

**Gordana Gorunović**

*Department of Ethnology and Anthropology,  
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Serbia*  
gorunovicgordana@mts.rs

## **Mihailo Lalić and Serbian Ethnology: Ethnography and Mimesis of Patriarchal Society in Montenegrin Highlands<sup>\*1</sup>**

**Abstract:** My starting point is the yet unexplored supposition that Lalić's realistic writing about the reality contains also a real ethnological and anthropological reference, first of all comments on the Serbian ethnology of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its traditional paradigm, and strategy of ethnographic writing. My second supposition is that the deeper structure of Lalić's historical novels is „inscribed” by the genre of ethnography which, together with other text types and stylistic means, contributes to the virtuoso construction of great narratives about the Montenegrin life world in historical perspective. Finally, an analysis of Lalić's discourse reveals that despite the Marxist inspired criticism of ethnology as part of the Serbian national science, the discipline was an inevitable point of reference in the narrative construction of Montenegrin identity.

**Key words:** Mihailo Lalić; social realism in Yugoslav literature; the Vasojević tribe; Dinaric zadruga; cultural-anthropological perspective; Montenegrin lifeworld; mimesis of ethnographic writing

### **Introduction: (Half) Forgotten Lalić**

At the very beginning, let me make a note. I am not aware of local ethnologists reading Lalić critically or interpretatively in the light of terms, explanations or simply empirical data of their own discipline, even though they had the early example of ethnological and historical critique (Đorđević 1984a, 1984b)<sup>2</sup>,

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<sup>2</sup> If this is how the type of analysis applied by Tihomir Đorđević on Njegoš and the novel *Outlaw Stanko* by Janko Veselinović could be defined.

and newer semiotic model of anthropological analysis of the Enlightenment literature applied by Ivan Kovačević (Kovačević 2001a, 2000b). If we put aside the growing interest in the genres of popular literature, attempts at interpreting classical works of national fictionist literature are sporadic and rare examples in local ethnology and anthropology (see Zlatanović 2009).

Lalić's literary discourse about society, culture and history of Montenegro in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a significant aspect of his writing and contributes to the meaning of the entire opus of this author. It could be included in the genre of esthetic and moral imagination, construe and symbolic presentation of the Montenegrin lifeworld, inside and out. Its base is the process of cultural translation or, in the words of Clifford Geertz (Geertz 2010b, 68), „The passage is still from the immediacies of one form of life to the metaphors of another”. This connotative effect in the reception and dual perspective of the writer, as a member-participant and/or observer,<sup>3</sup> allowed me to draw some parallels between his fictional writing and simultaneous phenomenological and symbolic approaches in the interpretative anthropology and sociology (Spasić 1998, 2004; Schutz 2012), regardless whether he personally knew their preoccupation or not. In fact, it could be said that he did not and that, furthermore, some of his naturalistic<sup>4</sup> and essentialist claims were directly contradicting the theory of social constructionism.

Domestic literary critics saw similarities with Sartre and existentialism in his pleading for social literature and responsibility of form, while similarity with Camus was based on consistent humanism (Bandić 1965, 23). The author himself pointed to the significance of authors as different as the symbolic poet Charles Baudelaire („the left Baudelaire” in his reception) and realist, communist Miroslav Krleža in forming his literary taste and early, but adamant and unchanging interest for socially sensitive and engaged literature (Lalić 1995, 86, 121–125). His critical assessment of surrealism in the literature (Lalić 1992, 195) is of relevance to me also as a parallel to those objections which neo-Marx-

<sup>3</sup> In the documentary diary prose *Transitional Time* (1988, 239), Lalić defines himself as „an outsider from the transition period” under the pseudonym Oto Hotaš or Hotašević. This name was appearing in genealogies of the Vasojevićs: in the 17<sup>th</sup> century Nikola Hotašev was the chief, most likely duke, of the Vasojević tribe in Lijevo Rijeka, the original area of this tribe (Bolica in Lenormant 2002, 277).

<sup>4</sup> His reflection on causes and deeper grounds of folk customs has arguments originating from the theory of evolution and sociobiology, e.g.: „What is linking us to Kvakiutles at whose potlatch-feasts ‘a huge amount of fish was squandered’ as well as other goods? (...) It must be that something deeper is connecting us than that which shines from the cortex. Deeper—it is that tiny reptilian and crocodilian embryo of the brain which by the miracle of evolution was somehow created hundreds of millions of years ago in our ancestors, the reptiles, to lead them into ambush, and where the current science finds the seat of aggressiveness, territoriality, hierarchy and readiness to blindly follow the leader” (Lalić 1995, 103–104).

ist and critical anthropologists (Keesing 1974; Asad 1983; Scholte 1986) were addressing, justly or not, against cultural analyses within the Geertzian interpretive anthropology: its alleged idealism, exaggerated emphasis of the symbolic dimension and neglecting of the „real” or „harder” aspects of social life—issues regarding class stratification, material production, politics and power as generators of cultural meanings. However, the cultural perspective and interpretive approach are not limited to some areas of social and cultural living which are in advance considered to be symbolic, as usually thought and done in modern anthropology. C. Geertz discharged the prevailing opinion—that some aspects of culture and society are more „symbolic” than others and therefore easier to interpret from the point of meaning—as mere „prejudice” originating from a comprehension of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that „the symbolic” was opposing „the real” in the same way as the imaginative vs. the prosaic, the figurative vs. the literal, the aesthetic vs. the practical, the mystical vs. the secular, etc. (Geertz 1980, 135–136). To paraphrase Geertz, the real is equally conceived, imagined, invented, i.e. formed and mediated by linguistic and symbolic means, as that which is conceived.

As a socialist and Marxist knowledgeable writer, Lalić was in practice realizing suggestions from the manifest of realism of the socialist Svetozar Marković (Marković 1947). He demonstrated that the literary writing of historical novels as a symbolically constructed vision of past reality can have not only interpretative value for readers, but also political-critical potential in socialism. And that had, to a certain degree, its price and made him unpopular in official political and professional circles (party forums, association of writers), as well as among a part of his contemporaries, associates and comrades. Despite foreign translations of his books,<sup>5</sup> domestic awards for literature, political functions, travels and awarded trips abroad<sup>6</sup>, his memberships in the Serbian and the Montenegrin Academy of Arts and Science, he was not a favorite of the Communist

<sup>5</sup> Mainly in Eastern European countries, but also in Western Europe and the USA: in English (*The Wailing Mountain*, 1965), in German (*Der Berg der Klagen*, 1967), in Danish (*Klagernes Bjerg*, 1967), in French (*Diable noir, mon frère*, 1969), Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, and even in Armenian.

<sup>6</sup> He got a scholarship and stayed in Paris in 1952–53, during the „campaign against the verdict” in the case of the Rosenberg couple, and wrote the novel *Evil Spring* there: „French authors, the right and left: Catholic Mauriac, De Gaulle supporter Malraux, Communists with Aragon, Jean-Paul Sartre with his, poets, painters, actors, directors, they all conspired and asked for a renewal of the proceedings, to study the material more objectively... Even the right-wing paper *Le Figaro*, which is usually enthusiastic about America, wrote for Julius and Ethel Rosenberg: ‘Only innocent people of big hearts can speak like that’. Cardinals and the President of France, Thomas Mann, Marten du Gard, Édouard Herriot and other notables begged Eisenhower not to execute the Rosenbergs” (Lalić 1992, 16).

authorities. As time went by and social-political crisis in Yugoslavia unfolded, he became aware that he was losing local readers. Now, two and a half decades after his death, he is almost forgotten. As outlined by the Montenegrin writer Jevrem Brković (Brković 2010):

In the posthumous literary life, among the publishers, readers and critics, there is not, unfortunately, even an average interest for his work and life, in Montenegro either, except in the reading material for schools; in Serbia, Lalić does not exist even in the mandatory reading material!

Rehabilitation of Chetnik ideology in Serbia erased the interest in Lalić's work; his readers were gone: they died, and their offspring have crossed, mainly, to the other side, the one which in Lalić's novels is the losers' and heavily vilified! And so it happens that within a changed social reality the subject matter of a great writer turns against the writer, thus becoming a largely aggravating circumstance in approaching his work.

He belonged to the generation of sons of founders of the common Yugoslav state which grew in it, experienced historical disappointment with it, and lived to see its breakup. After his childhood years and growing up in a province in eastern Montenegro, Lalić studied the Law School in the 1930s in Belgrade. He joined student fights against the dictatorship of the regime, became a Communist and was several times arrested and imprisoned. During the April War in 1941 he returned to Montenegro to join a military unit, participated in the uprising in July and shared the destiny of members of the partisan movement. Ground situation, particularly in autumn and winter of 1941, is the topic of numerous short stories of Lalić (e.g. the collection *First Snow*). During 1942, when most of the Montenegrin partisans withdrew to Bosnia and only a handful remained in the field, hiding in caves and dugouts and resisting chases of Chetnik and Italian forces—the historical context of his most renowned novel *The Wailing Mountain*—he was captured and sentenced to death in the Chetnik prison in Kolašin. After Italy's capitulation in 1943, he was interned in German prison camps in Greece, and from there he saved himself in 1944 by escaping and joining fighters of the Greek ELAS.

After the war, he was mindfully working on the textual construction of his imaginary and experienced world, making it his task to testify by remembering and writing about „the most interesting people of our time who did not regret to give their lives” (Lalić 1995a, 155). By doing so he turned into „a moral historian” and „epic-historian of people's revolution” (Bandić 1965, 6, 12), as much as its aesthetician and a kind of ethnopoet. He could be of interest also to social historians dealing with the contemporary history of Yugoslavia and the Balkans, as well as to other researchers interested in the cultural memory. Working as a journalist of „Pobjeda” and „Borba” (1945–1955), Lalić wrote about current social and economic issues—post-war reconstruction and development, indus-

trialization and urbanization of the country (e.g. Lalić 1952). During the Greek civil war (1946–1949), he received the order to record documentary material about hidden hospitals which the Yugoslav government organized for wounded partisans of the army of General Markos in secret locations in mountains of the PR Macedonia (now FYR Macedonia).<sup>7</sup> According to his scenario the documentary „Brotherly Aid” was made, directed by George Skrigin and Trajče Popov (1950). Already in October 1944 Lalić recorded triple names for villages in Khalkidhiki, at the same time Slavic, Turkish and Greek. Then he noticed in the hospital „that even Markos’ fighters had often two names: one was Slavic-Macedonian, the other Greek”, imposed. Resigned he concluded that not even the Greek Communist „could break away from nationalist prejudice!” (Lalić 1988, 63). Later on he will label socialist nationalism as one of „the most twisted” occurrences in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lalić 1992, 57).

As time went by, Lalić was more and more disappointed with the new events, processes and state of affairs (Resolution of the Cominform in 1948 and Goli Otok; the so-called Croatian Spring in early 1970s, etc.), betrayed hopes stirred by the revolution, failures of the Yugoslav path to socialism (self-management) and real-socialism in general, as well as domestic literary, ideological conflicts between supporters of modernism (i.e. surrealism), on one side, and realism on the other: „In fact, between the ‘art pour art’s sake’ and humanly engaged literature”, as he wrote in his diary prose (Lalić 1992, 49).

### Realist novel as paradigm of Montenegrin lifeworld: Tribal and state history fraught with warfare

The first association and key word describing the literary world in works of Mikhail Lalić is war, metaphorically labeled as some sort of „cancer of the humanity” (*War Fortune*, 391). War dominates as a theme and is *the great story* (Abbott 2009) in his novelistic-narrative opus, while the subjective experience of war is his „total obsession” (Bandić 1965, 17). This is a bitter, unsentimental and extremely „male”, androcentric prose about Montenegro in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>8</sup> about two Balkan and two World Wars, when the world was

<sup>7</sup> „I felt sorry for the Greeks. I saw them in Thessaloniki, where three occupying armies—the German, Bulgarian, Italian—were trampling down their streets, but failed to break their spirit. They welcomed our prisoners in 1943 better and nicer than our people and nations would. I saw them in Khalkidhiki—they heartily shared the last piece of bread and onion with us” (Lalić 1988, 59).

<sup>8</sup> „Do you know what time it is, Lado?” asks prosaically one of his characters the other, and the latter replies using an allegory, „Sordid, the filthiest, the twentieth century—the era of chase” (*The Chase*, 467).

turned into „a large waiting room of violent death” (*War Fortune*, 396). The tragic effect was fully won owing to Lalić’s skill (perceptibility, evocativeness, ease in reproducing the seen and experienced, imaginative power, etc.) to depict convincingly the drama of human destinies in the war within „local” frames, within the ordinary, immediate „daily” Montenegrin world of living, and to add a dimension of metaphysical meaning to it.

Writer’s choice of this hypernymic, „experience-near” (Geertz 2010a) theme was motivated in a multitude of ways—by historic, biographical,<sup>9</sup> notional, ethical and aesthetical reasons. Years of Lalić’s birth and death are important dates in history: he was born in 1914 in Montenegro at the beginning of World War I, after which the Austro-Hungarian Empire ceased to exist, but so did the small Kingdom of Montenegro; then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians was created (1918), which in 1929 changed its name into Yugoslavia. He lived to see the breakup of the SFR Yugoslavia and died in Belgrade at the end of 1992, during the war in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Lalić’s paradigm of the novel is a structurally complex and genre polyvalent work, a multiplex-text. In the structure of only one novel, namely *The Rupture* (1955), components of a war novel and chronicle are interlacing; as well as components of a novel about hard labour („our *Dead Home*” [*Зануцки из Мёртвoгo дома*])<sup>10</sup>; historical and social novel; ideological novel-utopia; psychological and philosophical novel; fictionalized biography and guidebook; adventure and love story (Babović 1984, 77–78). This complex structure is common also to other great novels of the writer, particularly four booklets of memoirs and diary of the main character Petar Pejo Grujović,<sup>11</sup> one of the founders of the Club of Montenegrin University Youth in Belgrade, Montenegrin dissident and emigrant in Turkey,<sup>12</sup> fighter of the Montenegrin Army in Balkan Wars (1912, 1913) and the Great War, and guerilla fighter during the Austria-Hungarian occupation of Montenegro (1916–1918).

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<sup>9</sup> In an interview to Grozdana Olujić, Lalić said: „Most of what I wrote, I had either seen or survived. However, even if it was not so, it is the duty of a writer to make that which he writes so persuading as if it really happened” (quoted in Bandić 1965, 38).

<sup>10</sup> About the Chetnik prison in Kolašin, transport of prisoners into German camps through the transit camp Staro Sajmište in Zemun and inmates’ experiences in Pavlos Melas, Harmakia and Lamia in Greece.

<sup>11</sup> Novels *War Fortune*, *The Knights*, *Until The Hill Turns Green*, *Looking Down At The Roads*.

<sup>12</sup> This is about a fictional reconstruction of real political clashes between the oppositional Club of the People’s Party and the pro-governmental Real People’s Party (supporters of the rule of the Prince, later on King Nikola I Petrović), at the time when the Constitution was adopted, the National Assembly formed, as well as the first political parties in Montenegro at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (See Vujović 1962; Rakočević 1969).



Main features of this tetralogy are pluralism of characters (monumental „gallery” of portraits, some of which are real historical figures) and dialogues given in vernacular; „wealth of narrative forms and the effect of their naturalness” (Babović 1984, 78); emphasized dynamics of action<sup>13</sup>; „collision” of time perspectives in narration (Popović 1995, 162), as well as reflexivity of the narrator and hero. The presented world is „a divided one and hostile to the bone” (Petrov 1967, 23), marked by rivalry and fight for power between different social, political, ethnical, cultural and civilization entities: Highlanders and Lowlanders<sup>14</sup>; tribal members and non-tribal members on the same territory—in case of the Vasojević tribe, this would be the antagonism between the Vasojevićs and the Srbljak-Ašans; between the Vasojević tribe and neighbouring tribes (Kuči, Bratonožići, Piperi), as well as Katunians<sup>15</sup>; between supporters of the Club and of the Righteous; of the White and the Green; Communists and nationalists, Partisans and Chetniks; the Petrović and Obrenović dynasty and the Karađorđević dynasty; Montenegrins and Serbs in Serbia; small Montenegro on the „eternally” discordant Balkan and superpowers in the West and the East, etc. (see Šijaković 2009).

According to Montenegrin historians inclining toward Marxism (Vujović 1962, 8), ideological division into the White (supporters of unification with Serbia under a Serbian dynasty) and the Green (opponents) generated political groups also during the World War II when main quisling formations were recruited from ranks of the White (Chetniks) and the Green (separatists). Furthermore, it survived in some forms after the war, serving as a generator of nationalism, localism and chauvinism, as well as „national nihilism”. Unification with Serbia in 1918 was until recently a huge topic in the Montenegrin public discourse and historiography. Lalić, aware of its significance in the „collective consciousness”, while obsessed with the theme of *betrayal*—capitulation of the king, government and army during World War I (January 1916), and later on collaboration with the occupying force during World War II—dedicated himself to literary process these events on the basis of written historical and oral sources, which he, too, collected as documentary material for his novels.

Prototype of Lalić’s hero is a fighter for freedom, justice and truth, „prisoner” of the idea; lonesome, haunted and often from within torn man from Hills (usually from the Vasojević tribe, i.e. the Upper Brzaks—literary pseudonym of

<sup>13</sup> Action narratives about journeys, military operations and battles confirm the early insight of literary critique that movement is „a characteristic agent of Lalić’s prose” (Bandić 1965, 31).

<sup>14</sup> Frequent division in Montenegrin tribes to upper and lower parts, at first caused by the topography of the tribal territory, which overlaps with other, historically formed divisions and differences in line with social status, political and economic power.

<sup>15</sup> Tribes of the old Katun nahia: Njeguši, Cuce, etc.

the tribe); political opponent, dissident or revolutionary attempting to breakup with the tradition of tribal particularism and national chauvinism. The final goal of Lalić's members of the Club and anarchists was the fight against the authoritarian regime (absolutist-patriarchal regime of the Prince, i.e. King Nikola) in Montenegro, national liberation of all Yugoslav nations under Turkish and Austro-Hungarian rule and unification with Serbia.<sup>16</sup> For Marxists, the final goal of the revolutionary fight was a classless society of justice and equality, in line with „the categorical imperative” of the early works of Marx: „to destroy all relations in which the man is a humiliated, oppressed, deserted, scorned being” (quote in Bandić 1965, 15). Their rebellious *communitas* (Turner 1969), symbolically represented as a folk holiday and wedding celebration with shots from guns—in the darker vision of reality, as a bloody wedding because „there is no wedding without meat”<sup>17</sup> (*The Wedding*, 236)—were fed from two sources. The first was the traditional Montenegrin epic and heroic myth, and the other the *ideology* and *utopia*, the belief in the revolutionary *exodus*—”from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom”, „from the zoological into the social state” (*War Fortune*, 119).

The parallel between the revolution and a Montenegrin wedding was explicit in the first novel of Lalić, *The Wedding* (1950), in which the main character Tadija Čemerkić praises the wedding as a „beautiful” and „smart” custom, using gender stereotypes: „It celebrates the male power which is able to create and the female softness which is by nature prepared to accept and maintain the fire of new life...” (Lalić 1979, 124). In his parable, presented in the form of a monologue with authentic, experienced description of the wedding from the point of the participant-native, the national people's uprising and social revolution is a big wedding, Partisans are wedding guests-kidnappers who go to arms to grab the bride, the red flag of proletarians is the banner carried by guests, and the bride combines liberty, justice and fortune in one.

<sup>16</sup> The stance on the polemical question regarding the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, and Yugoslavia—Unification or Serbian occupation—can be illustrated with words of Pejo Grujović: „Supporters of King Nikola, Sekula's [Sekula Drljević] federalists, separatists, and even Communists, when they get beaten by ox sinew on their soles and get aggravated—then they refer to the situation after the unification as Serbian occupation of Montenegro. (...) I, despite all of the dissatisfaction in which I got sour for twenty years between two wars, still refuse to agree that it was an occupation. (...) It was no occupation, but instead this unity and unification with brothers Serbs and other Yugoslavs was wanted by the people of Montenegro and they declared in favor by majority” (*Knights*, 61–62).

<sup>17</sup> This saying appears in the same, allegorical meaning in the biographical fiction about the First Serbian Uprising 1804 (Petar Jokić in Samardžić 1980, 227). According to some sagas, *Vožd* Karađorđe himself was originating from the Vasojevićs, just like the ancestors of Vuk Stefanović Karadžić.



The base of the philosophy of Lalić's characters is made of a dualistic understanding of the nature of the world and the man, analogue to Manichean and Babylonian teachings about the constant fight between the hero Marduk and goddess Tiamat<sup>18</sup> as the embodiment of primordial chaos: between light and darkness, matter and spirit, body and soul, senses and reason, good and evil. However, for Lalić as an author, Cosmos is indifferent and time „inert”, „in the same way as we have the illusion that space is motionless”. Time is a human creation and phenomenological category (Natanson 2012, 26–27); its flow is measured by the wear and tear of „our days and organs” (*naših dana i organa*)<sup>19</sup>, concepts and utopias in the life of men (Lalić 1992, 36). While motion in nature is circular, the man, by „nature paradoxical”, would like to impose to himself and his social world the rational belief in linear motion and progress (Lalić 1992, 147). Therefore, Lalić's skeptical philosophy of his mature phase opposes actually the evolutionist thinking in social sciences.

In the late phase, his philosophy turned explicitly pessimistic, maybe even anti-humanistic. Similarly to Princeton neo-gnostics (Ruyer 1986), the writer labeled the mankind as „a genus of swiftly remodeled monkeys”, chronically „divided and quarreling”; „stupid and selfish animals, lifelong downtrodden by impetuses of sex and bread” (Lalić 1992, 182). However, it won mystical premises in the form of speculations about the *soul* as a psychological and physiological value, essentially an electromagnetic phenomenon: a „flicker” which radiates from „the charcoal” of the body and perhaps transcends it in time (Lalić 1992, 149, 164).

### Tribal ethnography and ethno-history

Lalić originates from the Vasojević tribe, the largest Montenegrin-Highlands tribe. The Vasojević grouping was first mentioned in historical sources in 1444. Charges of the merchant from Dubrovnik, Brajan Prodanić, brought before the court of Dubrovnik, read that his caravan was attacked by highlanders, among others „despot's men [subjects of Đurđe Branković], Pipers and the Vasojevićs”, they killed his brother and robbed him of his goods (Đašić 1986, 168). At that time the Vasojević grouping has not fully formed a tribe yet, but was most likely

<sup>18</sup> In the game of words, dialectic materialism (dia-mat) turns into *tia-mat*.

<sup>19</sup> This is an example of the frequent use (and hardly translatable) paronomasia, which represents a feature of Lalić's linguistic expression, besides the metaphor, cumulating, gradation, periphrasis, repetition, comparison, etymological figures, etc. (see Radulović 2010). Partial linguistic analysis of sources of the language (main literary and dialectal layers; types of expressions, non-metaphorical and metaphorical, etc.) was carried out by Dušan Jović (1984) on excerpted material from 7 novels of Lalić.

a clan or fraternity of the type attributable to the so-called *katun organization* of Vlach and Albanian stock farmers. In 1485 the Turkish defter for the Sanjak of Scutari the village of Rječica is mentioned, called also Vasojevići in the Piperi nahia. Historian Miomir Dašić identifies Rječica, as a settlement of the permanently inhabited katun/clan of the Vasojevići, with Lijevo Rijeka, the main region of the later tribe. Formation of the Vasojević tribe was a long process which evolved gradually, most likely until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when they seceded from the Piper nahia as a separate and organized unit.

According to folk sagas, the Vasojevići were fictively kindred to the Montenegrin tribes of Ozrinići and Piperi and the northern Albanian Krasnići and Hoti. These tribes were allegedly originating from five brothers, Ozro, Pipo, Vaso, Kraso and Oto (Hot), who came a long time ago from Herzegovina to Kučevo in Old Montenegro, where Ozro stayed and others dispersed to various sides. Eponymic ancestor of the Vasojević tribe, Vaso was an immigrant in Lijevo Rijeka, in an unknown time when the area was desolate, and built a house on the right bank of the Nožica creek (Lalević and Protić 1991, 19–20). This hydronym went into a provision of the so-called Vasojević Law,<sup>20</sup> which refers to borders of the tribal territory: „The sky belongs to God, to the emperor all of the land, and to the Vasojević [tribe] everything from Nožica to [the river] Lješnica forever and amen” (Jelić 1929, 1).

According to Lalić’s comment, „destiny was neither benevolent nor kind” to these ancestors: legends say that Ozro was „limping”, Vaso „stump”, and Dabeta „blind” (Lalić 1992, 250). However, it could be rather said that it was their cultural tradition which did not spare them, i.e. oral lore and not fate, because most of these stereotypic legends resulted from additional fabrication and rationalization. Ethnologist Špiro Kulišić offered a likely interpretation, that the function of the motive of limping and other physical disabilities of eponymic ancestors (and ladies ancestors of clans) was to justify the negative connotation of the practice of uxorilocal marriage, because immigrant individuals were by becoming in-laws gaining the right of „citizenship” in the village of the new clan and property in the wife’s group (Gorunović 2007, 239). As time went by, their offspring were departing from the maternal uncle’s kin group. After taking

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<sup>20</sup> According to Jelić (1929, 5), set of regulations „of constitutional character”, which was likely formed in the common practice until the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century in order to become codified in 1829 or 1830. However, Jelić’s treatise, including the text of „The Law” and his comments, were criticized and denied from the very beginning (Petrović 1930). It is possible that it represents a work in the „genre” of science mystification, and The Law—”a skilled construction and compilation of various regulations and diverse rules” which were „codified” by the author himself (Dašić 1986, 366). Jelić has allegedly collected the material on The Law from old people in the field, in 1916, at the beginning of the occupation of Montenegro (see also Miljković Matić 2007).

the land and becoming demographically stronger, they established the paternal line of inheritance (together with the virilocal marriage as the normative form), and confirmed themselves as a separate and autonomous kinship group—a new patrilineal clan (*bratstvo*) in the tribe.

Members of the Vasojević tribe were emphasizing its tribal freedom and independence, even though, in fact, they were not fully sovereign: due to the obligation of paying tolls, they would occasionally revolt from the supreme Turkish Authorities, thus suffered a lot. They based their strongly developed sense of pride, dignity and honour on the oral lore about the noble origin of the Serbian medieval Nemanjić dynasty<sup>21</sup> and feudal aristocracy, epic songs about martyrdom of glorious ancestors in the Battle of Kosovo and the historically confirmed role in the territorial expansion of the new independent Montenegrin state in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and in the liberation wars of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup>

Modeled on folk tales and genealogies, history and political relations of the Vasojević tribe, Lalić built a fictitious history of the Brzak fraternity of Musičić which, too, originates from an immigrant, Musa Dibranin, an eponymic ancestor. The narrator of the legendary and „real” history of Musičić family was the main character of the tetralogy, Pejo Grujović:

Our ancestor, when he arrived here—he was not called Musa, but Musica [diminutive]. The way he was, small and alone, he could not impose himself by force. Only his grand-grand-grandchildren could rely on force. Their ancestral amity helped them, and even more so the division and discord of the unrelated and fractious Old Brzaks. Besides, ours made use of the power of the Prince; connections with Venice, sometimes even with Scutari, finally with Cetinje, and continued suppression of Old Brzak family members to date. More relocated due to oppression of the Musičić fraternity then due to bad years, and more converted to Islam out of spite to the Musičić fraternity than to please the Turks (*War Fortune*, 217).

The third wave of population, suppression and plunder, Musičić fraternity started harmless. Musica came alone, naked as a pistol, with recommendations of

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<sup>21</sup> There are several versions of the legend about the origins of the Vasojević tribe. According to one, eponymic ancestors-founders of the tribe, Vasoje and Vaso were descendants of Vukan Nemanjić, *Župan* of medieval Duklja and Raška (13<sup>th</sup> century). Vasoje was allegedly the son of Vukan's son Kostadin/Konstantin (not identified in historic sources), and Vaso was Vasojev's great-grandson along the direct paternal line.

<sup>22</sup> After the successful war against Turkey (1876–78) and the Congress of Berlin, territory of the Montenegrin state was drastically increased. Montenegro got the towns of Nikšić, Kolašin and Podgorica, and in the Littoral Bar and Ulcinj with its vicinity and therefore access to the Adriatic Sea, however under the control of Austria-Hungary. Victories in the Balkan liberation wars (1912 and 1913) resulted in receiving the towns of Mojkovac, Bijelo Polje, Pljevlja, Berane, Plav, Gusinje, Rožaj, Peć, Đakovica, Tuzi and part of the Scutari Lake, however not the town of Scutari which remained in Albania (Rakočević 1983).

some church leader and was accepted as elderman of shepherds of Prince Nenad Starokućić. They got him married to the daughter of the prince, a blind girl. When cousins of Bjelišić, Kaičić families killed two sons of the prince and ran off to the Vasojević tribe, Musica got the land of the Kaičić family and his older son, Rudaš, the hat and baton of the prince. When Rudaš's son Gojo killed his best man over a small insult, Rudaš cursed him to have no leaders or priests among his progeny, only heroes, and gave the leadership to descendants of his younger brother Mirčeta who fought over titles and honors to date (*War Fortune*, 136).

The story doesn't end here, because when a lineage or fraternity originating from insignificant immigrant gains in strength, demographically and military, and raises to the position of power, the additional „adjustment” of the origins of its founder follows. That is how various versions occur, and they all have a common motive as their base: aristocratic origin. For some, Musica was the descendant of a certain Musa, a chief officer of Prince Lazar of Serbia and brother of Musić Stevan.<sup>23</sup> Others link him to the Albanian noble family of Musaki; others believe that he was the descendant of „Musa Arbanas, Musa Kesedija, to whom the historian of Albania Barleti refers to as Mozes Dibranus” (*War Fortune*, 137).

Quoted excerpts from a wider narrative present a dense, condensed and stylized, diachronic description of the tribal society in miniature, on the individual example/case—invented, but carefully composed according to the „real life” and narrative interpretation of the past experience. Even though meta-historic fiction is at hand, the reader is offered an archetypal pattern of social and political relations, course of conduct and action (strategy, strikes and counterstrikes), including a repertoire of **social types/actors and roles**: lonely immigrant, a nobody, interloper; influential church leader; tribal prince from an honorable old fraternity (*starokućić*); handicapped girl/bride from a princely house; **main events**: insult to honour, murder, escape from blood feud to another tribe, confiscation of land from the perpetrators; **customs and beliefs**: tradition of the son-in-law, the best man; honour, curse; **offices, titles and insignia of authority**: prince, duke, priest, shepherds' elderman; the hat and baton of the prince; **social mobility**: oppression of „the weaker” in the tribe and „conversion to Turks” (i.e. to Islam) of feeble families and lineages; political and economic strengthening of new kinships originating from immigrants; alliances „of the stronger” with

<sup>23</sup> Again, an echo and variation of Vasojevićs' saga: Stevan Musić, hero from national epic poems, is identified with Stevan/Stevo Vasojević, Duke in Sjenica, sanjak of Novi Pazar (Jelić 1929, 9–10; Katanić 1939). Stevan is considered son and heir of Vaso, eponymic ancestor of the tribe, allegedly *Duke* in times of *Tzar* Dušan, born in Prizren. After the battle of Kosovo and Stevan's death, the Vasojevićs were allegedly migrating to Herzegovina and from there to Montenegro and Lijeva Rijeka. There is also a version which says that Vaso was the son of some *king* in Herzegovina and immigrant from Herzegovina.

external political factors—Scutari pashas and beys, proveditore of the Republic of Venice, bishops of Cetinje, etc.

Plausibility of the fictional description is achieved with references to an ethnographic source, Erdeljanović (1981 [1907]), who „noted that Drekalovićs [the strongest brotherhood in the Kuči tribe] did not buy land either in Kuči, or outside of Kuči”:

Something similar could be said for Musičićs in the Brzak tribe (...), and I believe that similar phenomena can be found in other tribes. Some tribes remained exposed to autocracy of patriarchal fraternities whose men believed it was only natural to take for free whatever they like and strengthen the position of the caste. The number of families they drove off by plunder, violence and injustice cannot be counted. Many of those who were banished converted to Islam—some out of spite and desire to get their revenge on whomever and in any way possible, others to get land from the Turks while avoiding becoming serfs.

Today many Musičićs are scattered throughout villages of Goričani: in-laws' or maternal uncles'. Some of them are also in Donjacs—they mixed, became Donjacs (...). And I remember when we considered Donjac people a lower race. One of the reasons why we considered them no-goods was that they tolerated the Turks in Doganja and mosque for long (...). We used to call people in Doganja 'pots'—like: their elderly brought pots with water to beys to wash their backside ... (...) Ours used to call them also 'Vlacho', 'Serbo', 'hogs', 'pigs', 'piglets'—when Turks were allowed to call them that, why should ours be not?" (*War Fortune*, 137–138)

These descriptions were also modeled in accordance with political history of concrete tribes, mainly the Vasojević tribe. The tribe spread gradually from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> and throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century from its original area of Lijeva Rijeka towards the East, suppressing, submitting or assimilating the indigenous, Slavic and non-Slavic population—nicknamed collectively contemptibly Srbljacs or Ashans (by the area of As/Has, so-called Berane nahia). By the 19<sup>th</sup> century it occupied the entire valley of the river Lim. They treated Srbljacs, indigenous and immigrants, scornfully from aristocratic heights, as if they were inferior or foreign, i.e. members of other tribes (Jelić 1929, 11). Thus their mutual relations were marked by distrust, antagonism and violence of the stronger against the weaker.

Besides, one of the main causes of bloody clashes between Highlander tribes was the fight for control over the mountains and pastures—between the Vasojevići and Kuči<sup>24</sup> around Komovo, between the Vasojevići and Albanian Kelmendi around Vrmoša (Vukosavljević 2012, 189; Erdeljanović 157–8, 226). The Vaso-

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<sup>24</sup> Ilija Jelić (1931, 13) wrote then that a 100 years ago a Kuč was not allowed to cross the territory of the Vasojević tribe, nor was a Vasojević allowed onto the territory of the Kuči. They were in blood feud and the traditional custom of hospitality, for which both tribes were otherwise known, was not valid then in their mutual relations.

jevićs were often waging war along the border, particularly their border villages: Slatina with Turks-Kolašin dwellers<sup>25</sup> and Velika, Kaludra and Šekular with Albanians from Rugova. According to Jelić (Jelić 1929, 22), they were notorious both in Montenegro and outside of it as „robbers”. Their batches used to engage in shooting sprees and confiscate cattle of Muslims in Bihor and neighbouring areas of so-called Old Serbia, as well as Albanian Klimenti/Kelmendi Catholics. Lalić confirms this, too, in his autobiographic-memoire prose *Epistolae Seniles*:

In order to get their revenge for Turkish villainy of the far past, and to eat meat without harm to their own cattle—ours went to plunder Muslim villages in Bihor. They would bring small livestock, sometimes also the big one, slaughter it, grill or cook (...). My father went, too, with the avengers—everyone else on foot, but he on a horse (Lalić 1995, 18).

The common law of Vasojevićs did not protect the property of local Muslims and Turks.<sup>26</sup>

### Family and zadruga

Lalić’s birthplace Trepča near Andrijevića in Polimlje area<sup>27</sup> is an old village mentioned in the defter for the sanjak of Scutari in 1485, among villages in the nahia of Komnen (medieval *župa*, county of Budimlje). According to this document there were 43 goodmen, 10 single adult taxpayers and 7 widows. Nothing can be concluded about the structure of families and composition of households, but it can be presumed that some of the registered were living in zadruga, and some in nuclear families.

At the very beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (1903 and 1905), priest Bogdan Lalević and Ivan Protić, laic ethnographers, testified that the zadruga of the Vasojević tribe started falling apart. „Until recently”, they wrote, „The Vasojevićs lived

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<sup>25</sup> The city of Kolašin was built mid the 17<sup>th</sup> century during the Cretan War, as a Turkish fortification with permanent military units.

<sup>26</sup> Allegedly a special legal provision of Vasojević’s Law was referring to that: „Someone who steals something Turkish let him be praised”, i.e. forgiven and blessed; furthermore, such acts were celebrated among the people as a heroic venture (Jelić 1929, 21–22).

<sup>27</sup> Upper river Lim basin fell under Ottoman reign in 1455 and a year later the tribal territories of Kuči, Bratonožići and Vasojevići in Lijeva Rijeka fell, too. During the first Turkish registrations (1485, 1497), Trepča could not have been a Vasojević village, because the Vasojević group was then as *derbenci* (guard of roads) living in Rječica, Lijeva Rijeka, and belonged to the Piper nahia (Dašić 1986, 94, 95). According to the lore, Trepča was prior to the Vasojević clans inhabited by the old Vuinović family or lineage, originating from Trepča near Vučitrn (Kosovo). They gave the place the name of their old village.



in zadruga that counted twenty to thirty members.” But cooperators (*zadrugari*) no longer wished „to submit to the elderman to whom they were strongly subordinated” because they desired a freer and more comfortable lifestyle. Often after the split-up it proved to be to their detriment, for they became „suddenly poor even went to wreck” (Lalević and Protić 1991, 25). This conclusion was later on confirmed by Lalić, too: already as a child he realized that „as soon as brothers divide, immediately they will grow poor, (...). What happened to mine was repeated by Boro’s sons who were second in wealth in the village, and then Miljan and Mile, and finally also Boro Rašov with Marko” (Lalić 1995, 53).

„Old Mita” from Trepča explained him then in his words the economic consequences of division in the rural family zadruga:

When the brothers divide, or the father with sons as it is often the case now, they remain alone. There is no one to keep the cattle, to take them to the mountain; there is no wool to wear (...), no meat or cheese in the winter. In the autumn they have nothing to sell, to have a hundred dinars for the rainy day (...). They get into debts, which need to be returned—not only that which was taken, but the interest, too. (...) No cot, no sheep dung, nothing to fertilize with, and then the best yards will fail even without drought... (Lalić 1995, 54).

According to folk belief, recorded in the ethnological and sociological literature (Stein-Erich 1966; Rihtman-Auguštin 1984; Vukosavljević 2012), it was common that division of zadruga, in the Dinaric region and beyond, was blamed on women generally, and especially wives of brothers, sisters-in-law. Echo of this „ethno-explication” appears in Lalić’s prose, too: „It would be better [for them not to divide], but the women<sup>28</sup> are not allowing it... And not only are the women, even the men are no better (...).” (Lalić 1995, 54). An early childhood memory, evoked by the writer in *Epistolae Seniles*, refers to the discord between three brothers, his father and uncles, several years upon their return from the Austria-Hungarian war prisoner camps, which consequently led to division. Women (wives of two brothers) are not mentioned in this excerpt. Division is requested by the youngest, single brother, dissatisfied with his position and treatment in the household community:

„I shall divide!”  
The uncle tried to explain to him that the youngest is not dividing.  
„Well, I shall! ... Or the village will gather to make peace.”  
„Ok, if you want. We haven’t gathered them in a while.”  
„Let him divide when he insists”, the father gave in. „He would be better of choosing.”  
„I can also choose”, Kunjo said.  
„The one dividing has no right to choose.”  
„We shall see!” Kunjo threatened. (*Epistolae Seniles*, 24)

<sup>28</sup> In the Serbian language the word „woman” means also „wife”.

The common law when dividing a *zadruga* was for the elder to divide the land, and parts of the land were taken and chosen by the youngest first, and then the older members. Threats of the youngest brother that unless things are done his way „the village will gather to make peace” was most likely referring to summoning the people’s court of „good men” (*kmetovi* as people’s judges; Jelić 1929, 18), who intervened in these conflict situations and arbitrated disputes. According to Lalić’s testimony (Lalić 1995, 29), his father Todor Ilijin was one of these judges. He was going to villages of Vinicka, Trešnjevo and Kraštica to „make peace between some parties in dispute, attend funerals and engage in politics”. When he fell ill, villagers were coming to him „to write them charges against neighbours, brothers, cousins and supons<sup>29</sup>...”

The old house (of the grandfather, Ilija Todorov) was given at the division to Lalić’s uncle Milutin. Lalić’s immediate, nuclear family (father, stepmother and two minor sons) remained there for a while, „like some tenants who are not paying rental, but feel tied up” (*idem*). After that they built their own house (a log cabin with a thatched roof), owing to free cutting of common woods and *moba* (bee) of the peasants from Trepča. *Moba* was a traditional form of solidarity when agricultural work had to be done (harvest, scything), building of houses and mending of damages caused by fire, flood or landslides. In regular circumstances bee was summoned, while in extraordinary circumstances villagers would on their own jump to aid to the misfortunate and harmed family. They would bring the construction material for the house providing also food, cloths, dishes and cattle (Lalević and Protić 1991, 25).

In Lalić’s fictional prose *zadruga* is rarely mentioned explicitly, described or commented, in comparison to the rural family (joint or nuclear) in general, fraternity and antagonistic relations between fraternities within a tribe, patriarchal moral and „aristocratic” honour code,<sup>30</sup> or to the psycho-cultural complex marked as *Dinaricism*—”historical sadness” as „our original disease”, called „neurasthenia Montenegrina” (*War Fortune*, 356). This family and household type appears in his novels and documentary works under the label „large Slavic family” or „patriarchal-egalitarian” family *zadruga*. It seems that Lalić understood the *zadruga* as a once general or common type of a complex family household in the social practice of the Vasojević and other Montenegrin tribes. *Zadruga* was labeled as „large house” (*velja kuća*) and „cooperative home” [*zadružna*

<sup>29</sup> From the word *supon*—gathering of cattle for grazing or oxen for plowing; supons are those who make a contract to jointly execute certain tasks in stock farming and agriculture.

<sup>30</sup> „When a girl ‘wrongs’ or when a young widow fails to resist solicitation and biological laws, when someone is caught stealing or someone innocent gets beaten and cannot have his revenge for it—these people could not survive in Montenegro or the Highlands, the code of honour prescribed that they had to move out or hang themselves” (*War Fortune*, 34).

*kuća*] (Erdeljanović 1981, 191; Popović 1954). It was widespread as a *model* of the family and primary community in the perception of native intellectuals and scientists, which can be proved by this ideal-typical quote from Jelić's doctoral dissertation on the blood feud and peacemaking in Montenegro and Northern Albania (Jelić 1926, 5):

...disputes between members of various communities were much more dangerous than those which would arise amid a family, because within a family all members were always united against that member [*zadrugar*] who would attempt to destroy their internal order, and it was impossible for him to fight against all of them, due to which all of these internal family disputes were always remaining without almost any harmful influences on the internal order of the community.

Jelić has, namely, legitimized his approach to materials about legal and other folk customs by immediate knowledge of the way of living and tradition—"as a born Vasojević" raised and educated „in the patriarchal way in one *larger* peasant house" (Jelić 1926, „Foreword", p. III; italics G.G.).

In Lalić's archetypical description of the pattern of social history of the invented fraternity of Musičić in the fictitious tribe of Brzak, a *zadruga* is nowhere mentioned, but it could be presumed that it had its real role in the demographic development of new lineages and clans and their social and political rise within the fraternity-tribal organization in the Highlands. There is an implicit understanding that divisions of *zadruga* and final abandoning of this institution were caused by the breakthrough of capitalistic trade and individualistic tendencies in the rural environment, under the influence of the stronger state organization, destruction of traditional tribal institutions and social stratification of the rural population. However, the writer overlooks the significance of ecological factors in the creation, maintenance and disintegration of *zadruga* in some Highlanders' tribes. It seems that extensive stock farming, combined with other favorable conditions—plentitude of pastures and free land for clearing—was beneficial for the *zadruga* household in the Vasojević tribe. According to the expert in ecology of the tribal regime and „history of the peasant society", Sreten Vukosavljević (Vukosavljević 2012, 68), transition from stock farming to agriculture and from extensive to intensive stock farming was the critical moment in adapting of the *zadruga* to new production conditions, which was the most frequent cause of its breakup. In the case of the Vasojević tribe, this was indirectly confirmed by other ethnographic reports. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their main vocation was agriculture and stock farming, but „previously" stock farming was the only industry (Lalević and Protić 1991, 38–39).

Lalić comprehended *zadruga* in the usual materialistic manner, in functional relation to the mode of production, agricultural-livestock economy and undeveloped division of labour „in which everyone does the same three-four necessary tasks" (*Determined Man*, 142); therefore, as a form of mechanical social

solidarity, according to Durkheim's expression. Due to the asymmetric socialization of sons and daughters,<sup>31</sup> Lalić believed that this family type encouraged formation of „the melancholic” character in men („neurasthenia Montenegrina”). Its main features were: laziness, lack of discipline, defiance to authority, infantilism,<sup>32</sup> individualism, narcissism, impulsiveness, grumpiness, tendency to violence in interpersonal and inter-group relations, hunger for acknowledgments in the public life, heroic glory and praise, but also willingness to self-sacrifice for the benefit of the community and nation (compare Cvijić's description of „Dinaric psychic type” in Kovačević 2016, 88–89).

### Mimetic discourse

Lalić's reading included, among other things, local and foreign social science literature: works of the National Science, Serbian anthropogeographic/ethnological school, historiography and philology, as well as popular anthropological works. References to Jovan Cvijić, Jovan Erdeljanović, Petar Šobajić, Andrija Jovičević, Radoslav Vešović, Vladimir Ćorović, Francois Lenormant, Ruth Benedict, Marcel Griaule and others, as well as comparative ethnographic data were not a mere addition or ornament in Lalić's prose. These are *themes* (Prince 2011), integral parts of wider inserted essays or comments, which in their form remind of debates on some discursive subject, and essentially represent an aspect of writer's experimenting with other, unpoetic text types.

In Lalić's prose, fictional and documentary, there are frequent interpolations of folk sagas about the earlier non-Slavic population and origins of a fraternity or tribe, (quasi) ethnographic descriptions and (quasi) etymological interpretations of characteristic toponyms and ethnonyms in the Montenegrin and wider Balkan region. This procedure resembles or imitates the style of representatives of the old historical-philological school in Balkan studies and Indo-European studies. Such are symbolic connections of oronyms by similarity, like Leleč, Lelestva, Leleza, Lelič hill, Lelija, Lelej Mount and Mount Tilelej. Hypothetical

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<sup>31</sup> „In addition to that comes the compassionate parental and grandfathers' protection of the youth from hardships of labour, and it lasts until the ripe age and supports raising lazy bags and melancholic persons” (*Determined Man*, 142).

<sup>32</sup> „Many Montenegrins, when they grow up, maintain some childish features for a long time, and some never part with them. For one tribe from the Katunian nahia the Prince said, allegedly joking, that their adulthood should be recognized after the age of 40, but I made comparisons and found in all of our tribes equally similar examples who until their old age and death remained as children: curious, gazing and 'green', devoted to play and fun, naïve dreamers, gullible illusionists of firm faith and easy minds, irconcilable Don Quixote and 'equalizers' (...)” (*War Fortune*, 371).

reconstruction of their meanings is based on the interpretation of the names as linguistic reminiscences of the Paleo-Balkan people of Leleg. „From these Le-lejs”, Pejo Grujović speculates, „so crowded and misfortunate, the word lelek [lament] and the custom of male lamenting over dead could have come to us” (*War Fortune*, 129). Later on he presents the assumption about „the ancient connection” between the forms Zeta—Zenta—Genta and the Pelasgian *centaur* or the Indo-Iranian *gendarva*; „the name *Brzaci* could be understood as the Slavic translation of some long forgotten Indo-European toponym” (*War Fortune*, 371). This tribal name is also linked to Brsjacs or Berzits, an old Slavic-Macedonian tribe which participated in the Slavic siege of Thessaloniki at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The narrator cites some similarities with „the bearded and tall Rekali” in the region of Debar: they are equally fond of „pretending to be important as ours do”, to „glorify their merits and abilities”, to build big houses like towers; then in wedding customs, dance, music and national costumes (compare Lalević and Protić 1991, 29).

There are also reminiscences of ethnological-anthropological explanations of institutions of pre-industrial societies. For example, Lalić evokes the dual principle in the organization of primitive peoples: „dual entities which survive in cooperation and collision...” He discovers it in Montenegrin tribes in the form of a series of oppositions: between the old folks and the immigrants (Lužani and Bjelopavlići; Ašani and Vasojevići; Starokuči and Drekalovići), autochthonous and interlopers, the upper and the lower, etc. Then, the functional principle of reciprocity in the funeral customs of fraternities in villages: „they dig a grave, take out the coffin and carry it to the cemetery, guests are served by people from another fraternity, and that service will be repaid when someone from their fraternity dies” (Lalić 1988, 291).

Memories and comments of the narrator and protagonist of the tetralogy of Pejo Grujović are powerful tools both in focalization, presentation of his subjective viewpoint as a participant/member and observer of past and current events (World War II), as well as in conveying a non-literary, ethnological discourse through literary means. A significant role in the transmission of (quasi) ethnological perspective plays a particular mimetic procedure which is implemented in novels *War Fortune* and *Knights*, particularly in essays titled „Babologija” (Grandma’s Stories), „Imena i priče” (Names and Stories), and „Brzaci” (Brzacs). It is based on simulating the writing of classic domestic ethnography, modeled on monographs from editions „Settlements in Serbian Lands” and „Settlements and the Origin of Population” of the *Serbian Ethnographic Miscellany* (see Niškanović 2016).

In regard with the stance of Lalić’s characters of intellectuals on the civil bourgeois ethnology between two World Wars, the discipline turns into an object of doubt and denial. Pejo Grujović, the wannabe ethnographer of his Brzak tribe,

said that „scholars and Marxists have declared this anachronism, reducing ethnology to lore and labeling it babology [from *baba*, grandmother; (usu. pej.) old woman]” (*War Fortune*, 114). Its object of study was considered anachronous and obsolete; its approach exoticizing, and function ideological and political—as a project serving national and party interests of the Serbian bourgeoisie.

The narrator, a lawyer by education, prepares the reader for an excursion into the ethnography of his own tribe through a short introduction about motivations of anthropogeographical and ethnological studies of the Balkan Peninsula, which were started at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by the geologist and geographer Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927).<sup>33</sup> According to narrator, Cvijić paid great attention to Montenegro because traces of the tribal way of living were still strongly preserved here, while they were long gone in European countries. This was the explicit reason and the implicit reasons were of political nature, like: Cvijić’s origin, more precisely that of his family, from the tribal area (the Drobniak tribe in Montenegrin Herzegovina); early influence of socialist ideas of Svetozar Marković; „inherited burden of wider views”, or „sufficient dose of megalomania”, which was typical for „many Highlanders and Montenegrins”; and the fact that he was belonging to a generation which predicted „conquering waves from the West, and tried to resist them by unifying forces and means of the Balkan nations” (*War Fortune*, 113). Despite interferences and „political machinations” of Serbian Radicals and nationalists, various unifiers and hegemonists, this research enterprise was, as assessed by the narrator, completely beneficial (compare Filipović 1968; Naumović 2016, esp. 41–43; Milenković 2016). A lump sum of material was gained as the base for further studies, and „at least a pale image” was saved of the conditions at the transition from „obsolete fraternal” into „non-fraternal”, capitalist relations.

Narrator then explains why, once upon a time, he refused the offer of the Ethnographic Institute of the Serbian Academy of Science to write an ethnographic study about the Brzak tribe:

I refused mainly because it seemed to me then, like the young men tend to believe now – that this tribal past of ours should be concealed and not revealed. (...) My thoughts were that this past should be kept hidden, because it was burdened by the cult of heroism and the monotony of heroic acts, with four of their versions – duel, plunder of livestock, death and revenge – and that it resembled bragging and was harmful, as it was causing envy among our brothers from other parts (...) (*War Fortune*, 114–115).

There was another reason: my doubt. (...) Looking at the way in which the Belgrade press was always writing about us with some scorn and intention to make the readers laugh at us, I doubted the real intention of the Ethnographic Institute and its researchers: Could it be that our brothers, townspeople from Belgrade, will present us to the world as some exotic semi-barbarians from the

<sup>33</sup> See the newest assessments of Cvijić’s legacy in Matic et al. 2016.



Orinoco tribe?... And will not the West then, a judge who was always on the side of the stronger, compare us to the Apaches, the belligerent prairie Indians from North America, to the unfortunate Utah Indians, with whom we indeed share some common features, one of which would be the bad luck that keeps following us (...) (*War Fortune*, 116–117).

In the opinion of the narrator, the traditional Montenegrin world of living was radically changed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the time between two World Wars, when the erosion of the Montenegrin myth of bravery speeded up, and individualistic and egoistic tendencies got stronger:

Such signs of spoil and lower forms of explicit egoism began in our midst at weddings even before and in funerals only after the ‘German war’, i.e. at the end of the second decade of this [20<sup>th</sup>] century. I consider them visible proof of the sudden ruin of the tribal man, transformation of our ‘esquire-nobleman’ *homo heroicus* into a manikin of the scribing era. For this operation of his, more precisely, comedy, time used the machine called *state* and later on also some smaller machines like *the club, organization, company, party*, which play an important role even in huge human cauldrons (...) (*War Fortune*, 367–368; underscored M.L.).

This is also the stance of the writer: according to Lalić’s psychosocial interpretation (Lalić 1992, 164), a tribe represented the „substitution of the mother” for an adult; it was his „cradle” which „gave him protection and sometimes managed to make a hero out of him”. By breaking the tribe, the state, authoritarian and bureaucratic, destroyed the cradle of the man and created „an incubator for a coward”. However, this *Comedia Montenegrina* is not a specific or exclusive feature of the Montenegrin social world. That is, according to the narrator, only a special case of the sudden and accelerated operation of the general process of changing „characters and customs”, which other European nations experienced much earlier, in milder forms and at a slower pace.

## Concluding considerations

Despite being a prolific writer, who tirelessly modified and „amended” his novels, Lalić occasionally questioned the reason why he was writing, and whether he was „doing good or bad” by showing „what Montenegrins were like and what they may seem to remain” (Lalić 1992, 170). He was inclining to observe Montenegrins with their patriarchal ways and traditionalism from the viewpoint of the old evolutionist distinction between „primitive” (as, basically, technologically or in other ways inferior) and „civilized” (as superior) nations. This implicit or explicit ideological discourse was for long burdening also the social-cultural anthropology (Kuper 1988). At the same time Lalić’s view of the Montenegrin „primitivism” was fluctuating, oscillating between implacable

economic diagnosis—that technological „backwardness” of the Montenegrin society was an almost historical constant—and the nostalgic yearning for intangible values and ideals projected in the past of his native society. He saw that the tribal ethos of righteousness and bravery (*čojstvo i junaštvo*, honour and heroism; Miljanov 2001) was a historically surpassed category, both in the Yugoslav socialist society and the modern world in general.

Lalić’s mission of „saving” the subject matter in the Serbian and Montenegrin literature was somewhat similar to the ethnographic mission of documenting so called primitive and traditional cultures in the ethnology and anthropology of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. He comprehended writing as an attempt at fighting against the element of *time*—”What it destroys, I restore and leave—who wants to take a look, shall find at least some trace...”—and *oblivion*, in its final outcome, futile (Lalić 1992, 227). But also as a sort of research based on experience and sources, with the aim to determine the nature of categories *here* and *now*—whether they were chaotic, or there were some significant repetitions in current events and situations which could point to certain regularities of historic processes (Lalić 1992, 452). Due to that, his novels have a strong documentary background—historical, political, economic, sociological, and even ethnological-anthropological to some degree. In the biographic-memoir and diary prose the writer expresses himself as a perceptive ethnographic observer and biographer of folk and popular culture in socialist times,<sup>34</sup> but also as a critic of occurrences in it. When comparing Montenegrin and Serbian wedding and funeral customs with the *potlatch*, he concluded with resignation: „We are all, as it seems, Kwakiutl—both Serbs with their weddings, and modernists with their fashion and elite, and Westerners with their surplus profit, and Montenegrins with inns and funeral clamor” (Lalić 1995, 102–103).

In the literary formulated critique of premodern domestic ethnology, the Serbian civil ethnology was scurrilously labeled as „Grandma stories” because its research interest was limited on sagas about the old times and search for anachronisms and archaisms, i.e. relict features of the folk life. In short, to that which

<sup>34</sup> I learned how precious his documentary records and short stories about so-called ordinary people and small local communities are as sources for the anthropology unfortunately only upon publishing the monograph about the local community in Orahovac, municipality of Kotor (Gorunović 2014). That is when I discovered Lalić’s story written in 1987 about Jovan Avramović (originally from Gornji Orahovac and popular among the people of his district), an enterprising director of the school in Zelenika, and his original attempts at modernizing the school inventory and teaching (e.g., by introducing educative television system in the Montenegrin littoral in cooperation with the Dutch „Philips”). His initiative failed due to the resistance of the local party committee: acquired inventory was sold „for peanuts”, and Avramović was retired before his time (Lalić 1992, 345–348).

the ethnologist Milenko Filipović, pro-functionalist, already mid 1950s in his polemic with his colleague, Marxist Špiro Kulišić, called „antiquarian ethnology”. Outside of ethnology there is little knowledge of the fact that Filipović has then set against this orientation, shaped under the influence of classic evolutionist and historical materialism paradigms, the „modern” or „real”/”genuine” social ethnology, interested in contemporary phenomena, functions, context and processes, according to the Anglo-Saxon social anthropology (Gorunović 2008). As a view from „outside” or „side view”, Lalić’s writing offers another important critical insight—that the epiphenomenon or even direct consequence of such researching strategy was also the construction of identity of the Montenegrins as „primitive” and exotic, local „Others”, which domestic ethnologists were failing to notice or recognize, let alone critically examine.

In Lalić’s writing, the comprehended model of Dinaric zadruga is the model of egalitarian domestic community of the Slavic type („big Slavic farmer’s family”), i.e. *Gemeinschaft* of the tribal society with an agricultural-livestock production, which is based on mechanical solidarity. More important is Lalić’s opinion about the role of the Dinaric family and zadruga in asymmetric socialization of children (due to favoring sons and male offspring) and shaping the character of men, because such a gender sensitive criticism comes from a Montenegrin writer who otherwise shared the existential „double insider syndrome” with his intellectual predecessors and contemporaries (Naumović 1998, 115).

Local modernist critics assessed Lalić’s work as native and provincial, pre-occupied with local topics and rural-tribal environments. However, that which some critics have once seen (and dismissed) as a mania for listing names and unnecessary „geographical details” which allegedly „blur the expression, giving it a certain textbook notion, localism, confinement, primitiveness” (Bandić 1965, 96), can be comprehended as an *intention* of the writer. Since most of the cited, real and invented, toponyms in Lalić’s novelistic prose have their symbolic meaning and motivation, this symbolic geography is part of the plan to meticulously build a living space-time, according to the mundane, geographical, social, cultural and historical. It is inhabited by human generations of „fellowmen”—”predecessors”, „contemporaries”, „consociates” and „successors” (Schutz 60); revived and infused with dynamics by their relationships, actions and interactions; designed and interpreted by their cultural cognitive and value, moral and psychological, categories (*the world view* and *ethos*; Geertz 1998, 175–176). The result is an entire „world in the text”, complex, vivid and dynamic, which really assumes dimensions of „the state, almost continent”, similar to Faulkner’s South or Andrić’s Bosnia, just like Bandić himself admitted.

When he studies the *chronotope* of landscapes and localities in Goethe’s work, Mikhail Bakhtin (Bahtin 2013, 38–39) says:

This is not an abstract geological and geographical landscape—in it (...) the strength of historical life is revealed; this is the arena of a historical event, this is a firmly outlined border of that spatial bed through which the flow of historical time will go; a chunk of earthly space has to be included in the history of mankind outside of which it is dead and incomprehensible (...). However, on the other side, nothing can be done even with the historical event, with abstract historical recollection, unless this is localized in the earthly space, if the *necessity* of its enactment at certain time and in a certain place is not clear (visible) (underscored M.B.).

This at large true also for the space-time view of landscapes in general, as well as of diverse sceneries/localities in Lalić's work, both descriptions of the homeland of the Vasojević tribe, i.e. Brzacs, highlands of Khalkidhiki, and the city panorama of Cetinje, Belgrade, Istanbul and Thessaloniki. The *eye culture* played a major role for Lalić, just like it used to for Goethe, that viewing and observing of natural occurrences and forces, but also his listening to them, his ability to hear their varying pace and resonance. Regardless whether they were seeking refuge in nature from the hustle and bustle of the social world, the persecution and chase, or they were reading signs in it, hints and portents of human disquiet, misfortune and achievements, he and his characters were often meditating in the open, in the mountain, forest, near water—about the image forthright and currently offered to the senses: the water that gently murmurs from the faucet near some *katun* (seasonal mountain settlement of herders) or the „squall” of the mighty and wild river Lim resembling some snake-like prehistoric beast.

Besides, Lalić's novelistic prose has such subtle observations which remind us of anthropological critic of the dominating visualism in the Western perception of other cultures—”the rhetoric of vision” is the toughest dogma of empiricism, says the interpretive anthropologist Johannes Fabian (Fabian 2001, 130). Like this one: „... our language has no surplus of words for the spectrum of acoustic events, just as it doesn't have for fragrances—because our heretofore evolution favored only visual deceit and ‘cognition,’ and neglected everything else...” (*War Fortune*, 74). This claim, justified with regard to the adaptive meaning of the sense of sight (as well as hearing) in processes of hominization, is still exaggerated. Our senses are products of not only the biological evolution, but also (and maybe even more so) of the entire global history to date, like Marx once noted (in Eriksen 2001, 47). However, it is true that due to the domination of visual perspective, linked to the tradition of empiricism and rationalism, anthropologists were often overlooking the cognitive meaning of other qualities—olfactory, aromatic, tactile and even auditory—in „the ways of making the world” (Goodman 2014), as well as the epistemological significance of the issues of social construction, cultural variation (Stoller 1989) and „particular” histories of the senses (Taussig 1993).

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Gordana Gorunović

Odeljenje za etnologiju i antropologiju,  
Filozofski fakultet, Univerzitet u Beogradu

*Mihailo Lalić i srpska etnologija:  
etnografija i mimezis patrijarhalnog društva u crnogorskim brdima*

Polazim od još neispitane pretpostavke da u Lalićevom realističkom pisanju o stvarnom postoji i stvarna etnološka i antropološka referenca, pre svega komentari o srpskoj etnologiji iz prve polovine XX veka, njenoj tradicionalnoj paradigmi i strategiji etnografskog pisanja. Moja druga pretpostavka jeste da je u dublju strukturu Lalićevih istorijskih romana „upisan” i žanr etnografije,

koji zajedno sa drugim formalno-stilskim sredstvima, doprinosi virtuosnoj konstrukciji velikih narativa o crnogorskom svetu života u istorijskoj perspektivi. Naposletku, analiza Lalićevog diskursa otkriva da je, uprkos marksistički inspirisanoj kritici etnologije kao dela srpske nacionalne nauke, disciplina bila neizbežna tačka u narativnoj konstrukciji crnogorskog identiteta.

*Ključne reči:* Mihailo Lalić, socijalni realizam u jugoslovenskoj književnosti, Crna Gora, pleme Vasojevići, dinarska zadruga, srpska građanska etnologija, kulturnoantropološka perspektiva, crnogorski svet života, mimeza etnografskog pisanja

*Mihailo Lalić et l'ethnologie serbe:  
ethnographie et mimesis de la société patriarcale  
dans les monts monténégrins*

Mon point de départ est l'hypothèse non explorée selon laquelle l'écriture réaliste de Lalić sur la réalité contient des références ethnologiques et anthropologiques réelles, avant tout des commentaires sur l'ethnologie serbe de la première moitié du XXe siècle, sur son paradigme traditionnel et sur la stratégie d'écriture ethnographique. Ma seconde hypothèse, hardie, est que le genre d'ethnographie, qui est « inscrit » ensemble avec d'autres moyens stylistiques et formels (géographie symbolique, l'épopée historique, ethnopoétique) dans la structure plus profonde des romans historiques de Lalić, contribue à la construction virtuose des grands récits sur le monde de vie monténégrin dans une perspective historique. Enfin, la réflexion et les commentaires sur la création littéraire de Lalić dans une perspective anthropologico-culturelle peuvent servir de prétexte pour que soit ouvert le problème potentiellement important (interdisciplinaire) des rapports entre la « production » et l'utilisation littéraire et anthropologique des textes, ou plus précisément, sur la manière dont, à l'époque du socialisme, on transmettait par le biais du réalisme littéraire les savoirs ethnographiques de l'ethnologie serbe.

*Mots clés:* Mihailo Lalić, réalisme, socialisme, Monténégro, tribu des Vasojević, zadruga dinarique et fraternité, l'ethnologie serbe, perspective anthropologico-culturelle, le monde monténégrin de vie

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