another important reason is the difficulty of rendering into Serbian Milton's „organ voice“, as Tennyson calls it - that is Milton's poetic idiom fostered on the best and most elaborate traditions of English poetic style. An analysis of the Serbian translations of *Paradise Lost* clearly show that Brkić's observation is fully justified.

The critical, informative and historical comments and studies published either with the Serbian and Croatian translations of Milton's works or on the occasion of their publication complement the picture of the reception of Milton in this area, and they are particularly important because they are likely to be the main source of information for the common reader.

Staniša Nešić in an article written on the occasion of the publication of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* in the Serbian rendering of D. Bolfan and D. Kosanović, gives some superficial information on Milton, but remains wisely reticent about the quality of the translations themselves (which are very poor<sup>41</sup>) and merely says that they represent „an event“ in Serbian publishing and translating.<sup>42</sup>

Djilas's translation is accompanied by several appendices, and they probably deserve a closer scrutiny for it is probable that the Serbian readers will most often read Djilas's rendering of *Paradise Lost* and rely on these appendices for further information.

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<sup>41</sup> The recent translations of Milton's works into Serbian are analysed by the present author in an article published in *Mostovi*, 1997.

<sup>42</sup> „Mit o Adamovom padu i usponu“, *Politika*, 30 November 1989.

The longest article is „Svijest o satanizmu u čovjeka. Povodom pojave Miltonovog epa *Izgubljeni raj* Milovana Djilasa“, written by Vasilije Kalezić. This essay is characterized by sheer verbiage which abounds in far-fetched and inappropriate parallels between Milton's and the translator's biography (Milton is deprived of his third marriage, so that the similarity between him and Djilas, who married only twice, might appear more striking), and even more inappropriate analogies between the translator and Milton's Satan.

This essay is followed by an unsigned note on Milton himself, which though very short (pp. 459-461), teems with errors. The reader is informed that „Milton was in frequent conflict with his professors, which demonstrated his rebellious spirit“. The only known fact from Milton's biography on which this assertion of his revolutionary character may have been based is a solitary reference that Milton had some sort of misunderstanding with his tutor in Cambridge, the occasion of which is not known.

We are further told that „immediately after graduation, in 1638, Milton travelled to Italy“ (p. 459). Neither did Milton, who was admitted to the university in 1625, take as many as thirteen years to graduate nor did he go to Italy immediately after the graduation. He graduated on time, in 1629, and three years later he was awarded his M.A. After that he retired to his father's country house at Horton, where he spent six years in further study. This is the so-called Horton period, of essential importance for Milton's later work. It was only after this interval of solitude that Milton set off on his travels in France and Italy.

„The last years of his life were spent in poverty, indigence and family quarrels caused primarily in his three unsuccessful marriages.“ Leaving aside the question of style, we may observe that while Milton was not actually rich in his last years, he was certainly not indigent. He owned a house which had „four rooms with a fireplace“<sup>43</sup> and when he died he left almost a thousand pounds, which was quite a substantial sum at that time. As regards the reference to his three unsuccessful marriages, that can be hardly squared with the way in which Milton describes his second, untimely deceased wife „*my late espoused saint*“ and with the explicit testimonies of witnesses in court regarding his relations with his third wife.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> E. Salliens, *John Milton*, Oxford, 1964, p. 251.

<sup>44</sup> The author did not have to seek far or in foreign languages reliable information on Milton's biography. Puhalo's biographical, critical and comparative study had been published about twenty years previously.

It is further said that *Comus* is „Milton's tribute to a Cambridge student who was drowned“ and even some vague critical observations on this work are offered, the author of the note being all the time unaware that the poem on which he instructs the innocent reader is not *Comus*, but *Lycidas*.

As regards *Paradise Lost* itself, it is stated that Milton completed it in 1667. The poem was actually written by June 1665, and its printing was delayed because of the great fire in London in 1666. Milton's other epic, *Paradise Regained*, was not written in 1671, as the note states; this work was given the official *imprimatur* in the first half of the preceding year.

One of the latest essays on Milton published in Serbia is „Avgustinova Božja država i Miltonov Izgubljeni raj“. <sup>45</sup> The paper examines the similarities and differences in the presentation of the Christian legend of the Fall of Angels and the Original Sin in Augustine's and Milton's works.

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What conclusions can we draw from this survey of the reception of Milton in the South Slavonic regions in recent times?

There has been no space to discuss here the recent translations of Milton's works, <sup>46</sup> but it can be said that some notable achievements have been made in this sphere.

As regards comparative studies, it may be noted that the interest in the relationship between *Paradise Lost* and Njegoš's *Luča mikrokozma* still persists. Especially interesting are the studies of M. Flašar, who points out the need to explore the mediating and modifying channels through which Milton's ideas reached Njegoš. The other comparative studies are either negligible or biased by patriotism. It may be observed that the latter type of analyses have shifted from verifiable parallels, analogies and echoes to rather vague comparisons of the theological and ideological ideas of the two writers (extolling Njegoš at the expense of Milton) in a manner which casts serious doubt on the adequacy of the linguistic and scholarly equipment of their authors.

As regards the critical and historical studies, however, some notable achievements have been made, surpassing by far, as regards their thoroughness and scholarly value, what was written in the earlier decades. The greatest advance in this respect was made by D. Puhalo, but various other critical

<sup>45</sup> *Godišnjak Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu*, knj. XX (1992), pp. 63-71.

<sup>46</sup> His is the subject of an article published by the present author in the 1997 issue of *Mostovi*, the periodical of the Union of Literary Translators of Serbia.

works and histories of literature also contain valuable texts which have contributed to the better knowledge and wider reception of this classic of English literature in the South Slavonic regions.

## ДОПРИНОС ПРОУЧАВАЊУ РЕЦЕПЦИЈЕ ДЕЛА ЏОНА МИЛТОНА У ЈУЖНОСЛОВЕНСКИМ КРАЈЕВИМА

### Резиме

Преглед наших превода, критичких тумачења и приказа дела највећег енглеског епског песника Џона Милтона (1608-1674) који су се појавили у Србији после темељне студије Душана Пухала *Милтон и његови трагови у југословенским књижевностима*, докторске дисертације одбрањене на Београдском универзитету 1958. и објављене 1966. показује да је последњих година било значајних доприноса бољем познавању и разумевању тог класика енглеске књижевности у нашој средини.

Као последица повећаног интересовања за Милтона у Србији се у последње две деценије појавило неколико превода његових дела. У њих спадају, између осталог, два српска превода *Изгубљеног раја*, један превод *Поново задобијеног раја*, преводи *Сопећа*, *Ареопазитике* и неких мањих прозних дела. Ти преводи су неједнаке вредности. Неки су врло лоши и показују недовољно познавање енглеског језика Милтоновог доба, али неки као интегрални прелев *Изгубљеног раја* М. Ђиласа или превод Бранимира Живојиновића првог певања тог епа, значајна су достигнућа нашег преводилаштва.

Компаративне студије објављене у овом раздобљу баве се углавном често разматраним проблемом односа између Милтоновог *Изгубљеног раја* и Његошеве *Луче микрокозме*. Приметно је, међутим, да се у последње време нагласак померио с испитивања специфичних аналогичности и одјека на опште теолошке сличности и разлике, као и на питање модификаторских канала преко којих су Милтонови протестантски погледи могли доспети до нас и постати прихватљиви за православног Његоша.