

krleža versus meštrović

During his entire working lifetime, which was exceptionally long, Krleža showed special interest, to say it mildly, for Ivan Meštrović and his work. On various occasions, he felt motivated to note down or say publicly a thing or two about his attitude towards the great sculptor. Beginning with his early “Croatian Literary Lie” from 1919 — where Meštrović’s name served as one of the crucial symptoms of the cultural and political climate¹ — to the semi-official interviews given in the last years of his life — where he tended to recapitulate some of the reasons for his earlier statements and add new elements² — one could find at least some twenty texts in which he touched or mentioned Meštrović or, even more frequently, spilled sulphur on Meštrović’s interpreters and trabants.

Krleža’s attitude towards Meštrović was far from homogeneous; on the contrary, it was extremely complex, full of oscillations and amplitudes. It would be exaggerated to say that it was a traumatic attitude, although the appearance of the sculpture of the Vidovdan Temple most probably became one of Krleža’s youthful fixations, towards which he felt evident sympathies, which soon, however, turned into convinced rejection. Meštrović was not an artist of Krleža’s “blood group” and could even less serve him as a “lighthouse” (in the Baudelairean sense — unlike, for example, Brueghel, Goya, or Grosz), but the writer’s unmistakable intuition told him that the sculptor was confronted with a problem that was preoccupying him

as well: how to express the specificity of a small Balkanian people, how to make up for that famous time-lag with respect to Europe, how to compensate the disadvantages of the environment and perhaps even turn them into advantages and virtues. As an example of a relative world-wide success and a “ful-filled destiny” after World War I, Meštrović had become a challenge to his entire milieu and thereby also a measure for its possibilities. That could certainly not escape Krleža’s attention, since he was attracted by almost all social topics, in particular collective fashions and obsessions. However, the reasons of attraction and repulsion were far deeper than that and the ambiguous “embrace” of the two distinguished men developed with time into a relationship between two real lifestyle antipodes.³

According to the testimony from a yet unpublished interview, in case of Krleža, Meštrović’s art played a significant role in breaking away from the illusions of early youth, motivating him to disentangle himself from the sentimental bonds with certain type of literary tradition, represented by (in his intimate boyish pantheon) Šenoa, Tomić, Zagorka, -alski, Kumičić, and similar writers: “He tore it down, suddenly and all together: Ivan Meštrović. He opened mind-boggling verticals leading into the infinity of spiteful monumentality.”⁴ The author evoked the same subversive significance of Meštrović’s sculpture more precisely in a diary notice from 1942: “About how we daydreamed of Ivan Meštrović (around

Krleža prema meštroviću

_____ Za čitava svog, iznimno dugog, radnog i životnog vijeka Krleža je, blago rečeno, pokazivao posebno zanimanje za djelo Ivana Meštrovića. U najrazličitijim prilikama osjetio se motiviranim da zabilježi ili javno izreče ponešto o tome svom odnosu prema velikom kiparu. Počevši od davne "Hrvatske književne laži" iz 1919 — gdje mu je Meštrovićevo ime poslužilo kao jedan od glavnih simptoma kulturno-političke klime¹ — pa do poluslužbenih razgovora iz posljednjih godina života — kada rado rekapitulira neke razloge ranijih sudova i dodaje nove elemente² — mogli bismo naći barem dvadeset tekstova u kojima je dodirnuo i spomenuo Meštrovića ili, još češće, okrznuo Meštrovićeve tumače i trabante.

Krležin odnos prema Meštroviću nije nimalo jednoznačan; štoviše, iznimno je složen i pokazuje priličnih oscilacija i amplituda. Pretjerano bi bilo reći da je taj odnos traumatičan premda je pojava skulpture Vidovdanskog hrama predstavljala, po svemu sudeći, jednu od Krležinih mladenačkih fiksacija i evidentnih simpatija, koje su se međutim, ubrzo prometrnule u uvjereno odbijanje. Meštrović nije umjetnik Krležine "krvne grupe", i to manje mu je mogao poslužiti kao "svjetionik" (u baudelaireovskom smislu — za razliku, recimo, od Brueghela, Goye ili Grosza), ali je književnik nepogrešivom intuicijom osjetio da se kipar bavi problemom koji je i njega naročito zaokupljao: kako izraziti specifičnosti maloga balkanskog naroda, kako nadoknaditi famozno zaostajanje za Evropom, kako kompenzirati nedostatke

ambijenta i pretvoriti ih čak u vrlinu i prednost. Kao primjer relativnog uspjeha u svjetskim razmjerima i kao "ostvarena sudbina" Meštrović je nakon prvog svjetskog rata postao izazovom čitavoj sredini, a time i mjerom njezinih mogućnosti. Već kao takav nije mogao izmaknuti Krležinoj pažnji, jer su njega privlačile gotovo sve društvene teme a pogotovo kolektivne mode i opsesije. Međutim, razlozi atrakcije i repulzije bili su čak znatno dublji, i dvosmisleni "zagrljaj" dvojice velikana razvio se s vremenom u odnos pravih životnih antipoda.³

Prema svjedočanstvu još jednoga objavljenog razgovora, u Krležinu slučaju Meštrovićevo je djelo odigralo bitnu ulogu pri raskidu s iluzijama najranije mladosti, potaknuvši ga na oslobađanje od sentimentalnih spona stanovitog tipa hrvatske književne predaje, kakvu (u intimnom dječaćkom panteonu) predstavljahu Šenoa, Tomić, Zagorka, -alski, Kumičić i njima slični: "Sve je to porušio veoma surovo, iznenada i odjednom: Ivan Meštrović. On nam je otvorio vratolomne vertikale u nedogled prkosne monumentalnosti."⁴ Određenije je sam pisac evocirao isto prevratničko značenje Meštrovićeve skulpture u dnevničkom zapisu iz 1942. godine: "O tome kako smo mi (oko 1910-1912) maštali o Ivanu Meštroviću nije rečeno ništa stvarno, jer nema takve fantazije koja bi mogla danas pojmiti hermetički smisao naših slobodarskih nadahnuća u vezi s njegovim imenom. Pojava Meštrovićeve skulpture za nas bila je divlji poklič za slobodom. Vjerujući da su

1910-1912) nothing real has been said, since today there is no fantasy that could grasp the hermetic meaning of our libertarian inspirations related to his name. For us, the appearance of Meštrović's sculpture was like a wild cry for freedom. Since we believed that Austria's days were numbered, Meštrović's motto 'Against the Unheroic Times' meant for us the uncompromising negation of everything that we believed was withering away."⁵

In order to understand such big and heavy words, one should know that Krleža was at the same time making the passage from the narrow, exclusively Croatian national feeling towards Yugoslav "nationalism", wishing and anticipating a federation of related nations that would be able to do away with the hated foreign rule, which symbolized all that was past, gone, and old. In that naïve, youthful faith, the discovery of Meštrović served as the main support and fare, while the power of the artist's expression was understood as granting immunity against all regional, confessional, and traditional limitations. But all limitless loyalty and enthusiasm are soon betrayed and Krleža found himself cheated. Therefore, he did not hesitate to deal very harshly with his "seducer" and spare no weapon in his arsenal of mocking and satirical invectives (if truth be told, it was at first in his notebook and somewhat later in his writings intended for publication).

The first crack, as it seems, was open in 1914, at the Biennale of Venice. Namely, all that Krleža had known until then about Meštrović's work had probably been based exclusively on reproductions - adorned, moreover, by exalted explanations and surrounded by an aura of his own fictions and daydreams. The very first encounter with reality in a way marked the end of this myth and sobered him up from his infatuation with Meštrović.⁶ In this respect, the somewhat longer note from a retrospective distance is very telling: "Meštrović appeared before us like a Herakles, but there, in Venice I had already experienced a revelation of the Heraklean myth at Bourdelle's hand; and the shock was so strong that, some minutes later, I was bitterly disappointed with my first encounter with the Vidovdan Temple. These were two shocks, a positive and a negative one, and when I finally managed to find my way among all those Venetian pavilions and flags and swayed towards Meštrović's Widows, it all ended with a

bitter disappointment. A month or two later, when I brought the manuscript of my 'Zarathustra and the Young Man' to the editor of 'Savremenik', I told him the sad story of my first encounter with Meštrović and he began to persuade me to write a report on my experience, which I, however, refused to do. Those were already the first days of war (1914)."⁷

Krleža did not go public with his experience of disappointment with Meštrović, just as he had not published any testimony of his infatuation. After all, he was still very young and new in writing, inclined towards strong emotions and sudden changes of mood. However, when he entered the literary world in a grand manner immediately after World War I, he also scratched at his Meštrović-complex in order to define more precisely his own aesthetical and social programme. By dealing with certain aspects of Meštrović's opus, he made an account of his own past (which had been rather short, but extremely dynamic), doing away with his illusions and errors, for which he was now blaming the sculptor as a symbolic scapegoat that he could "have his revenge with."

In the meantime, the ideology of Yugoslav spirit had been transformed from the revolutionary yeast into an almost official dogma. The Vidovdan Temple was no longer viewed as a promise and perspective, but rather as the definite realization of centennial longings. Therefore, the celebration of the myth of Vidovdan was imposed as orthodoxy, in which Meštrović was appointed the high priest, ministered by numerous literary personalities and panegyrists, from Vojnović and Kosor to Miloš Gjurčić and Ljubomir Micić, not to mention Strajnić and "určin. Among the propagandists of Vidovdan spirit, there were good acquaintances of Krleža's, such as Vladimir "erina, his schoolmate, and Milan Marjanović, the first editor who had accepted his texts, his companion from the circle of anti-Austrian, "Yugo-spirited" youth.

More than anything, Krleža was enraged with the regime manipulation and instrumentalization of the "Kosovo cycle". How was he to accept the twisted and reductionist interpretation of something that had half a decade before seemed to him a crucial means of assertion of national identity: "In those years of 1912-1913, Meštrović's cliché of nationalist idea began to smoke in my head and there we were, two Croats

on an elite Budapest dance, who sat there for a long time, debating on the issue. He insisted on his principle that for us as a people, it would be best to disappear. I countered his national and political nihilism with Meštrović and his 'geniality'. In that Budapest night, no other argument occurred to me apart from Meštrović's geniality and Meštrović's geniality was a rather serious political slogan at the time."⁸

And while his collocutor from the previous lines, the emblematic Doctor (and a "Croatian renegade"), would acknowledge Meštrović after the foundation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes and suddenly praise his role without any scruples, should we wonder that Krleža was becoming ever more ironical and sarcastic about such conversions of "taste"? For the general mood, indicative words are those that the writer placed into the Doctor's mouth: "Our race will conquer all obstacles! There is some sort of 'subjective intuition of that mystical sense of reality' and, as you can see, Meštrović has foreseen Yugoslavia with his colossal vision! Meštrović is a genius!"⁹

It was also symptomatic, and Krleža did not hesitate to make that malicious observation, that the same creature carried "from 1919 onwards photographs of Meštrović's heroes around all his fine quarters in Belgrade." For, as he further explained, "those Meštrović's heroes are hanging in his Belgrade drawing room like a parlour statehood decoration. The same goes for Meštrović's King Peter the Triumphant, a photograph belonging to the Association for the Transfer of Foreigners".¹⁰

In the context of the royalist apotheosis of the "Vidovdan Cycle", it is utterly understandable that Krleža not only had to withdraw his allegiance to Meštrović's patent of national myth, but also develop considerable polemical activity against those who glorified and sustained that mythomania, although some personalities once dear to him were among them (or perhaps precisely because he had formerly stood close to some of those enthusiasts, who were not always calculating). Just as Krleža wrote about Ljubo Babić that he was "permanently unnerved by Meštrović,"¹¹ the same could be said about the author of that formulation. It is beyond debate that Krleža was in continuous opposition to this "Meštrović's phrase-laden romanticism"¹² or irritated by the painter's "royalist phrasing",

dani Austrije odbrojani, Meštrovićevo geslo 'Nejunačkom vremenu uprkos' za nas je značilo beskompromisnu negaciju svega u što smo bili uvjereni da je na samrti."⁵

Da bi se razumjele ovako velike i teške riječi, treba znati da Krleža istodobno prelazi put od užeg i isključivo hrvatskog nacionalnog osjećanja prema jugoslavenskom "nacionalizmu", te priželjkuje i sluti federaciju bliskih naroda koja će biti kadra raskrstiti i s omraženom tuđinskom vlašću, što simbolizira sve prošlo, bivše i staro. U toj naivnoj mladenačkoj vjeri otkriće Meštrovića služi mu čak kao glavna podrška i popudbina, a snagu njegova izraza smatra cjepivom protiv svih regionalnih, konfesionalnih i tradicijskih ograničenja. Ali bezrezervna predanost i oduševljenje bivaju vrlo brzo iznevjereni, i Krleža se osjetio prevarenim. Stoga neće nimalo oklijevati da surovo obračuna sa svojim "zavodnikom", pa će neštedimice istresti na nj čitav arsenal svojih podrugljivih i sarkastičnih invektiva (istina, najprije na papiru svoje bilježnice a nešto kasnije u spisima namijenjenima javnosti).

Do pukotine, čini se, dolazi 1914. na venecijanskom bijenalu. Naime, sve se dotad Krležino poznavanje Meštrovićevih radova temeljito, valjda, isključivo na reprodukcijama - iskićenima, k tome, uznositim didaskalijama i okruženima aurom vlastitih fikcija i snatrenja. Već prvi susret sa zbiljom označio je svojevrstan kraj mita i otrežnjenje od zanosa za Meštrovića.⁶ Rječit je u tom smislu oveći navod s retrospektivne distance: "Meštrović se pojavio pred nama kao Heraklo, a ja sam, eto, u Veneciji doživio jedinstveno objavljenje heraklovskog mitosa od Bourdelleove ruke, sa tako jakim šokom da me je nekoliko minuta kasnije moj prvi susret sa Vidovdanskim hramom grdno razočarao. Bila su to dva šoka, u pozitivnom i negativnom smislu, i dok sam se između onih venecijanskih paviljona i barjaka konačno snašao i tako dolutao do Meštrovićevih Udovica, sve je svršilo s gorkim razočaranjem. Mjesec-dva kasnije, kad sam uredniku 'Savremenika' donio svoj rukopis 'Zaratustra i mladić', ispričao sam mu tužnu priču o svome prvom susretu s Meštrovićem, a on me je nagovarao da napišem reportažu o svom doživljaju, što sam međutim odbio. To je već bilo za prvih dana rata (1914)."⁷

Krleža nije objelodanio svoje iskustvo razočaranja Meštrovićem kao što nije dotad bio posvjedočio ni svoje zanose njime. Uostalom, bio je još vrlo mlad i književni početak, sklon jakim afektima i naglim

mijenama raspoloženja. Kad je, međutim, odmah nakon (prvog) svjetskog rata na velika vrata ušao u književnost, zagrebao je i po vlastitom Meštrović-kompleksu da preciznije odredi svoj estetički i socijalni program. Obračunavajući s nekim aspektima Meštrovićeva opusa pravio je i saldo svoje (dotad razmjerno kratke ali nadasve dinamične) prošlosti, razračunavao s iluzijama i zabludama za koje je u kiparu našao simbolična krivca i stoga mu se mogao "osvećivati".

U međuvremenu se ideologija jugoslavenstva od revolucionarnog kvasca pretvorila u gotovo službenu dogmu. U Vidovdanski hram više se nije gledalo kao u obećanje i perspektivu nego kao u definitivnu realizaciju stoljetnih težnji. Stoga je ortodoksno nametnuto slavljenje vidovdanskog mita, pri čemu je Meštrović postao velikim svećenikom, a kod službe su mu asistirali brojni literati i panegiristi, od Vojnovića i Kosora do Miloša Gjurića i Ljubomira Micića, da o Strajniću i "určinu ne govorimo. Među propagatorima vidovdanstva našli su se i dobri Krležini znanci poput Vladimira "erine, kolege iz razreda, i Milana Marjanovića, prvog urednika koji je prihvatio njegove tekstove i suputnika iz kruga protuaustrijske, "jugoslavenstvujuće" omladine.

Krleža se ponajmanje mogao pomiriti s režimskom manipulacijom i instrumentalizacijom "kosovskog ciklusa". Kako da prihvati iskričeno i reducirano značenje nečega što mu se još prije pola desetljeća činilo bitnom afirmacijom narodnog identiteta: "Meni se u to doba, 1912-1913, počeo u glavi pušiti Meštrovićev klišejski nacionalistički ideje, i dva Hrvata na jednom peštanskom elitnom plesu, mi smo još dugo razgovarali o tom pitanju. On je stajao na principu da je za nas kao narod najbolje da nestanemo. Njegov nacionalpolitički nihilizam ja sam pobijao Meštrovićem i njegovom 'genijalnošću'. Nikakav drugi argumenat osim Meštrovićeve genijalnosti nije mi te peštanske noći pao na pamet, a Meštrovićeva genijalnost spadala je doista u ozbiljne političke parole onih dana."⁸

I dok sugovornik iz prethodnih redaka, amblematični Doktor (i "hrvatski odrod"), nakon osnivanja Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca bez skrupula prihvaća Meštrovića i hvali njegovu ulogu, treba li se čuditi da Krleža postaje sve ironičniji i zajedljiviji prema takvim konverzijama "ukusa". Za raspoloženje duhova indikativne su riječi što ih pisac stavlja u usta navedenom Doktoru:

"Naša rasa pobijedit će sve zapreke! Postoji neka 'subjektivna intuicija mističnoga čuvstva realnosti' i, vidite, Meštrović je svojim kolosalnim predviđanjem prorekaio Jugoslaviju! Meštrović je genijalan!"⁹

Simptomatično je također, i Krleža se ne libi zlobno napomenuti, da ista kreatura nosi "od 1919 fotografije Meštrovićevih junaka po svim svojim beogradskim mebliranim sobama". Jer, tumači dalje pisac, "ti Meštrovićevi junaci vise u njegovom beogradskom salonu kao salonski državotvorni ukras. Isto tako i Meštrovićev Kralj Petar Pobjednik, fotografija Društva za Promet Stranaca"¹⁰

U kontekstu rojalističke apoteoze "Vidovdanskog ciklusa" sasvim je shvatljivo da Krleža ne samo odriče svoj pristanak na Meštrovićev patent nacionalnog mita nego i razvija znatnu polemičku aktivnost protiv onih koji tu mitomaniju slave i podržavaju, makar među njima ima i nekoć mu bliskih osoba (ili, pogotovo stoga jer je bio blizak nekima od tih ne uvijek proračunatih — zanesenjaka). Kao što je Krleža napisao za Ljubu Babića da ga "trajno nervira Meštrović",¹¹ slično bismo mogli ponoviti i za samog autora te formulacije. Najmanje je sporno da je Krleža kontinuirano u oporbi prema "Meštrovićevom frazerskom romantizmu",¹² ili da je iritiran njegovom "rojalističkom frazom", odnosno "rojalističkom megalomanijom u sjeni Vidovdanskog misterija".¹³ Najvehementniji je izraz tog stava već spomenuta "Hrvatska književna laž", u kojoj nalazimo i ovakve pasuse: "Neimari novog, mramornog Vidovdanskog Misterija obnemogli su beletristi... Svi naši (vojnovićevski i meštrovićevski) proroci... in artibus kreću se pod znamenom Sancta Mediocritas. Uvjereni principijelno da predstavljaju naprednu negaciju našeg književnog neokatolicizma... oni sami propovijedaju isto tako jezuitsku emfazu i bijesne gestove Meštrovićevog Srde Zloproglede. Ova njihova galerija deseteračkog Malocchija sa preblagim Marcima i Milošima, ovo nepoetsko polulikovno a poluskulptorsko društvo zida, u našoj najnovijoj književnoj varijanti, Kosovski Hram, kao simbol anateme Svega što treba da nestane pred naletom ovih, isto tako sredovječnih furioznih utvara, ni po čemu progresivnijih od Angelusa i Zdravomarije. Propovijedajući novu, borbenu, takozvanu Vidovdansku Etiku, zvekeće se rojalističkim mačevima i mamuzama... Sve su to laži i sve su to fraze!... i ova najmodernija Vidovdanska Arhitektura

that is, by his “royalist megalomania in the shadow of Vidovdan mystery.”¹³ The most vehement expression of that attitude was the afore-mentioned “Croatian Literary Lie,” in which one encounters passages like the following: “The masters of the new, marble Vidovdan Mystery are impotent fiction writers... All our (Vojnovićian and Meštrovićian) prophets... in artibus walk around under the sign of Sancta Mediocritas. Convinced in principle that they represent the progressive negation of our literary neo-Catholicism... they preach the same Jesuit pathos and the raving gestures of Meštrović’s Srda Zlopogleda. This gallery of theirs, full of decasyllabic Malocchio with ultra-mild Markos and Milošes, this unpoetic, half-painting and half-sculpting society, is constructing, in our most recent literary version, a Kosovo Temple as a symbol of the anathema of all-that-should-disappear before the onslaught of these equally middle-aged, furious phantasms, which are in no way more progressive than Angelus and Hail Mary. By preaching this new warrior ethics, the so-called Ethics of Vidovdan, they clank their royalist swords and spurs... It is all lies, all empty phrases!... and this hypermodern Vidovdan Architecture made of plaster, and this shrieking and yelling like at a literary marketplace, our folk masses are perfectly indifferent to all this... So let us not fool ourselves with poisons that evaporate from the literary tomb under our feet. We are neither dead mummies nor empty heads, we are no resurrected phantasms of the dead, who believe in the dogmas of religious traditions, and we shall not stylise a decorative lie into a Meštrović’s Sphinx, before which our literary mob kneels today, paying respects to her by burning incense and prostrating themselves in decasyllables.”¹⁴

Doubtlessly Krleža never articulated more openly or more passionately what in fact disturbed him in Meštrović’s project than he did in the above-quoted pamphlet. Obviously, he was protesting against all that (by no means naïve) croaking and saluting around the idea and its (even more calculating) grovelling to the ideology of the Karadorđević dynasty, rather than against the very features of Meštrović’s sculpture. He expressed similar thoughts with small modifications on numerous occasions, almost always when he needed to render metaphorically the emptiness of the cultural programme of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, since there was no doubt for

him that Meštrovićianism was identical with royalist glitter and gilding. Thus, he wrote in his essay on Fran Supilo from 1928: “I do not know what kind of brain one would need in order to persist in all these lies and blood and still recite in decasyllables how Meštrović’s plaster figures symbolize the realization of Vidovdan religion!”¹⁵ Further on, in the same text, he used the attitude towards the Vidovdan Temple in order to praise Supilo’s moral integrity: “He could not recite to Croatian soldiers around Russian prisoner camps how our problems would be solved by the plaster stucco of Meštrović’s sculptures, so it was only logical that he should leave the Yugoslav Committee and remain isolated and alone.”¹⁶ And in his essay on Stjepan Radić in Belgrade, Krleža could not help but include two piercing observations, in which he identified Meštrović with the regime.¹⁷

How little Krleža was changing on the issue of the Vidovdan Temple (not only in his attitude, but also in his tone), two passages, chronologically very distant from each other, will clearly show. The first is from his “Bygone Days”, from 1916: “One should write a history in order to explain how such hallucinating stupidities are constructed, like believing that Meštrović’s Vidovdan Temple is something that can help us in this cultural and political shipwreck.”⁴ The second quotation is from 1952, from a text “On Some Problems of Encyclopaedia”, and begins with the same “categorical imperative”: “One should pay special attention... In this analysis, one should concentrate especially on all the variants of this counter-revolutionary, Western-European consciousness, which has had such a fatal influence on the development of our ‘nationalisms’... (for example:)... German romanticism creates an entire ridiculous cosmogony out of the political megalomania of the Dinaric race, a cosmogony that in Meštrović’s Secessionist version becomes an outright caricature.”¹⁹

Indeed, in discussing the Kosovo cycle, Krleža never abandoned the image of caricature. It suffices to recall his definition of his own “broader” national awakening on the ruins of Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: “We were Yugoslav in the strict sense of the word, i.e. in the cultural sense, i.e. each of us dragged along the plaster stallion of Kraljević Marko on a rope for purposes of representation, both of sculptor Meštrović and of our people.”²⁰ Or the even more sarcastic and intolerant formulations from

another text, approximately about the same period: “They used to copy A. G. Matoš and today they are raving about the ‘Yugo-myth’ and that related to Ivan Meštrović and his Kraljević Marko. If there is a symbol for this drunken Phariseism, it is that neo-Mycenic idiot of ours on Meštrović’s horse, first a bully-man and then, one day, when he becomes a ferryman, he will collect the tribute in his own land, for nothing is more cruel than gentrified mob!”²¹ That is what remained of the epic Marko (and his equally celebrated horse), for which Niccolò Tommaseo had stated a whole century before (prophetic, or?!) that “every deed of his and every word is a genuine sculpture.”²²

Nevertheless, as soon as he left the royalist shell of the Vidovdan Temple, Krleža could find different words for the sculptor: “The only result of the Croatian Secession in visual arts remains until today (1935) Meštrović’s sculpture.”²³

To be sure, Krleža had a rather negative opinion on the entire European Secession, which he reassessed on numerous occasions. According to his constation, Meštrović had “toppled down into the Secession in his earliest youth.”²⁴ But in this case, the negative judgment is outspokenly relativized: an acknowledgment of Meštrović’s early phase, though with all possible qualifications, can be found in Krleža’s text on Auguste Rodin, published in 1963: “In our circumstances, the Rodin elements in the eclectic opus of Ivan Meštrović are more durable than anything else in his opus that had been influenced by the Viennese ‘Modernism’, which likewise would have never given that entire gallery of Meštrović’s sculptures without Rodin as their model.”²⁵

If we leave aside the polemic fervour and most of these entirely justified (however giganticized in themselves) invectives against the conception and the figures of the Vidovdan Temple, we shall encounter the true assets of Krleža’s opinion on Meštrović’s Kosovo cycle in the quickly noticed and wittily formulated parallels with the work of Franz Metzner, especially the Leipzig monument of the Battle of the Nations. Jelena Uskoković has recently “brought back into circulation” those statements, and with a reason, corroborating and sustaining, with new arguments and a clear analytic procedure, Krleža’s conviction of the strict dependence of Meštrović’s “national phase” on the art of Viennese circles, in

od gipsa, i ova cika i galama književnog savšara, jer se sve to naše narodne mase savršeno ništa ne tiče... Ne obmanjujmo se dakle otrovima koji se isparuju iz književne grobnice pod našim nogama. Nismo ni mrtve mumije ni prazne glave, nismo mi uskrsele mrtvačke utvare vjerujuće u dogme religioznih tradicija i nećemo mi da stiliziramo jednu dekorativnu laž u Meštrovićeve Sfingu, pred kojom danas naš književni plebs kleči, paleći tamjan i metanišući joj u desetercima.”¹⁴

Sigurno je da Krleža nije nikad otvoreni je i strastvenije izrazio što ga zapravo smeta u Meštrovićeve projektu nego što je učinio u navedenom pamfletu. Očigledno, pobunio se više protiv (nimalo naivnog) kreketanja i talambasanja oko ideje i njezinog (još intencionalnijeg) slizavanja s ideologijom karadorđevićevske dinastije, negoli protiv samih kiparskih svojstava Meštrovićeve rada. Slične je misli varirao u bezbroj navrata, gotovo uvijek kad mu je trebalo metaforički izraziti ispraznost kulturnog programa Kraljevine Jugoslavije, jer da se meštrovićijanizam poistovjećuje s rojalističkim glancem i pozlatom za Krležu nije bilo nikakve sumnje. Primjerice, u eseju o Franu Supilu iz 1928. stoji: “Ne znam kakva bi pamet bila potrebna, da čovjek stoji u ovakvim lažima i u ovakvoj krvi, pak da deklamira o desetercu i o tome kako Meštrovićeve figure od gipsa znače realizaciju vidovdanske religije!”¹⁵ U nastavku istog teksta odnosom prema Vidovdanskom hramu određuje se čak moralna postojanost Supilova: “on nije mogao deklamirati hrvatskim vojnicima po ruskim zarobljeničkim logorima kako će naše probleme riješiti sadrena štukatura Meštrovićevih kipova, i tako je logično istupio iz Jugoslavenskog odbora i ostao osamljen i sam”.¹⁶ Ni esej o Stjepanu Radiću u Beogradu nije mogao proći bez dva bockava spomena identifikacije Meštrovića s režimom.¹⁷

Koliko se Krleža malo mijenjao u problematici Vidovdanskog hrama (ne samo u gledištima nego i u intonaciji), pokazat će dva navoda, međusobno vrlo udaljena. Prvi je iz “Davnih dana”, i to iz 1916. godine: “Treba bi napisati povijest da se objasni kako dolazi do takvih halucinantnih gluposti, da se vjeruje, kako je Meštrović Vidovdanski Hram nešto što nam može pomoći u ovom kulturnom i političkom brodolomu.”¹⁸ Drugi je citat iz 1952. iz teksta “o nekim problemima enciklopedije” i započinje istim “kategoričkim imperativom”: “Treba

bi posvetiti naročitu pažnju... Trebalo bi kod te analize obratiti izvanrednu pozornost svim varijantama te kontrarevolucionarne zapadnoevropske svijesti, koja je tako kobno djelovala na razvoj naših ‘nacionalizama’... (primjerice)... njemačka romantika stvara od političke megalomanije dinaroida čitavu jednu komičnu kozmogoniju, koja u secesionističkoj varijanti Meštrovićevoj postaje karikaturom.”¹⁹

Doista, u raspravljanju o Kosovskom ciklusu Krležu nikako nije napuštao smisao za karikaturu. Dovoljno se sjetiti njegove definicije vlastita “šireg” nacionalnog osvješćavanja na ruševinama Austro-Ugarske Monarhije: “Bili smo Jugoslaveni u užem smislu, tj. u tzv. kulturnom smislu tj. svaki je od nas vukao za sobom na špagi sadrenoga šarca Marka Kraljevića u reprezentativne svrhe, kipara Meštrovića i našega naroda.”²⁰ Ili još jetkije, netrpeljivije formulacije u jednom drugom tekstu o gotovo istom razdoblju: “Prepisivali su A. G. M.-a, a danas bunčaju o ‘Jugomitosu’, i to na temu Ivana Meštrovića i njegova Kraljevića Marka. Ako postoji simbol za ovu našu polupijanu tartiferiju, to je taj naš neomikenski glupan na Meštrovićevom konju, siledžija, a onda, kad jednoga dana postane skeledžija, ubirat će namet na vilajet, jer ništa nije surovije od pogospodene raje!”²¹ Na što li se sveo epski Marko (i njegov ništa manje proslavljeni konj), za kojega je prije čitavog stoljeća Niccolò Tommaseo bio ustvrdio (proročki, nema šta?!) kako je “svaki njegov čin i svaka njegova riječ prava skulptura.”²²

Ipak, čim se udalji od rojalističke ljuštare Vidovdanskog hrama, pisac zna za kipara pronaći i drukčijih riječi: “Jedini likovni rezultat hrvatske secesije ostaje danas (1935) Meštrovićeva skulptura.”²³

Da se razumijemo, Krleža ima o čitavoj secesiji kao evropskom stilu prilično negativno mišljenje, potvrđeno u bezbroj navrata. Prema njegovoj konstataciji i Meštrović se “u svojoj najranijoj mladosti strovalio u secesiju.”²⁴ Ali negativni sud u ovom je slučaju izrazito relativiziran: priznavanje rane Meštrovićeve faze, iako sa svim mogućim ogradama, možemo pročitati u tekstu o Augustu Rodinu, objavljenom 1963. godine: “U našim relacijama, ono što je u eklektičkom opusu Ivana Meštrovića rodinsko, od trajnije je građe od svega što je nastalo u tom istom djelu pod utjecajem bečke ‘Moderne’, koja isto tako ne bi bila dala čitavu galeriju Meštrovićevih kipova, bez rodinskog uzora.”²⁵

Ostavimo li po strani polemički žar i većinu sasvim opravdanih (ma koliko, sa svoje strane, također gigantiziranih) invektiva na koncepciju i likove Vidovdanskog hrama, pravu aktivnu Krležinih sudova o Meštrovićeve Kosovskom ciklusu naći ćemo u rano uočenim i duhovito sročnim paralelama s djelom Franza Metznera, posebno s lajpciškim spomenikom bitke naroda. Sasvim je opravdano Jelena Uskoković nedavno “vratila u optičaj” te piščeve tvrdnje, te novim argumentima i jasnim analitičkim postupkom potkrijepila i podržala Krležino uvjerenje o strogoj zavisnosti Meštrovićeve “nacionalne faze” od tokova bečkoga likovnog kruga, a posebno od Metznerova rada ostvarenog u raznim sredinama, uključujući i Beč u vrijeme dok je naš kipar ondje boravio.²⁶

Najranije i najodređenije Krleža se pozabavio relacijom Meštrović—Metzner 1914. godine, odmah nakon spomenutog doživljaja Vidovdanskog hrama na venecijanskom bijenalu. Sastajući se s grupom uvjerenih propagatora jugoslavizma i rasnog mesijanstva, pisac dolazi na ideju da im podmetne Metznerove snimke umjesto Meštrovićevih i polučuje očekivani rezultat, odnosno, izaziva njihov upravo refleksni zanos pred tim (Metznerovim) kipovima, kao da je riječ o objavljenju našega nacionalnog duha i rasne inspiracije. Na svoj je način zabavno, iako i gorko i smiješno istodobno, pročitati karakteristike što ih Krleža navodi da su izrečene za kavanskim stolom kao atributi Meštrovićeve genija (a u povodu Metznera): “Lujko i Zofka, Đuro i Juro unisono: patos, melankolija, emfaza bola, grčeviti zamah, volja za rasnom pobjedom, arhaizirani ili-rski praslavenski tipovi, rasna dinamika, duboka bol nad vjekovnim porazima, vjera u nacionalno uskrnuće, rasna genijalna inspiracija, prkos potlačene južnoslovenske rase obasjane Lazarskim nimbusom, kosovsko mlijeko (a to je upravo ono mlijeko koje mi Zagorci nismo sisali), misterij ove tragedije, koja znamenjuje naše političko i kulturno Uskrnuće itd., itd.”²⁷

Misao o bitnom Metznerovu utjecaju na Meštrovića Krleža, međutim, nije u to vrijeme objavio. I zapis iz 1916. također nije mogao biti poznat suvremenicima, premda u njemu fiksira slične dojmove: “Nikako mi ne ide u glavu ovaj meštrovićevski sistem: kako se boriti protiv germanskog utjecaja (upravo supremacije) sa protuturskim simbolima, koji nijesu drugo nego parafraza pangermanske romantike à la Metzner.”²⁸

particular Metzner's work created in various environments, including Vienna at the time when Meštrović was staying there.²⁶

The earliest and most definite among Krleža's attempts to characterize the relationship between Meštrović and Metzner is that from 1914, immediately after the afore-mentioned experience of the Vidovdan Temple at the Biennale of Venice. At a meeting with a group of convinced propagators of Yugoslav spirit and racial Messianism, Krleža came to the idea of substituting photographs of Metzner's sculpture for those of Meštrović's and he achieved the expected result, that of provoking their outright and automatic enthusiasm about those (Metzner's) figures, since they believing them to be a revelation of our national spirit and racial inspiration. It is amusing in its own way, although bitter and ridiculous at the same time, to read about the characteristics that were uttered at that coffee table as attributes of Meštrović's genius (though actually referring to Metzner): "Lujó and Zofka, Đuro and Juro, in unison: pathos, melancholy, emphasis on pain, convulsive momentum, will for racial victory, archaized Illyrian ancient Slavic types, racial dynamics, deep suffering over the centuries of defeat, faith in national resurrection, racial, ingenious inspiration, obstinacy of the suppressed South-Slavic race illuminated by Lazar's nimbus, the mother's milk of Kosovo (which is precisely that sort of milk which we, people from Zagorje, have never sucked), mystery of this tragedy, which signified our political and cultural Resurrection, etc. etc."²⁷

However, at that time Krleža did not publish his thoughts on Metzner's crucial influence on Meštrović. His note from 1916 could not have been known to his contemporaries, although he expressed a similar opinion there: "I can never understand this Meštrovićian system: how it is possible to fight against German influence (or rather, supremacy) with anti-Turkish symbols, which are nothing more than a paraphrase of pan-Germanic romanticism à la Metzner."²⁸ He went public more decidedly with his thesis on the imitation of Metzner in 1919 and then again in 1921, in his essay on Petar Dobrović: "Feudal Turkish decasyllable, Metzner and the Secession, that was supposed to be our folk art, and all this has resulted in nothing in fifteen years. Meštrović followed his eclecticism into gothic and further on, while everything

else just evaporated. Much ado about nothing!"²⁹ But by then Moša Pijade had already written a systematic text on the same issue, which Krleža had greeted with enthusiasm and reviewed in his journal "Plamen".³⁰

The pinnacle of Krleža's treatment of Meštrović and a sort of "boiling point" was certainly the essay published in "Književnik" No. 3 from 1928 and known under a somewhat later title: "Ivan Meštrović Believes in God". All those latent ideas, which had been only said or written down as side notes, were now exposed in public, in a moment of crucial show-down, the real settling of accounts between fiction and reality. In this text, Krleža repeated many of his above-quoted opinions, but also added a number of new arguments in favour of his determined negative verdict. From the viewpoint of a convinced fighter for social justice and the materialist interpretation of all phenomena (with the purpose of changing them), it was understandable that the stumbling stone should be seen in Meštrović's (also otherwise unconcealed and unrestrained) mysticism.

Perhaps Krleža might have been tolerant about mere religious inspiration; he would have simply considered it unmodern — in his own words — and a sort of private affair of the artist. But he could not forgive Meštrović his symbiosis of a typically Secessionist metaphysics and affected spiritualism on the one side and the unscrupulous mystification of the national myth and the creation of a cultic alibi for an utterly repressive state formation on the other. Besides, he rightfully warned of the incompatibility of Western-European cultural tradition (Gothic and Catholicism) with the Orthodox and Byzantine substrate of Kosovo beliefs (which basically excluded sculptural presentation).

Even though not sparing certain sculptures, Krleža devoted his most destructive dose of sarcasm to the Pythian interpretations of the sculptor by his literary satellites. The fact that the "Remembrance" was renamed into "Vukosava of Miloš Obilić" in the artist's atelier, according to Vojnović's reading of the "Death of the Mother of Jugović", offered to Krleža an opportunity for an outright avalanche of irony and a whole series of grotesque and paradoxical conclusions: "So that is how it happened! A nameless female torso was transformed into Vukosava, Vukosava into the widow cycles, the widow cycles into the Vidovdan Temple,

and the Vidovdan Temple, according to the principles of Vidovdan Mystery, into the — Vidovdan Constitution. A trivial cause with enormous consequences. A single word gave birth to an avalanche, a single Secessionist phrase to religious system, the Vidovdan Mystery, the sevenfold tribute, Marjanović's Initiations of Marko type, and so Meštrović, in his beginnings, instead of leading, was led into Vidovdan! There is no doubt that he has never reflected on the whole too much, which is evident from his essays and the religious and reflexive meditations that he has written in the past ten to fifteen years."³¹

Mocking the consequences of Meštrović's verbal fervour and naivety, Krleža made it clear that he was not opposed to the essence of the sculptor's talent, and perhaps he even wanted to convince the artist himself that he had the right and the duty of artistic autonomy, aside of all ecclesiastical sponsorship, monarchist pompousness, and belletristic babbling. For Krleža not only once again sentimentally reminded of the sculptor's role in his own spiritual development and growth ("since we have spent a good part of our political childhood in the shadow of the aesthetic symbolism of Ivan Meštrović and since he used to fascinate our generation with his theories"³²) — but also explicitly acknowledged Meštrović's role of "the greatest Croatian talent in visual arts until today".³³ Moreover, he did not hesitate to pay him due respects in the same text and write some lines of praise such as he had probably never dedicated to any artistic opus (although he must have felt more friendly understanding and poetic solidarity towards some).

Today, we can have our reserves regarding the way in which Krleža constructed his "ontology" of sculpture on the basis of Meštrović. However, it is obvious that he had no reserves towards some aspects of the artist's work and that he considered them almost the same kind of pure "revelation of essence" as his polemic adversaries considered him a "revelation of the national spirit." In any case, Krleža substituted their obscure, 'self-interested and utterly confused religious motivation with lay and profane faith into the substantiality of sculpture and the necessity of sublimating sensual impulses. Perhaps Krleža's synthesis of aesthetic idealism and materialism is nowhere as tangible as here; but although this combination may seem impossible and problem-

Decidirano s teozom o imitaciji Metznera Krležina izlazi 1919. pa 1921. u eseuju o Petru Dobroviću: "Feudalnoturski deseterac, Metzner i secesija, to je trebala biti narodna umjetnost, i od svega u petnaest godina ništa. Meštrović je pošao svojim eklekticizmom u gotiku i dalje, a ostalo se sve rasplinulo. Mnogo vike ni za što!"²⁹ Ali tada je već postojao sustavni tekst Moše Pijade o istoj problematici, što ga je upravo Krleža zdužno pozdravio i prikazao u svom časopisu "Plamen".³⁰

Apogej Krležina bavljenja Meštrovićevim i svojevrsna "točka usijanja" svakako je esej objavljen u "Književniku" br. 3 iz 1928. i poznat pod nešto kasnijim naslovom "Ivan Meštrović vjeruje u Boga". Sve ono latentno, dotad samo usmeno rečeno ili uzgred zapisano, izlazi u tom trenutku pred javnost, i to je čas bitnog obračuna, pravog svodenja računa između fikcije i zbilje. U tom je tekstu Krleža ponovio mnoga od gledišta koja smo već naveli, ali je pridodao i mnogo novih razloga za odlučan negativni sud. Iz aspekta uvjerenog borca za socijalnu pravdu i materijalističko tumačenje svih fenomena (u svrhu njihova mijenjanja) razumljivo da je kamen smutnje u Meštroviću (i inače neskrivenom i neskrivanom) misticizmu.

Možda bi Krleža i bio tolerantan prema pukoj religioznoj inspiraciji; smatrao bi je, jednostavno, nesuvremenom — kako i piše — te na svoj način privatnom umjetnikovom brigom. Ali on Meštroviću ne može oprostiti simbiozu tipično secesijske metafizike i afektiranog spiritualizma s beskrupuluznom mistifikacijom nacionalnog mita i stvaranjem kulturnog alibija za sasvim represivnu državnu tvorevinu. Osim toga, s pravom upozorava na nesklapanost zapadnoevropske kulturne tradicije (gotike i katolicizma) s pravoslavnim, bizantskim, supstratom kosovskog vjeronja (koje praktički isključuje skulpturalno oblikovanje).

Ne štedeći, dakako, ni neke kipove, najrazorniju dozu sarkazma Krleža posvećuje kiparevim pitijским tumačenjima i interpretacijama njegovih literarnih satelita. Podatak da je "Sjećanje" okršteno "Vukosavom Miloša Obilića" na sugestiju Vojnovićeva čitanja "Smrti majke Jugovića" u umjetnikovu ateljeu pruža Krleži priliku za čitav ironički rafal i pravu seriju grotesknih i paradoksalnih izvoda: "Dakle, tako je to bilo! Od torza jednog bezimenog ženskog lika nastala je Vukosava, od Vukosave ciklusi udovica, od ciklusa udovica Vidovdanski Hram, a od Vidovdanskog Hrama po principima

Vidovdanskog Misterija — Vidovdanski Ustav. Neznatan razlog, ogromne posljedice. Od jedne riječi nastala je lavina, od jedne secesionističke fraze religiozni sistemi, Vidovdanski Misterij, sedmerostruki porez, Marjanovićeva Inicijacije tipa Marko, i tako Meštrović u svome početku, mjesto da vodi, on se povodi u vidovdansko! Da o svemu tome nije baš nikada predbuko razmišljao, nema sumnje, rječito govore njegovi pismeni sastavci i njegove religioznosnaone meditacije za posljednjih deset-petnaest godina."³¹

Rugajući se posljedicama kipareve verbalne zanesenosti i lakomislenosti, Krleža bi htio da se shvati kako on nije protivan srži kipareva dara, a možda čak i da samog autora uvjeri u pravo i obvezu umjetničke autonomije, mimo crkvenog mecenatizma, monarhističkog pompijerizma i beletrističkog trabunjanja. Jer Krleža ne samo da još jedanput sentimentalno podsjeća na ulogu kipareva djela u vlastitom duhovnom razvoju i sazrijevanju ("pošto smo u sjeni estetskog simbolizma Ivana Meštrovića proživjeli dobar dio našeg političkog djetinjstva, i pošto je on svojim teorijama fascinirao naše pokoljenje"³²) — nego i eksplicitno priznaje Meštroviću ulogu "našeg do danas najvećeg likovnog talenta".³³ Štoviše, ne oklijeva odati mu dužno poštovanje i u istom tekstu ispisati pohvalne retke kakve valjda nije posvetio ni jednom opusu (premda je za mnoge druge imao, jamačno, više prijateljskog razumijevanja i poetičke solidarnosti).

Možemo mi danas i imati ponekih rezervi prema načinu kako Krleža u povodu Meštrovićeva konstituiranja svojju "ontologiju" kiparstva. Očigledno je, međutim, da on nikakvih rezervi prema nekim aspektima kipareva djela nema i da ih smatra gotovo isto toliko čistim "objavljenjem biti" koliko su se njegovim polemičkim sugovornicima ostali aspekti činili "objavljenjem narodnog duha". U svakom slučaju, Krleža zamjenjuje njihovu mutnu 'koristoljubivu i sasvim ispremiješanu) religioznu motivaciju laičkom i profanom vjerom u tvornost skulpture i u nužnost sublimiranja senzualnih poticaja. Možda se ni na kojem drugom mjestu ne vidi plastičnije Krležina sinteza estetičkog idealizma i materijalizma; ali dok se na razini ideja ta sprega čini nemogućom i aporijskom, na razini kreativnog kreda ona je vrlo produktivna i služi barem kao protuotrov vulgarnog determinizma i isprazne metafizike. Hvaleći "lakoću i nagon nadarena čovjeka" pisac brani i kipara i sebe

sama od svih ideoloških presezanja i zloporaba, dolazili oni zdesna ili slijeva — kako je, uostalom, dokazao i u svim kasnijim slavnim polemičkim istupima.

Svakako treba navesti u cjelini jedan od tih afirmativnih pasusa, jer je paradigmatičan za Krležina shvaćanja: "U raznim fazama svoga razvoja, u momentima čiste i neoskrvnutе inspiracije, Meštrović je davao svojim djelima mirne i jasne definicije kiparstva, kao trodimenzionalnog okamenjivanja materijalnih pojava u prostoru. Mnogim svojim djelima on je dokazao kako to kiparsko utjelovljenje tjelesnog ne može imati i nema druge svrhe nego da se prolazno zaustavi, da se pokretno okameni i da se tjelesno utjelovi u materiji, da se jedan tjelesni oblik objektivira u svom prolaznom stanju... u mnogim njegovim kipovima problematika je kiparstva zatvorena jednostavnošću formule kojom se konstatira da su dvaput dva četiri."³⁴

Nepotrebno je, međutim, navoditi čitave stranice opisa i tumačenja, na kojima egzemplificira tezu odabirom skulpture "Sjećanje" (s inkriminiranim naslovom "Torzo Vukosave Miloša Obilića"). Nepotrebno, jer tu samo parafrazira istu misao i po-zivajući se na Hildebrandtove kategorije prostornosti i prirodnosti zapravo komponira svojevrsnu "pjesmu u prozi" i slaže hvalospjev kiparu — makar i "krivovirna pravca". Nemimolazan je, ipak, čvrst i logičan zaključak: "U tome kipu nema još ničeg spekulativnog, ni dekorativnog. Sve ono ornamentalno, stilizirano prenamaganje motiva i izvještačenih tema, sve ono namješteno transcendentalno, tzv. religiozno i rasno, kosovsko, vidovdansko i vidovito neukusno, čulno ekstatično i ratno propagandistično, što se u okviru Meštrovićeve, političkim i umjetničkim obratima bogate karijere kasnije pretvorilo u propagandističku retoriku, u ovome kipu još nije bilo ni program, ni agitatorski plakat, ni naivna politika. To je bila lirski tiha i uzvišena melankolija u početku stvaranja, mramor čist, neoskrvnut i klasično jednostavan!"³⁵

Ne smije nas, stoga, čuditi Krležina žestina kojom napada sve ono što prati Meštrovićev društveni uspjeh. Naime, on je uvjeren da brani jezgru njegova senzibiliteta i od autorovih prenemaganja i od egzgetičkih pretjerivanja i od političkog manipuliranja. Na tragu njegovih formulacija i nama će se činiti smiješnom pretenzija Miloša -urića da u Vidovdanskom hramu vidi "Gesta Dei per Jugoslavenos" ili zahtjev Lorda Roberta Cecila da Njemačka "najprije proizvede

atic on the level of ideas, on that of a creative credo it may be very productive and serve at least as an antidote against vulgar determinism and empty metaphysics. By praising the “lightness and instinct of a gifted man,” Krleža defended both Meštrović and himself from all ideological trespasses and abuses, regardless of whether they were coming from left or from right — as he proved, after all, in his later, famous polemic activity.

One of such assertive passages should certainly be quoted in full, since it is paradigmatic for Krleža’s viewpoint: “In various phases of his development, in the moments of pure and uninvolute inspiration, Meštrović gave to his work serene and clear definitions of sculpture as three-dimensional petrification of material phenomena in space. In a number of his pieces, he has proved that this sculptural incarnation of the material cannot have and does not have any other purpose but to stop the transient, to petrify the mobile, and to fix the corporeal in the matter, to objectify a physical form in its transitory condition... in a number of his sculptures, the issue of sculpting art has been enclosed in a formula that is as simple as that of two and two making four.”³⁴

Nevertheless, it is needless to add long pages of descriptions and interpretations, by which Krleža exemplified his hypothesis on the statue of “Remembrance” (with the incriminating second title of “Torso of Vukosava, Wife of Miloš Obilić”). Needless, since he was only paraphrasing the same idea and, referring to Hildebrandt’s categories of spatiality and naturality, actually composed a sort of “poem in prose” and wrote a panegyric to the sculptor — even if one of “heretic orientation”. The inevitable, firm, and logical conclusion is though: “In that statue, there is yet nothing speculative, nothing decorative. All that is ornamental, all that stylised amassing of motifs and artificial themes, all that affectedly transcendental, the so-called religious and racial, Kosovian, Vidovdanian, and prophetically tasteless, sensuously ecstatic and martially propagandistic, that would later, in Meštrović’s career, rich with political and artistic shifts, be transformed into propagandist rhetoric, was in this statue still neither a programme, nor an agitating banner or naïve politics. It was lyrically quiet and sublime melancholy in the beginning of creation, marble pure, immaculate, and classically simple!”³⁵

Therefore, one should not wonder at the vehemence with which Krleža was attacking

everything that accompanied Meštrović’s social success. He was convinced that he was defending the core of the sculptor’s sensibility, both from Meštrović’s own affectations and from the exegetic exaggerations and political manipulations. Following his formulations, one may agree how ridiculous was the ambition of Miloš -urić to see “Gesta Dei per Jugoslavenos” in the Vidovdan Temple or the demand of Lord Robert Cecil that Germany should “first produce an artist of Meštrović’s format before asking of Britain to discuss its demands.”³⁶ And let us remember that this was referring to an artist that was an entirely typical “product of Viennese coffee-shop speculation”³⁷ and a disciple of Franz Metzner that “subjected himself to the influence of his teacher and constructed his Vidovdan Temple as a counterpart of the Leipzig monument to the Battle of the Nations.”³⁸

Krleža also wanted to “protect” the sculptor from his characteristic mysticism. He preventively mocked the idea of the “expectation of the Messiah,” by which Meštrović had “infected” his milieu.³⁹ He decisively rejected the “tons of mud and masses of bronze canons” that Meštrović had moulded “in search of a modernist formula of shallow, ‘racial’ messianism and utterly unserious, pseudo-religious rhetoric.”⁴⁰ He parodied the Biblical style of those who wrote: “Ivan Meštrović is Johanaan and Messiah must come, it is the Avenging Rage of Kraljević Marko.”⁴¹ Through the mouth of his “Diderotian prattler”, Mister Pomidor, he persiflaged Meštrović’s transcendental conjectures: “I do not understand much of all this. But it seems to me that it must be as deep as those similar philosophems of Ivan Meštrović, who is diligently quoting you (i.e. Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, Pomidor’s collocutor - remark by T. M.) in the prefaces to his unimaginably profoundly conceived catalogues.”⁴² Eventually, he bagatelized the depiction of Domagoj’s Archers, a piece that Meštrović had doubtlessly made “while he was flirting with the clerical notion of martial Domagojhood.”⁴³

On the basis of all that, one may conclude that animosities were stronger than sympathies, but the truth is actually opposite. What Krleža was bothered about with Meštrović was his “Cyclop-like stagger between tastelessness and megalomania”⁴⁴ and it seems that he basically wanted to use his critical explication in order to purify the opus that attracted him, so that it may shine

in its true greatness. We do not mean to deal with their personal relationship and we have no sufficient data for that. However, we should mention Krleža recalling that he “had been in Meštrović’s mercy before he wrote that political and cultural pamphlet, in which he accused him of being a servant of the regime.”⁴⁵ This means that they first approached one another with mutual respect, even until as late as 1928, which may also explain the fact that Meštrović, at Krleža’s suggestion, modelled the (later lost) statue of Lenin, presented in “Književna Republika” in 1926 and donated to the “persuader”.

After the pamphlet, their relations certainly became cooler and were subsequently interrupted. However, Krleža’s interest for Meštrović did not cease. Perhaps it may even be said that, with time, that positive aspect of the sculptor’s opus was growing in Krleža’s mind and reached its pinnacle in the (unsigned, but later authorized) encyclopaedia article from 1964: “In the first five decades of this century, there is not so much sculpturally perfectly treated marble or bronze world-wide that some of Meštrović’s sculptures may not be compared with the best artistic creations of the period.”⁴⁶ His evaluation from 1952, uttered at the meeting of the editorial board of Yugoslav Encyclopaedia, was equally categorically positive: “It is proposed that, among the visual artists, only Ivan Meštrović should get three columns and nobody else.”⁴⁷ It is entirely accidental, but also highly significant and full of symbolism, that Krleža’s office at the Lexicography Institute was located on Strossmayer’s Square, so that he could see Meštrović’s statue of Strossmayer from his window.”⁴⁸

II

Beside essays and articles, pamphlets and polemics, diaries and autobiographic notes, prefaces and encyclopaedia items — an overview of which has been offered in this text — one can find certain references to Meštrović’s personality even in Krleža’s “purely” literary works of prose. For example, Puba Vlahović, the protagonist of the short story “The Three Cavaliers of Miss Melanie”, expresses himself extremely emphatically: “Meštrović represents the flaming tongue in this fire of ours.”⁴⁹ Of course, this character represents Zagreb intellectuals from the time “when Croatian modernism was on its deathbed,” while

jednog umjetnika kao što je Meštrović, a tek onda će Velika Britanija moći da diskutira o germanskim zahtjevima”.³⁶ A riječ je, sjećamo se, o umjetniku koji je upravo tipičan “produkt bečkokavanske spekulativnosti”³⁷ i dak Franza Metznera koji “podliježe utjecaju svoga učitelja i, kao pandan spomeniku Leipziške Bitke Naroda, konstruira svoj Vidovdanski Hram”.³⁸

Krleža bi htio “zaštiti” samog kipara i od svojstvenog mu misticizma. Profilaktički se ruga ideji “očekivanja Mesije” kojom je Meštrović “zarazio” sredinu.³⁹ Odlučno odbacuje “tone blata i mase brončanih topova” što ih je Meštrović izmijesio “u traženju modernističke formule plitkog ‘rasnog’ mesijanizma i sasvim neozbiljne prividnoreligiozne retorike”.⁴⁰ Parodira biblijski stil onih koji pišu: Ivan Meštrović je Johanaan, a Mesija ima da dođe, to je Osvetnički Gnjev Kraljevića Marka”.⁴¹ Na usta svojega “diderotskog brbljavca”, gospodina Pomidora, persiflira Meštrovićeva transcendentalna nagađanja: “Od svega toga ne razumijem mnogo. Ali izgleda mi da je to svakako duboko kao slični filozofemi Ivana Meštrovića koji vas (tj. grofa Coudenhove-Kalergija, Pomidorova sugovornika - nap. T. M.) marljivo prepričava u predgovorima svojih nevjerovatno duboko zamišljenih kataloga.”⁴² Napokon, bagatelizira prikaz Domagojevih strijelaca, Meštrovićevo djelo nastalo, izvan svake sumnje, u trenutku “kada koketira sa klerikalnim pojmom bojovne domagojevštine”.⁴³

Na temelju navedenoga moglo bi se zaključiti da su animoziteti jači od simpatija, a istina je zapravo obratna. Krležu kod Meštrovića smeta “kiklopski hod između neukusa i ogromnosti”,⁴⁴ pa on kao da želi kritičkom eksplikacijom pročistiti djelo koje ga privlači kako bi ono zasjalo u zbiljskoj veličini. Njihovim osobnim odnosima ne kani se baviti, a nemamo ni potrebnih podataka. Ipak, važno je Krležino prisjećanje kako je “bio u Meštrovićevoj milosti sve dok nije protiv njega napisao političko-kulturni pamflet optužujući ga kao slugu režima”.⁴⁵ To znači da su se susretali s međusobnim poštovanjem, sve do 1928. a time se jedino može objasniti i činjenica da Meštrović, po Krležinoj sugestiji, modelira (kasnije zagubljeni) kip Lenjina objavljen u “Književnoj republici” 1926. godine i darovan “nagovaraču”.

Nakon pamfleta dolazi, svakako, do ohlađenja pa i prekida. Ali Krležino zanimanje za Meštrovića ne prestaje. Možda

čak s vremenom u piščevoj svijesti raste onaj pozitivni dio kipareva opusa, da bi kulminirao u (nepotpisanom, ali kasnije autoriziranom) enciklopedijskom članku iz 1964. godine: “Za prvih pet decenija ovoga stoljeća u svjetskim razmjerima nema tako mnogo kiparski savršeno obrađenog mramora ni bronce, da se nekoliko Meštrovićevih kipova iz današnje retrospektive ne bi moglo mjeriti s najsretnijim likovnim ostvarenjima tog razdoblja.”⁴⁶ Odlučno afirmativan već je i sud iz 1952, izrečen na sjednici redakcije Enciklopedije Jugoslavije: “Predlaže se, da od likovnih umjetnika 3 stupca dobije samo Ivan Meštrović i nitko drugi.”⁴⁷ Sasvim je slučajno, ali ipak vrlo znakovito i puno simbolike, da je Krležina radna soba u Leksikografskom zavodu smještena na Strossmayerovu trgu te da baš “s njegova prozora pogled pada na Meštrovićeve spomenik Strossmayeru”.⁴⁸

II

Osim eseja i članaka, pamfleta i polemika, dnevnika i memoarskih zapisa, predgovora i enciklopedijskih jedinica — što smo ih panoramski prikazali u našem tekstu — stanovite reference na Meštrovićevo pojavu nalaze se i u Krležinim “čisto” literarnim proznim ostvarenjima. Primjerice, Puba Vlahović, protagonist pripovijetke “Tri kavalira gospođice Melanije”, izražava se krajnje emfatički: “Meštrović predstavlja vatren jezik ovog našeg požara.”⁴⁹ Naravno, taj lik reprezentira zagrebačku inteligenciju iz vremena “kad je umirala hrvatska Moderna”, a na drugom mjestu istog dijela čitava je epoha određena upravo spomenom istog kipara, “kad je našao onu slavnu herojsku formulu iz gipsa te sa svojim takozvanim voluntarizmom modelirao svu nemoguću konfuziju naših kavana i naših mozgova”.⁵⁰

U jednoj dužoj i sustavnijoj radnji nastojali smo osvijetliti različite reflekske fenomena Meštrović u suvremenoj mu proznoj produkciji. Neporecivim paralelizmima sa životopisom darovitog dječaka iz Dalmatinske zagore i uspješnog izlagača na bjelosvjetskim salonima bilo je lako dokazati da je samo Meštrović mogao poslužiti kao model nekih ključnih likova iz novela Milana Begovića, Nikole Andrijaševića i Antuna Matasovića. U svim tim radovima, rekli smo, kipar je gotovo nadljudski eksponiran i predstavljen kao “junak svojega doba”.⁵¹ Sa sasvim drukčijim predznakom, tim prozama treba priključiti mnoge stranice Krležina romana “Banket u blitvi”.

Nema nikakve dvojbe da je “Banket u blitvi” transpozicija političke zbilje dvadesetih i tridesetih godina, te da su mnoge karabaltičke asocijacije zapravo aluzije na balkanski prostor. Roman je očigledno pisan “s ključem”, i njegovi čitatelji i komentatori trudili su se, prema vlastitu iskustvu, “prepoznati” predloške za pojedine tipove i situacije. Od homofonog Beaugarda, kao centra moći, pa do romantične budnice “Još nam Blitva ni propala, dok mi živimo” dovoljno je elemenata koji ne ostavljaju nikakve sumnje o pravoj ambijentalnoj podlozi djela. U iskrivljenu ogledalu blatvijsko-blitvanskih relacija parabolično se prelamaju neke od konstanti srpsko-hrvatskih odnosa, u figuri diktatora Barutanskog i u osobama iz njegova okružja odjeknut će različita svojstva nosilaca šestojanuarske i vidovdanske političke presije. Ali to nas u ovom kontekstu manje zanima, premda uvjetuje i sam prikaz amblematične osobnosti kipara Romana Rajevskog, o kojemu moramo nešto određenije reći.

Mnoge od situacija iz “Banketa u Blitvi” “posuđene” su iz kronike političkih prilika Kraljevine Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca. Dakako, nije riječ o pukoj transpoziciji nego o sustavnoj kontaminaciji, pri čemu se “uzori” pretapaju i gube. Međutim, lik Romana Rajevskog “kalkiran” je direktno po Meštroviću, odnosno po najoficijelnijim aspektima njegova državotvornog statusa. Jer nema presedana u evropskim razmjerima da bi neki kipar tako personificirao naciju, rasu i državu kakav je bio slučaj s Meštrovićem. A takav je i Rajevski. Krležu je morala ipak zabavljati (nakon što je rasčistio s vlastitim ogorčenjem) ideja da u opisu djelatnosti i ugleda Romana Rajevskog “podmetne” što više meštrovićijanskih atributa. Da je Rajevski tek “travestirani” Meštrović, osjeća se već od prvog spomena u uvodnom poglavlju, odnosno prologu “o blitvinskom pitanju kroz vjekove”: “... blitvinska epopeja kretala se u oblacima blitvinske Wallhale, a ta romantična ‘historiografska’ opera traje još danas u heroiziranim likovima najvećeg, i u evropskom inostranstvu i u objema Americama podjednako slavljeno slikara, kipara i političkog ideologa Romana Rajevskog”.⁵²

Dok je za fantomatsko slikarstvo Filipa Latinovicza bilo lako pokazati kako je složeno od različitih komponenti, nadahnutih životom i djelom tako divergentnih osobnosti poput Babića i Hegedušića, Juneka i Kraljevića,⁵³ za imaginarno kiparsko

elsewhere in the same short story, the entire epoch is defined precisely by mentioning the same sculptor, namely “when he found that famous heroic formula made of plaster and modelled, with his so-called voluntarism, all that impossible confusion in our cafeterias and in our brains.”⁵⁰

In a longer and more systematic study, we have sought to illustrate various echoes of the Meštrović phenomenon in his contemporary prose production. By means of undeniable parallelisms with the biography of a gifted boy from Dalmatinska Zagora and a successful exhibitor in fancy salons, it was easy to prove that only Meštrović could have stood model for some of the crucial characters in short stories by Milan Begović, Nikola Andrijašević, and Antun Matasović. In all these pieces, as we have said, the sculptor is celebrated as almost supra-human and presented as the “hero of his time.”⁵¹ With entirely different connotations, this prose should be complemented by numerous pages from Krleža’s novel “The Banquet in Blitva”.

There is no doubt whatsoever that “The Banquet in Blitva” is a transposition of the political reality in the 1920s and 1930s, and that many Karabaltic associations are actually allusions to the Balkan region. The novel was evidently written “with a key” and its readers and interpreters sought to “recognize”, each according to his own experience, models for individual characters and situations. From the homophone Beauregard as the centre of power to the romantic réveille “Our Blitva is not dying is long as we live”, there are enough elements that leave no doubt about the true ambiental background of the novel. In the twisted mirror of Blatvian-Blitvan relations, some of the constant traits of Croatian-Serbian relations are shining through in a parabolic way, while in the figure of dictator Barutanski and the characters from his surrounding, various features of the carriers of the political pressure of January 6 and Vidovdan have found their echo. But this is what interests us less in this context, though it influences the very presentation of the emblematic personality of whom we must say something more particular: sculptor Roman Rajevski.

Many of the situations from “The Banquet in Blitva” were “borrowed” from the chronicle of political situation in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Of course, it is not a simple transposition, but rather a systematic contamination, in

which the “models” merge and vanish. However, the character of Roman Rajevski was “moulded” directly after Meštrović, that is, after the most official aspects of his status of a statehood promoter. For it was unprecedented in European conditions that a sculptor would personify the nation, race, and state to such an extent as Meštrović did. And Rajevski was the same. Krleža must have been amused (after he had done with his own bitterness) by the idea of “imputing” as many of Meštrović’s attributes in the description of the activities and reputation of Roman Rajevski. The fact that Rajevski is just a “transvested” Meštrović is felt from the very first mention in the introductory chapter, which is a prologue “on the Blitvan issue throughout the centuries”: “... The Blitvan saga has taken place in the clouds of Blitvan Wallhala and that romantic ‘historiographic’ opera still lives in the heroicized characters of the greatest painter, sculptor, and political ideologist, celebrated equally in Europe and in both Americas - Roman Rajevski”.⁵²

While the phantomatic painting of Filip Latinowicz was easily shown as composed of various components, inspired by life and work of equally divergent personalities such as Babić and Hegedušić, Junek and Kraljević,⁵³ in case of the imaginary sculptor Roman Rajevski only Meštrović could come into consideration as a model. To this purpose, it suffices to read a few characteristic passages from the novel and compare them with the above-mentioned Krleža’s judgments or situations linked with Meštrović. For example: “I read the other day in the ‘Tigdende’ that Rajevski actually represented a ‘synthesis of the Blitvan folk myth’! He is, says ‘Tigdende’, ‘the Messiah, the Prophet, and the Victor, a synthesis of the Blitvan people’! He is the incarnation of the Blitvan soul! The guardian angel of the Blitvan race!”⁵⁴ Or: “What attention has Rajevski attracted abroad? Attention as an ‘artist’? As a painter? A sculptor? No! He was received abroad as a politician, not a painter. He was the representative of Blitva in Paris...”⁵⁵ Especially the passage written in English (and translated in a footnote), an example of couloir gossip on a Transatlantic steamer and an example of the celebrity craze that was rising around Rajevski: “He is a personal friend of the dictator of Blitwania, of the coronel Barutansky, who delivered the Karabaltics from the red hell. Yes! Morgan, Rockefeller and many others

want to have their portraits done by him. He is a religious sculptor! He is a friend of bishop Armstrong! He is not only an artist but also a prophet! In fact he is the first man who presented to Europe a young unknown interesting karabaltic race!”⁵⁶

How unimaginable the character of Rajevski would be without Meštrović as its yeast is also evident from some typical details, which agree and “rhyme” so well with Krleža’s visions of the sculptor’s social role. It is indicative that Rajevski is also caught between two religions, the more “state-oriented” one accepting his otherwise rather unorthodox aspects with benevolence: “... and those so-called Protestant church dignitaries, who admire Rajevski’s Counter-Reformation, that is, the allegedly hundred-percent Catholic angels.”⁵⁷ It is a special curiosity to come across the following question, a decade after Krleža’s pamphlet on Meštrović’s religious bigotry was issued: “But why do you bother me so much about whether Rajevski believes in God or not? What do you need that for? Are you also one of those who have claimed recently that Rajevski has no talent?”⁵⁸ Certainly, the sacral compositions of Roman Rajevski, such as that of the Assumption of the Virgin, made in oak wood, do not fall far from Meštrović’s tree. Some lines from the description will easily prove it: “Rajevski is a routiner, that is true, but this has been done by a steady hand of a master! Look at this John the Apostle, how dramatically he is broken in his waist, how well his left elbow hangs down along his thigh, it gives that kind of obligatory suspension to the whole silhouette and that was needed to intensify the sense of depression and sadness... It is an academic example of perfection, look how a single graphically expressed movement can dominate the entire composition, how it can become the so-called compositional dominant!”⁵⁹

Certain links and parallels could also be established on the plot level, although one should not exaggerate with the “identification” of side characters, such as the sculptor’s model-maker and sponger Olaf Knutson or his envious rival, academic painter and connoisseur Vanini-Schiavone. The idea of “our Quattrocento... with five hundred years of delay” is also close to our milieu, since it inevitably evokes memories of Strossmayer’s sponsoring actions, which Krleža nicknamed “badly painted Tuscany.” The horseman’s statue of the ruler or the

stvaralaštvo Romana Rajevskog kao poticaj dolazi u obzir isključivo Meštrović. Dovoljno je u tu svrhu pročitati nekoliko karakterističnih ulomaka iz romana i usporediti ih s već ovdje navedenim Krležinim sudovima ili situacijama vezanim uz Meštrovića. Primjerice: “‘itao sam neki dan u ‘Tigdende’, da Rajevski predstavlja zapravo ‘sintezu blitvinskog narodnog mitosa’! On je, kaže ‘Tigdende’: ‘Mesija, Prorok i Pobjednik i blitvinska narodna sinteza’! On je utjelovljenje blitvinske duše! Anđeo čuvar blitvinske rase!”⁵⁴ Ili: “Kakvu je pažnju pobudio Rajevski u inostranstvu? Pažnju kao ‘umjetnik’? Kao slikar? Kao kipar? Ne! On je primljen u inostranstvu kao političar, a ne kao slikar. On je bio predstavnik Blitve u Parizu...”⁵⁵ A naročito pasus napisan na engleskom (i preveden u fusnoti), kao uzorak kuloarskog govorkanja na transatlantskom parobordu i primjer reklamne hajke što se dizala u povodu Rajevskoga: “On je lični prijatelj diktatora Blitvanije pukovnika Barutanskog, koji je oslobodio Karabaltik od crvenog pakla! Da! Morgan, Rockefeller, svi se daju portretirati od njega! On je religiozni skuptor! Prijatelj biskupa Armstronga! On nije samo umjetnik, on je i prorok! On je de facto prvi, koji je Evropi prikazao jednu mladu, nepoznatu, zanimljivu karabaltičku rasu!”⁵⁶

Koliko je figura Rajevskog nezamisliva bez Meštrovićeva kvasca vidi se i iz tipičnih detalja, koji tako dobro prijanjaju i “rimuju” se s Krležinim vizurama kipareve društvene uloge. Indikativno je da je i Rajevski stavljen u procijep dviju religija, od kojih ona “državnija” s blagonaklonošću prima njegove inače neortodoksne, aspekte: “A oni nekakvi protestantski crkveni dostojanstvenici, koji se dive Rajevskovim protureformatorskim, navodno sto posto katoličkim anđelima”.⁵⁷ Pogotovo je kuriozno, dekadu nakon Krležina pamfleta o Meštrovićevoj religioznoj zadrnosti, naići na pitanje: “A što vi mene toliko gnjavite, da li Rajevski vjeruje u Boga ili ne? Što će vam to? Ili zar i vi spadate u one ljude, koji u posljednje vrijeme tvrde, da Rajevski nema dara?”⁵⁸ Naravno, ni sakralne kompozicije Romana Rajevskog, poput Uzašća Blažene Djevice u orahovini, ne padaju daleko od Meštrovićeva stabla. Nekoliko naznaka iz opisa to će lako potvrditi: “Rajevski je rutiner, to je istina, ali to je sigurnom, majstorskom rukom rađeno! Kako je samo ovaj Ivan Apostol dramski slomljen u pasu, kako mu lijevi lakat dobro visi priljubljen uz bok, to daje čitavom obrisu

onaj potrebni prijelom u crtežu, a to je bilo potrebno, da se pojača dojam depresije i žalosti... Akademski primjer savršenstva kako jedna reljefno izražena kretanja može zavladati čitavom kompozicijom, kako može postati takozvanom kompozicionom dominantom!”⁵⁹

Stanovite veze i paralelizmi mogli bi se uspostavljati i na razini sižea, premda ne bi trebalo pretjerivati s “identifikacijom” sporednih likova poput kipareva modelatora i prišepetlje Olafa Knutsona ili zavidnog konkurenta akademika, slikara i conaissance Vanini-Schiavonea. Bliska je našoj sredini i ideja “našeg Quattrocenta... sa petstogodišnjim zakašnjenjem” jer neizbježno izaziva spomen na Strossmayerove mecenatske akcije, što ih je isti Krleža okrstio kao “nafarbanu Toskanu”. Konjanički kip vladara ili personifikacije Blitve u obličju Palade Atene također su moguće reference na zemlju koja je zbog obilja majestetične skulpturalne građe nazivana i “Kiposlavijom”.

Ipak, ključno je mjesto romana i razlog Krležina snažnog emocionalnog angažmana poistovjećivanje amblema i zbilje: “Barutanski i Rajevski predstavljaju jednu te istu pojavu, jedan te isti pojam podjednako: današnju zbrkanu beauregardsku Blitvu! To su samo dva simbola Blitve! Ako vas ždere Blitva kao moralno pitanje, kako možete biti tako nehajno lijeni spram Rajevskoga?”⁶⁰ Demistifikacija, stoga, ide do kraja: “Jer Rajevski u inozemstvu, Rajevski u inozemnoj štampi, Rajevski u predgovorima svojih kataloga pred inozemnom publikom, to je prije svega propaganda za blitvinsko poduzeće gospodina Barutanskoga!”⁶¹ Kao kruna svega, najoštrij sardonični ugriz ili *coup de grâce* svim estetičkim iluzijama: “Ljudi se ne klanjaju Rajevskome kao umjetniku (jer ljude uopće umjetnost kao takva ne zanima), nego zato što misle da će preko toga našega narodnog blitvinskog genija potpisati povoljne trgovačke ugovore s Beauregardom.”⁶²

Budući da je Krleža svoj odnos prema Meštroviću otvoreno izrazio u nizu diskurzivnih tekstova, nije mu trebao roman kao alibi za intuitivno, indirektno i manje odgovorno iskazivanje. Isti se pisac nije libio jasno formulirati ni svoj odnos prema diktatorskom režimu Kraljevine Jugoslavije, nego je objavio na desetke članaka u kojima razotkriva njegove urođene slabosti. Prilikom “kuvertiranog” pisanja, kakvu mu je pružila koncepcija romana “Banket u Blitvi”, isko-

ristio je, međutim, za sustavno povezivanje najrazličitijih niti razgranatoga društvenog zla i za definitivni saldo svijui laži i kulisa jednoga groteskno konstruiranog poretka. Stoga ovim romanom nije o slučaju Meštrović rekao ništa teže i inkriminiranije negoli u pamfletima, niti je definirao nešto što se inače ne bi bio usudio reći, ali je organski zaokružio i na svoj način uopćio sve ono što ga je u kiparevoj reprezentativnoj karijeri smetalo i što je umjetnika samog ometalo u postizanju najvišega. Srećom svoj “dossier Meštrović” Krleža nije zaključio negativnom presudom.

III

Krleža je s pažnjom pratio rad mnogih likovnih umjetnika i s razumijevanjem pisao o različitim problemima slikarstva i kiparstva. Tim aspektima njegova djela posvećene su također već neke studije, analize i interpretacije,⁶³ a iz njih proizlazi da je Krleža imao naročita sluha za ekspresionističku poetiku i za neke historicističke i konstruktivističke tendencije. Zato je logično da je nastojao afirmirati i Dobrovića i Babića, i Hegedušića i Becića i Augustinčića i Mišea. Meštrović ga nije mogao “privući” ni stilskim ni društvenim afinitetima već ga je opsjeo uglavnom per negationem. Ali taj put suprotstavljanja i odbijanja bio je za Krležu evidentno “pravi”, pa nije slučajno da je pišući o svim ovdje nabrojanim umjetnicima morao makar jednom spomenuti i Meštrovića.

Meštrović za Krležu, ipak, nije tek “zao duh” iz Aleksandrove boce, nego i kipar istinske snage i mogućeg ugleda. Izruguje se, istina, tvrdnji kako je Meštrović “naša legitimacija pred Evropom”,⁶⁴ ali bi i sam, u nekoj “pročišćenoj” verziji, želio baš s pomoću Meštrovića dokazati Evropi da i mi konja za trku imamo. Svjestan njegove moći, vidi u Meštroviću sintezu individualnog i kolektivnog, premda ne na temeljima koji njega zanimaju. Dok Meštrović kontaminira srednjovjekovlje i suvremenost na podlozi dinastija i manastira, Krleža teži integraciji pučkog i laičkog senzibiliteta, što se u ovim našim stranama stoljećima vrlo malo mijenjao, upravo od srednjovjekovnih dana. Glavni je razlog spora i suprotnosti Krležina plebejska i populistička alternativa Meštrovićevu dvorskom i udvoričkom mentalitetu.

Ni u raspravama ni u romanu Krleža ne može mimoći klasni karakter konflikta. Egzemplarno je u tom smislu svečano

personification of Blitva in the shape of Palais Athens are other possible references to the country that was, owing to its abundance of majestic sculptural material, once called "Statueslavia".

Still, the crucial point of the novel and the reason for Krleža's strong emotional engagement was the identity of emblems and reality: "Barutanski and Rajevski represent one and the same phenomenon, one and the same idea: the confused Beauregard Blitva of our days! They are merely two symbols of Blitva! If Blitva is eating you as a moral question, how can you be so indifferent and inert towards Rajevski?"⁶⁰ Thus, the demystification goes all the way through: "Because Rajevski abroad, Rajevski in foreign press, Rajevski in prefaces to his catalogues, standing before the foreign audience, that is primarily propaganda for the Blitvan enterprise of Mister Barutanski!"⁶¹ The crown of everything is the fiercest sardonic bite or *coup de grâce* against all aesthetic illusions: "People do not bow before Rajevski as an artist (for people are barely interested in art as such), but because they think that, through this national Blitvan genius, they will sign profitable trade contracts with Beauregard."⁶²

Since Krleža had already expressed his attitude towards Meštrović in a number of discursive texts, he did not need a novel as an alibi for intuitive, indirect, and less responsible statements. He did not hesitate to formulate clearly his opinion on dictatorship in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and published dozens of essays in which he revealed its inherent weaknesses. Nevertheless, he used the opportunity of "encrypted" writing, offered by the conception of "The Banquet in Blitva," to interlace systematically the most various threads of omnipresent social evil and to establish a definite account of all lies and disguises of a grotesquely construed social order. Therefore, in this novel he neither said anything heavier or more incriminating about Meštrović's case than he had done in his pamphlets, nor did he define anything that he would have hesitated to say in a different way, but he did round up into an organic whole and generalized in his way all that disturbed him in

the sculptor's representative career and that obstructed Meštrović himself in reaching the top. Fortunately, he did not conclude his "dossier Meštrović" with a negative verdict.

III

Krleža observed the work of numerous visual artists with attention and wrote with much understanding on various problems of painting and sculpture. Several studies, analyses, and interpretations have been dedicated to these aspects of his work,⁶³ which have established that Krleža was especially receptive to expressionist poetics and some historicist and constructivist tendencies. Therefore, it is only logical that he would rather accentuate the work of Dobrović and Babić, Hegedušić and Becić, Augustinčić and Miše. Meštrović could not "attract" him neither with his stylistic nor with his social affinities and was preoccupying him mostly per negationem. But this path of opposition and rejection was evidently "the right one" for Krleža and it is no wonder that, writing about all the afore-mentioned artists, he at least had to mention Meštrović.

However, Meštrović was for Krleža more than just an "evil spirit" from Alexander's bottle; he was a sculptor of genuine power and potential reputation. To be sure, he mocked the statement that Meštrović was "our legitimization before Europe,"⁶⁴ but he would also have liked, in some "purified" version, to show to Europe, precisely with Meštrović, that our country also had something to boast with. Aware of Meštrović's power, he saw in him a synthesis of the individual and the collective, although not on the basis such as would have interested him personally. While Meštrović was merging the Middle Ages with the present on the basis of dynasties and monasteries, Krleža strove to achieve an integration of popular and lay sensibilities, which had changed very little in this region for the past centuries, in fact since the medieval period. The main reason of the conflict and the opposition was Krleža's plebeian and populist spirit as an alternative to Meštrović's royalist and courtly mentality.

Neither in his essays nor in his novel could Krleža avoid the class aspect of the conflict. In this respect, an exemplary episode was the festive journey of sculptor Rajevski to America, which was accompanied by pomp and propaganda, while the belowdecks of the same ship contained masses of poor people forced to emigrate and do the basest work. Krleža's conclusions are undoubtedly and decidedly biased in favour of the humiliated and oppressed, of peasants and the mob: "Our art, especially our glorification of the so-called sublime, metaphysical call of our Blitvan race, this racial messianism of ours, all that is nothing more but decorative plaster in a situation that needs no plaster decoration whatsoever, but bread."⁶⁵ His texts and judgments on Meštrović are a good example of his non-dogmatic way of thinking. Radical in his negation of superficial qualities, he was equally decided in his positive affirmation of the core and the essence. In fact, in many respects he was actually continuing Matoš's critical line of evaluation of Meštrović's work, for his predecessor had also admired that "truly great artist," but rejected at the same time the "panegyric superlatives" of his interpreters.⁶⁶ Thus, Krleža's dethronization of Meštrović equalled his apotheosis on a more appropriate and more profane level.

This dialectic assessment of Meštrović's activity had and would have for long an anthological significance in our local circumstances, not only for its rarely non-sectarian tolerance, but also for its openness, which transcends all political pragmatism. Both Meštrović and Krleža had a goal before their eyes, which was to create something that would become a symbol of the ambience and the milieu, as well as a proof of living at an inappropriate moment in an uncomfortable space. In a way, both achieved what they wanted,⁶⁷ but Krleža had the advantage (of a longer life and a broader horizon) of explicitly stating it for the sculptor, offering at the same time certain parameters and criteria according to which he wished to be recognized and acknowledged himself. ×

PRIJEVOD: Marina Miladinov

1 Plamen, 1 January 1919, reprint in: Eseji [Essays] VI, Zora, Zagreb, 1967.

2 S. Ferrari, Ultimo incontro con Krleža, Nuova rivista Europea, VI/1982. The interview took place on 15 May 1980.

3 I. Zidić, Miroslav Krleža i hrvatski likovni umjetnici [M. K. and Croatian visual artists], Čovjek i prostor, 3-4/82.

4 P. Matvejević, Razgovori s Miroslavom Krležom [Interviews with M. K.], Naprijed, Zagreb, 1969, p. 68. S. Lasić, Krleža,

putovanje kipara Rajevskog u Ameriku, popraćeno pompom i propagandom, dok u potpalublju istog broda stoje siromasi prinuđeni na iseljavanje i rad najniže vrste. Piščev zaključak neporecivo je pristran, i odlučan, na strani poniženih i ugnjetenih, kumeka i raje: "Naša umjetnost, specijalno naše veličanje takozvanog višeg, metafizičkog poziva naše blitvinske rase, ovaj naš rasni mesijanizam, sve to nije ništa drugo nego dekorativna sadra u jednome stanju, koje uopće ne treba sadrenih dekoracija nego kruha."⁶⁵ Tekstovi i sudovi o Meštroviću primjer su Krležina nedog-

matskog mišljenja. Radikalan u negaciji nekih površnih svojstava, pisac je jednako decidiran u afirmaciji jezgre i srži. Po mnogo čemu zapravo nastavlja Matoševu kritičku liniju vrednovanja Meštrovićeva djela, jer se i prethodnik divi "doista velikom stvar-aocu" ali odbacuje "panegirički superlativ" njegovih tumača.⁶⁶ Stoga je Krležina detronizacija Meštrovića ravna apoteozu na nekoj primjerenijoj i profanijoj razini.

Dijalektička procjena kipareve aktive ima i imat će u nas još dugo antologijsko značenje, ne samo po rijetkoj nesektaškoj toleranciji nego i po otvorenosti koja tran-

scendira svaki politički pragmatizam. I Meštroviću i Krleži lebdio je pred očima cilj ostvarivanja djela koje bi moglo biti znakom ambijenta i sredine, te dokazom postojanja u neprikladnom vremenu i neudobnom prostoru. Obojica su na svoj način željeno postigli,⁶⁷ a pisac je imao povlasticu (dužeg života i šireg viđenja) da to dospije za kipara i izričito ustvrditi, nudeći nam usput i neka mjerila i kriterije prema kojima bi želio i sam biti prepoznat i priznat. ×

Život umjetnosti, 33/34, 1982.

1 Plamen, 1. I 1919, prema Eseji, VI, Zora, Zagreb 1967.

2 S. Ferrari, Ultimo incontro con Krleža, Nuova rivista Europea, VI/1982. Riječ je o razgovoru vođenom 15. V 1980.

3 I. Zidić, Miroslav Krleža i hrvatski likovni umjetnici, Čovjek i prostor, 3-4/82.

4 P. Matvejević, Razgovori s Miroslavom Krležom, Naprijed, Zagreb 1969, str. 68. S. Lasić u knjizi Krleža, kronologija života i rada, GZH, Zagreb 1982, str. 70, zaključuje da se spomenuto Krležino sudbonosno upoznavanje Meštrovićevih djela zbilo već 1906. godine, u njegovu četvrtom razredu gimnazije.

5 Fragmenti iz dnevnika godine 1942, Forum, Zagreb XI/1972, br. 12, str. 334-5.

6 S. Lasić, nav. dj. str. 115.

7 Kao u bilješci 5.

8 O našoj inteligenciji, u Deset krvavih godina i drugi politički eseji, Oslobođenje, Sarajevo 1973, str. 64.

9 Ibidem, str. 56.

10 Ibidem.

11 Davni dani, godina 1916, Zora, Zagreb 1956, str. 146.

12 August Cesarec, u Eseji, III, Zora, Zagreb 1963, str. 408.

13 Uvodna riječ za časopis ČDanas 1952«, u Eseji, VI Zora, Zagreb 1967, str. 217.

14 Hrvatska književna laž, prema Eseji, VI, Zora, Zagreb 1967, str. 109-111.

15 Slom Frana Supila, u Deset krvavih godina i drugi eseji, Oslobođenje, Sarajevo 1973, str. 135-6.

16 Ibidem, str. 136.

17 Ibidem, str. 184 i 196.

18 Kao u bilješci 11.

19 O nekim problemima Enciklopedije, u Eseji, V, Zora, Zagreb 1968, str. 136-7.

20 Izlet u Rusiju, Zagreb 1926, str. 36.

21 Iza kulisa godine 1918, u Djetinjstvo i drugi zapisi, Zora, Zagreb 1972, str. 152.

22 N. Tommaseo, Canti popolari illyrici, Milano 1913, str. 159.

23 Europa danas, Zora, Zagreb 1972, str. 308.

24 Marginalije uz slike Petra Dobrovića, Eseji, III, Zora, Zagreb

1963, str. 210.

25 August Rodin, Forum, Zagreb, II/1963, br. 2, str. 408.

26 J. Uskoković, Monumentalizam kao struja hrvatske Moderne i Mirko Rački, Život umjetnosti, 29-30/1980, passim.

27 Davni dani, zapisi iz 1914-1921, Zora, Zagreb 1956, str. 133-4.

28 Ibidem, str. 160.

29 Kao u bilješci 24.

30 Tekst M. Pijade, Ivan Meštrović i težnje za stilom u našoj umetnosti, tiskan je u beogradskim ilustriranim novinama i Slobodnoj reči 1919, a pretiskan u knjizi M. Pijade, O umetnosti, SKZ, Beograd 1964, i Srpska likovna kritika (priredio L. Trifunović), SKZ, Beograd 1967. Krležina recenzija objavljena je u Plamenu br. 12/1919, vidi i esej o Moši S. Pijade u Deset krvavih godina i drugi politički eseji, Oslobođenje, Sarajevo 1973, str. 235, kao i Krležin članak o istoj osobi u Obzoru, 22. II 1926.

31 Ivan Meštrović vjeruje u Boga, u Eppur si muove — politički eseji, Oslobođenje, Sarajevo 1973, str. 113.

32 Ibidem, str. 98.

33 Ibidem, str. 114.

34 Ibidem, str. 112.

35 Ibidem, str. 106.

36 Ibidem, str. 101-2.

37 Ibidem, str. 112.

38 Ibidem, str. 108.

39 Zapisi iz godine 1917, u Djetinjstvo i drugi zapisi, Zora, Zagreb 1972, str. 111.

40 Kao u bilješci 37.

41 Kao u bilješci 11, str. 183.

42 Razgovor o materijalizmu, u Europa danas, Zora, Zagreb 1972, str. 235.

43 Iz hrvatske kulturne historije, Eseji, III, Zora, Zagreb 1963, str. 365.

44 O Kranjčevićovoj lirici, ibidem, str. 29.

45 S. Ferrari, nav. dj. str. 110.

46 Enciklopedija likovnih umjetnosti, JLZ, Zagreb 1964, svezak 3.

47 Govor na drugoj sjednici Plenuma centralne redakcije

- kronologija života i rada [Krleža, chronology of his life and work], GZH, Zagreb, 1982, p. 70, concludes that the above-mentioned fatal encounter with Meštrović's work took place as early as 1906, when he was in the fourth grade of secondary school.
- 5 Fragmenti iz dnevnika godine 1942 [Fragments from the diary, 1942], Forum, Zagreb XI/1972, No. 12, pp. 334-5.
- 6 S. Lasić, op. cit., p. 115.
- 7 As in n. 5.
- 8 O našoj inteligenciji [On our intellectuals], in: Deset krvavih godina i drugi politički eseji [Ten bloody years and other political essays], Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 1973, p. 64.
- 9 Ibidem, p. 56.
- 10 Ibidem.
- 11 Davni dani [Bygone days], the year of 1916, Zora, Zagreb, 1956, p. 146.
- 12 August Cesarec, in: Eseji [Essays] III, Zora, Zagreb, 1963, p. 408.
- 13 Uvodna riječ za časopis ČDanas 1952« [Introduction to the journal], in: Eseji [Essays] VI, Zora, Zagreb, 1967, p. 217.
- 14 Hrvatska književna laž [Croatian literary lie], reprint in: Eseji [Essays] VI, Zora, Zagreb, 1967, pp. 109-111.
- 15 Slom Frana Supila [The fall of Fran Supilo], in: Deset krvavih godina i drugi eseji [Ten bloody years and other political essays], Oslobođenje, Sarajevo 1973, pp. 135-6.
- 16 Ibidem, p. 136.
- 17 Ibidem, pp. 184 and 196.
- 18 As in n. 11.
- 19 O nekim problemima Enciklopedije [On some problems of encyclopaedia], in: Eseji [Essays] V, Zora, Zagreb, 1968, pp. 136-7.
- 20 Izlet u Rusiju [Trip to Russia], Zagreb, 1926, p. 36.
- 21 Iza kulisa godine 1918 [Behind the stage in 1918], in: Djetinjstvo i drugi zapisi [Childhood and other writings], Zora, Zagreb, 1972, p. 152.
- 22 N. Tommaseo, Canti popolari illyrici, Milan, 1913, p. 159.
- 23 Europa danas [Europe today], Zora, Zagreb, 1972, p. 308.
- 24 Marginalije uz slike Petra Dobrovića [Marginal remarks on paintings by P. D.], Eseji [Essays] III, Zora, Zagreb, 1963, p. 210.
- 25 August Rodin, Forum, Zagreb, II/1963, No. 2, p. 408.
- 26 J. Uskoković, Monumentalizam kao struja hrvatske Moderne i Mirko Rački [Monumentalism as a current in Croatian modernism and M. R.], Život umjetnosti, 29-30/1980, passim.
- 27 Davni dani, zapisi iz 1914-1921 [Bygone days, notes from 1914-1921], Zora, Zagreb 1956, pp. 133-4.
- 28 Ibidem, p. 160.
- 29 As in n. 24.
- 30 Text by M. Pijade on Ivan Meštrović i težnje za stilom u našoj umetnosti [I. M. and stylistic tendencies in our art] was printed in Belgrade illustrated newspaper and Slobodna Reč in 1919, then reprinted in: M. Pijade, O umetnosti [On art], SKZ, Belgrade, 1964; and Srpska likovna kritika [Serbian art criticism] (ed. by L. Trifunović), SKZ, Belgrade, 1967. Krleža's review was published in Plamen No. 12/1919, cf. his essay on Moša S. Pijade in Deset krvavih godina i drugi politički eseji [Ten bloody years and other political essays], Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 1973, p. 235, as well as Krleža's article on the same person in Obzor, 22 February 1926.
- 31 Ivan Meštrović vjeruje u Boga [I. M. believes in God], in: Eppur si muove — politički eseji [Eppur si muove & political essays], Oslobođenje, Sarajevo, 1973, p. 113.
- 32 Ibidem, p. 98.
- 33 Ibidem, p. 114.
- 34 Ibidem, p. 112.
- 35 Ibidem, p. 106.
- 36 Ibidem, pp. 101-2.
- 37 Ibidem, p. 112.
- 38 Ibidem, p. 108.
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