

notes on ljubo babiĆ

THE UNWORTHY WITNESS

History depends on witnesses. History is not written by the protagonists about themselves, but by the passive witnesses of their deeds. Without a living witness and his testimony, his trace, word, or sign, there is no credibility, no consistency in history. Therefore, it is the future, presence, memory, and statement of the witness that determines what - of all that has happened, what really was - will be doomed to existence and chosen to continue in history.

History of an individual contains important and crucial moments, which protagonist himself can assess only with difficulty, let alone testify of them: how shall a dying man comment upon his last thoughts? It is a pity if in such a moment the witness - even though present - has no ability to register precisely, memorize well, or reproduce the observed.

In such a role, that of the unworthy witness, I found myself with Ljubo Babić immediately before his death. Torn between the feeling of duty to testify and the incapability to express things adequately, I am writing this text after a long delay as a notice on my incapability to write things down truly and completely (as a credible reconstruction of events); I am writing it merely as a memory of something that has happened.

So, I arrived that morning. I was once again warned that he was not fully conscious, that he was occasionally absent-minded or enraged without reason. I ascended a wooden staircase, winding, gloomy, lit only through

a dark stained-glass window, to the first floor. His bed was opposite the door, next to an open window: a light parallelogram of glass, filled with the colours of St Rochus Park and the neutral, grey shadow of the dimly lit wall, upon which he was leaning, sitting in his bed. The setting was a sign of some memory that was typically his. It reminded of his painting "Clouds" (1954), only inverted: there, the ambience of the backyard of his house was painted in vivid autumn colours, while the window of his atelier was a neutral, black hole, a square in which only the painter's hand could be seen, holding a brush before the canvas. Witty. He was obviously happy and amused while painting that image, for he knew and understood what other painters strove and managed to achieve, how much they fought with the "atmosphere" and used scenography in order to evoke the painter in his atelier (see Sedlmeyr's study on Vermeer's painting "Painter and His Model"), while he, Babić, could trick the theme so easily and flatly. That is the way children sometimes draw the "horseman". One can only see the rider, while the horse is out of frame (if they find it difficult or wearisome to draw it). That painting of Babić's is also one of the few that show his creativity in inverting thematic stereotypes and inventing compositions, such as "From the Munich Atelier" (1911), "Black Flag" (1916), "Football" (1926), "In Front Of the Florist's Shop" (1929) or "From My Garden" (1956).

His personality was mild and pleasant. When trying to express the mood that he

bilješke o ljubi babiću

NEDOSTOJNI SVJEDOK

Povijest ovisi o svjedocima. Povijest ne pišu protagonisti o sebi već statisti, svjedoci njihovih djela. Bez živog svjedoka i svjedočenja, traga, riječi, znaka, nedostaje vjerodostojnost, ne postoji postojanost povijesti. Za budućnost dakle, prisutnost, pamćenje, iskaz svjedoka određuje što će — od onoga što se zbio, što je u stvarnosti bilo — biti osuđeno na postojanje i odabrano za povijesno trajanje.

U povijesti pojedinca ima važnih i prijelomnih trenutaka o kojima protagonist sam teško može suditi, a još teže svjedočiti: kako da umirući komentira svoje posljednje misli? Nesreća je ako u takvu trenutku svjedok — iako prisutan — nema sposobnosti da precizno registrira, dobro pamti, reproducira.

U ulozu nedostojnog svjedoka bio sam s Ljubom Babićem neposredno uoči njegove smrti. Razapet između osjećaja dužnosti da svjedočim i nemoći da to adekvatno iskažem, pišem ovaj tekst nakon duga odgađanja kao bilješku o svojoj nemoći istinitog i cjelovitog bilježenja (uvjerljive rekonstrukcije zbivanja), samo kao spomen da se nešto zbio.

Došao sam dakle toga jutra. Još jednom su me upozorili da je poremećene svijesti, odsutan duhom ili se bezrazložno žesti. Uz drveno stubište, zavijeno, tjeskobno, osvjetljeno mračnim jednim njegovim vitrajem, na kat. Ležao je nasuprot vratima, uz otvoren prozor: svijetla pačetrovina prozora ispunjena bojama Rokova perivoja i neutralna siva sjena polumračnog zida na koji je bio naslonjen u krevetu. Ta scenografija bila je

znakom nekog podsjećanja, izrazito njegova. Podsjećala je na njegovu sliku "Oblaci" (1954), samo inverzno: ondje je ambijent stražnjeg vrta njegove kuće živo jesenski šaren, a prozor ateljea neutralna crna rupa, i u toj pačetrovini vidi se samo ruka slikara s kistom pred platnom. Dosjetka. Veselio se i zabavljao, očito, slikajući tu sliku, jer je znao, poznavao i razumio što su drugi slikari htjeli i uspijevali, koliko su se borili s "atmosferom" i služili scenografijom da dočaraju slikara u ateljeu (vidi Sedlmeyrovu studiju o Vermeerovoj slici "Slikar i model"), a kako se on, Babić, lako, plošno dosjetio izigrati temu. Tako djeca katkad crtaju "konjanika": vidi se samo jahač a konj je izvan kadra (ako im je teško ili im se ne da crtati). Ta Babićeva slika ujedno je jedna od onih nekoliko koje pokazuju njegovu kreativnost u inverziji tematskih stereotipa i invenciji kompozicije, kao na primjer "Iz münchenkog ateliera" (1911), "Crna zastava" (1916), "Nogomet" (1926), "Pred izlogom cvjetarne" (1929), ili "Iz mog vrta" (1956).

On sam bio je blag i mio. Pokušavajući izraziti raspoloženje koje je zračilo iz njega, rekao bih, posuđujući sliku od majstora riječi: bio je uronjen u "kristalnu kocku vedrine". Očito ni za čim nije žalio, ništa brinuo, iako je bio svjestan da odlazi. Govorio je bezbrižno. Kako je imao krasnih trenutaka u životu i radu, kao i susreta s ljudima. S radošću je spominjao čak i svađe i sukobe. Ne sjećam se ni tema, a kamoli riječi. Zbunjujući je bio odnos između ležernog ćaskanja i dubokog ponora potpuno rastvorene svijesti. Ukratko,

was emanating, I should say, borrowing the image from those who are skilful with words, he was steeped into a "crystal cube of serenity." It was obvious that he regretted nothing, worried about nothing, although he was aware of his near departure. He was speaking carelessly. About the beautiful moments in his life and work, about his encounters with people. He seemed happy even when mentioning quarrels and conflicts. I cannot recall the topics, let alone the words. It was a confusing balance between relaxed chatting and a deep abyss of consciousness completely open. Briefly, looking at him, every thoughtful person would think that perhaps there is something beyond this world after all.

Benevolent and void of all malice, he was, I think, aware of the fact that I was accidentally present at the scene that I did not understand. Beyond the conversation, satisfaction was floating permanently and peacefully. He let me know that in his life, which he had left behind, he had not suppressed anything he had wanted to say. It is the privilege (or rather the award) of the brave.

I was the unworthy witness of lucidity in an exceptional man, aware of it only insofar that I can consciously testify of the incompleteness of my report. I can also testify with conviction of the fact that the history of this artist can never be written in full, for his biography will always lack the meaning and the sense of that morning between life and death.

In order to pay respects to him with what I can and know, I am adding a few notes on his work, mostly written back in those years.

ON BABIĆ'S STYLE AND KRLEŽA

When writing on Babić, it is impossible to avoid Krleža, just as it would have been hardly possible for the two of them to miss each other in life. It was a profound affinity between a writer and a painter, expressed in several thematic circles and the stylistic features of their work.

Babić portrayed Krleža several times, and Krleža portrayed Babić, each in his own medium. However, while Krleža's texts on Babić are often quoted, what Babić's paintings - and not just Krleža's portraits - speak of that affinity has, I believe, been "read" very rarely.

Perhaps we should, first of all, point out a paradox in Krleža's assessment of

Babić: despite the afore-mentioned indubitable affinity and Krleža's outright admiration, his high evaluation of Babić's work, and his permanent support of the painter, his starting points and definitions are far from undisputable and they are not always fair to Babić, even if they are written in good will.

Such is, for example, Krleža's hypothesis on Babić's superiority with respect to European styles and about that being a precondition for his work to last, which he stated in the conclusion of his preface to the catalogue of Babić's retrospective exhibition at the Modern Gallery (1975/76): "... He painted in the late twilight of western European painting, in his own style and his own way, regardless of the fanfare of countless styles and fashions that were howling around the world like spirits unclean" and "if Ljubo's work has remained truly above all these so-called revolutionary plagues in art, it will live and is setting on a long journey into distant and unknown regions of spirit and taste for decades to come."¹

I agree with this assessment of Babić's value, but Krleža's formulation is, in my opinion, unsustainable for two reasons: because it denies the true revolutionary character of 20th-century art (by calling it "so-called" and stating in the same text that "Picasso's 'Les demoiselles d'Avignon' are unfortunately the end rather than the beginning") and because he expresses the conviction that the greatness and permanence of Babić's work are proportionate to his isolation (detachment) from all contemporary currents in visual arts.

As for the first issue, it is a misunderstanding that can be explained only by the conviction (or prejudice) that revolutionary spirit could not be expressed visually in any other way than by directly "translating" words into images. It can be concluded from the context, as well as from other texts by Krleža, that he was placing the boundary of (revolutionary) freedom of research in visual arts by concluding it with expressionism and politically oriented Dadaism.

However, if we transfer the debate on the revolutionary aspect of art from the verbal battlefield to the visual one, it is easy to prove that, for example, the only works of visual arts adequate to the unconventional thought of Lenin and the revolutionary action, which Krleža passionately defended in words,² were precisely those and such to which he denied all revolutionary spirit, such as Malevich's "White Square

on White" (1919) or Tatlin's construction of the "Monument to the Third International" (1920). Malevich and Tatlin were not only Lenin's contemporaries, but also his followers, at least on the issue of demolishing the "old" and "constructing" the new world. Malevich's "suprematist compositions" (1914-1918) disposed of traditional norms and conventions in visual thinking and creation, of the relationship between "theory and practice": the act of painting was seen as abolishing the "old order" on a painting and proclaiming, in visual language, its demand for re-evaluation, the "new measure" of all things; just as Tatlin constructively and actively denied the traditional conceptions of construction and design. Even though applauding (among the first) to the revolutionary ideas in the World of Words, Krleža expressed his reservations and rejection of the new, revolutionary Image of the World in 20th-century visual arts, both Western-European and Russian.³

As for "remaining above the plagues in art," one should say that Babić's work cannot be thoroughly viewed or understood "outside" and "beyond" the artistic passions and plagues of its time. However glorifying that might sound, it would be unjust towards the painter: deeply anchored in the world around him, Ljubo Babić was a very sensitive traveller, receptive and creative at the same time; he was neither deaf to the clamour of his time, nor blind for the contemporary currents in visual arts. By establishing the correlation between Babić and the processes in European art, by seeking the origins of his style and method in contemporary visual tendencies, his particularity and individual constant will not be lost, but rather delineated more objectively.

Indeed, Babić painted in the footsteps and the spirit of several European "styles and fashions" that one could certainly not call his own: in her preface to the retrospective exhibition, Jelena Uskoković has described very well his links with the Secession, expressionism, and magic realism, as well as with the accentuated "volumism" of Proljetni Salon (Spring Salon), the colouristic tendencies of the Zagreb circle of painters, and folklorism.⁴ To these general lines of European and Croatian visual stylistics we would like to add two more components as the extreme points of Babić's broad stylistic range: *historicism* and *constructivism*.

Historicism, which is habitually situated (both in our minds and in various texts)

po njemu bi svatko pametan pomislio da možda nešto postoji i s one druge strane.

Blagonaklon, bez zlobe, bio je, mislim, svjestan da slučajno prisustvujem prizoru koji ne razumijem. Iznad konverzacije lebdjelo je trajno i smireno zadovoljstvo: dao je do znanja da u životu, iza sebe, nije prešutio ni jednu riječ koju je želio reći. Privilegij (ili nagrada) hrabrih.

Bio sam nedostojni svjedok lucidnosti jednog izuzetnog čovjeka, tek toliko svjestan da mogu savjesno posvjedočiti nepotpunost svoga iskaza. Pouzdano mogu svjedočiti, također, da povijest ovog umjetnika nikada neće biti cjelovito napisana, jer će u njegovoj biografiji zauvijek nedostajati značenje i smisao ovog jutra između života i smrti.

Da mu se odužim onim što znam i umijem, dodajem nekoliko bilježaka o njegovu djelu, pisanih, uglavnom, još u ono vrijeme.

O BABIĆEVU STILU I KRLEŽI

Pišući o Babiću nemoguće je zaobići Krležu, kao što nije bilo moguće da se njih dvojica mimoidu u životu. Riječ je o dubljem srodstvu književnika i slikara, koje se izražava i u nekim tematskim krugovima i stilskim oznakama njihovih djela.

Babić je višekratno portretirao Krležu, Krleža Babića, svaki u svom mediju. Ali, dok se često citiraju Krležini tekstovi o Babiću, nedovoljno je, čini mi se, "pročitano" što Babićeve slike — ne samo Krležini portreti — govore o tom srodstvu.

Možda ipak najprije treba upozoriti na jedan paradoks što se tiče Krležinih sudova o Babiću: unatoč spomenutom, nedvojbenu srodstvu i Krležinom neposrednom oduševljenju, visokoj ocjeni Babićeva djela i trajnoj podršci pisca slikaru, Krležina polazišta i definicije nisu indiskutabilne, niti su uvijek pravedne prema Babiću, iako su dobronamjerne.

Takva je na primjer teza o Babićevoj uzvišenosti nad evropskim stilovima, i o tome kako je to uvjet za trajanje njegova djela, objavljena kao zaključak u predgovoru katalogu Babićeve retrospektivne izložbe u Modernoj galeriji 1975/76: "... slikao je u kasnom sumraku zapadnoevropskog slikarstva svojim vlastitim stilom i načinom usprkos talambasima bezbrojnih stilova i moda koje urlaju svijetom kao duhovi nečastivi", te "ako je Ljubino djelo spram svih tih tzv. revolucionarnih likovnih napasti ostalo doista uzvišeno, ono će poživjeti i ono se nalazi na dugom putu u daleke nepoznate predjele duha i ukusa decenija koji stižu." ¹

Slažem se s ocjenom vrijednosti slikara, ali je ova formulacija po mom mišljenju neodrživa iz dva aspekta: i kad niječe istinsku revolucionarnost umjetnosti 20. stoljeća (nazivajući je "takozvanom" i smatrajući u istom tekstu da "Picasssove 'Les demoiselles d'Avignon' nisu početak nego nažalost svršetak"), i kad izražava uvjerenje da je veličina i trajnost Babićeva djela razmjerna njegovu izdvajanju (odvajanju) od suvremenih likovnih strujanja.

Što se tiče prvog, to je nesporazum koji bi se mogao objasniti jedino uvjerenjem (predrasudom) da se revolucionarnost nije mogla likovno izraziti drukčije nego neposrednim "prevođenjem" riječi u sliku. Iz konteksta, kao i iz ostalih Krležinih tekstova, može se deducirati da on granicu (revolucionarne) slobode istraživanja u likovnim umjetnostima postavlja zaključno s ekspresionizmom i politički usmjerenim dadaizmom.

Prebacimo li međutim razgovor o revolucionarnom u umjetnosti s verbalnog poprišta na vizuelno, lako je dokazati, na primjer, da su jedina likovna djela adekvatna nekonvencionalnoj Lenjinovoj misli i revolucionarnoj akciji, koju je Krleža strastveno branio riječju,² upravo ona i onakva kojima Krleža odriče revolucionarnost, kao na primjer Maljevičev "Bijeli kvadrat na bijelom" (1919) ili Tatlinova konstrukcija "Spomenika III internacionali" (1920). Maljevič i Tatlin nisu samo Lenjinovi suvremenici, nego i istomišljenici barem ukoliko je riječ o rušenju "starog" i "izgradnji" novog svijeta. Maljevičeve "suprematističke kompozicije (1914-1918) razbijaju dotadašnje norme i konvencije vizuelnog mišljenja i oblikovanja, odnosa "teorije i prakse": likovnim činom dokida se "stari poredak" na slici i likovnim govorom izvikuje zahtjev za novom procjenom "novim mjerilom" svih stvari; kao što Tatlin konstruktivno i aktivno negira tradicionalne koncepcije izgradnje i oblikovanja. Pozdravljajući (među prvima) revolucionarne ideje u Svijetu Riječi, Krleža se ograđuje i ne priznaje novu, revolucionarnu Sliku Svijeta u likovnoj umjetnosti 20. stoljeća, podjednako zapadnoevropskoj kao i ruskoj.³

Što se tiče "uzvišenosti spram likovnih napasti", treba naprotiv priznati da se Babićevo djelo ne može cjelovitije sagledati ni razumjeti "izvan" i "iznad likovnih strasti i napasti svoga vremena. Ma kako pohvalno zvučalo, bilo bi nepravedno prema slikaru: duboko ukorijenjen u svijet oko sebe, Ljubo

Babić je bio veoma senzibilan suputnik, receptivan i kreativan usporedno; nije bio ni gluha ni žamor vremena ni slijep za suvremena likovna strujanja. Utvrđujući relaciju Babića prema evropskim likovnim zbivanjima, tražeći porijeklo njegova stila i načina u suvremenim likovnim tendencijama, neće se izgubiti, nego naprotiv objektivnije ocrtati njegova osebjnost i individualna konstanta.

Babić je doista likovno stvarao u tragu i duhu niza evropskih "stilova i moda" za koje se nikako ne bi moglo reći da su vlastiti: njegovu vezu sa secesijom, ekspresionizmom i magičnim realizmom, kao i naglašenim "volumizmom" Proljetnog salona" ili s tendencijama kolorizma zagrebačkog slikarskog kruga i folklorizmom" dobro je definirala Jelena Uskoković u predgovoru retrospektivne izložbe.⁴ Ovim generalnim linijama evropske i hrvatske likovne stilstike željeli bismo dodati još dvije komponente, kao krajnje točke široka Babićevog stilskog raspona: *historicism* i *konstruktivizam*.

Historicism, koji se po navici (u svijesti i tekstovima) obično situira u 19. stoljeće — jer ga pokriva atraktivna smjena novih stilova — postoji i traje u svim granama likovne umjetnosti intenzivno još i u trećem desetljeću 20. stoljeća: Kovačićeva Burza u Zagrebu s jonskim stupovima započeta je 1923, a Gradska šteditonica Podhorskog 1928. godine. Ali, kao što Kovačić škrtim elementima povijesne arhitekture (jonske volute kapitela stupova na pročelju, renesansni okviri prozora prvoga kata) ostvaruje djelo moderne jasnoće, monumentalno, jednostavno i originalno, tako i Babić nije historicist u tematskom i morfološkom smislu, nego utoliko što želi evocirati duh i specifičnu vrijednost slikarstva neke prošle epohe, stila u dubljem smislu riječi. Zemlja u koju bi se on nostalgичno želio vratiti jest Španjolska, a vrijeme barok. Tom "historičističkom baroku" pripada na primjer portret "Krleže kao hidalga" (1918).⁵ Ne samo kostimom, već je i karakterom španjolski i barokni: tvrdi od Velásqueza kojem duguje pozu i kompoziciju, a bliži Riberi po tmastoj smeđoj boji i naglašenom kontrastu svjetla i sjene. Babićev je historicizam usmjeren duhu epohe i likovnim kvalitetama slikarstva prošlog razdoblja, a ne tematici i izvanjskim oznakama vremena i stila.

Slično, strukturalno i suštinski okrenut je prošlosti i Krleža: njegove "Balade Petrice Kerempuha" također su — "stilski" gledano

in the 19th century - since it included an attractive sequence of new styles - existed and persisted intensely in all branches of visual arts until as late as the 1920s: Kovačić's building of the Labour Market in Zagreb with its Ionic columns was begun in 1923 and Podhorski's City Bank in 1928. However, just as Kovačić used the meagre elements of historical architecture (the Ionic volutes of the column capitals on the façade, the renaissance window frames on the first floor) in order to realize a building of modern clarity, monumental, simple, and original, thus Babić was no historicist in the thematic or morphological sense either, but only insofar as he strove to evoke the spirit and the specific value of painting from a past epoch, or of style in the more profound sense of the word. The country that he nostalgically longed for was Spain and the time was baroque. This "historicist baroque" included, for example, the portrait of "Krlježa as Hidalgo" (1918).⁵ It was Spanish and baroque not only in its costume, but also in its character: harder than Velásquez, whom he owed his pose and composition, and closer to Ribera in its dense brown colour and the accentuated contrast of light and shade. Babić's historicism was directed towards the spirit of the epoch and the visual qualities of painting from a past period rather than the topics or external features of that time and style.

In a similar way, that is, structurally and essentially, Krlježa was also oriented towards the past: his "Ballads of Petrica Kerempuh" are likewise - "stylistically" speaking - a historicist poem. Apart from using archaic vocabulary and orthography, Krlježa accentuated its historicity, its "historicism", by citing historical events and sources, and even, to make things clearer, by "dating" some of his ballads (mostly to the 16th century). That is not merely a historical topic, but rather an attempt - which is essentially historicist - to revive and restore the "style of the epoch" by means of vocabulary and speech, as well as the (supposedly) acrid, anti-romanticist, and anti-romantic spirit. In this respect, Krlježa was essentially different from the writers and poets of historicist orientation in the 19th and the 20th centuries, who were mostly and predominantly sweetish and romantic. He was not attracted by the glitter and glory of the past, but rather by mud, violence, madness, injustice, and crime. But his intent was nevertheless "historicist".

Eventually, I would like to emphasize another aspect of Babić's stylistic affiliation, which is evident outside of painting and barely recognizable at first sight, but without it, it would be difficult to explain the most important among Babić's theatre sets.

The best of Babić's stagings of Shakespeare's plays, generally known and acknowledged for their quality, should also be viewed in their historical context, their "stylistic" and even "fashionable" character, unless we want to proclaim Babić an independent originator of this style and method. The most important part of his scenographic opus, which included architecture and painting, is unimaginable without the experience of modern researchers and the "modern tradition" of European theatre vanguard, which predominantly walks in the footsteps of cubist experiments and conceptions that are close to constructivism.

In their formal features, as well as their kinetic, mobile principle and their conception of transformability, Babić's solutions of scenic space could not resist the "plagues" of the "spirits unclean", both of the Western-European and the Russian vanguard.⁶

These were also criticized by Krlježa. In fact, when writing on modern art in 1976 (on the occasion of Babić's retrospective), Krlježa expressed consistently the same viewpoint that he had taken half a century earlier, in his "Trip To Russia" from 1925. Just as he was now claiming that cubism was "unfortunately the end," he had formerly denied all creative invention, functionality and revolutionary spirit to scenography (architectural and visual stage design), although he recognized and approved of the revolutionary change in several theatres of Moscow, especially of the work of theatre directors such as Meyerhold, Vahtangov, and Tairov.⁷

Having expressed his principle demand that the "poetic word of modern drama, if seeking to express the reality in an Aeschilean way, should be just as massive, clear, and simply sculptural," Krlježa goes on: "Instead, the stage illustration of theoretically clear dramatic clashes is decadent and abstract, since it follows the visual taste of the time and that taste is in complete chaos, which is undoubtedly a symptom of our decaying civilization, not only in the field of visual arts, but also in all other spiritual disciplines equally." Then he reset the norm: "Although our present-day, contemporary social drama should be modelled on

sculpture, its scenic expression is senseless and experimental, subjugated to the lyrically abstract adventure of modern painting trips into nothing," and concludes with a general assessment that is at the same time a condemnation: "... To say it frankly, in terms of scenic art, we have not had many flames in the 20th century."⁸

It is easy to notice the unconquered dichotomy between the verbal and the visual: whereas the Word managed to express and follow the Revolution, the Image continued the decadent withering of the *ancien régime*. Krlježa's demand for a scene that would be "modelled on sculpture" is based on the idea that the "weight" of the sculptural volume, of the "mass", would directly express the pressure weight of "massive, clear, and simple" words; therefore, what was needed was a "literal translation from the verbal into the visual." However, this demand neglected the fact that cubism had brought a revolutionary change in visual arts, which had practically cancelled the dominance of static volume, "broken up" in the new conception in the "space-time" relationship, which was parallel and similar to Einstein's *revolutionary change* in the conception of "physical" time and space. The 20th-century scenography had joined precisely those searching currents with its best examples. As for the Russian theatres, even if most of their drama texts were occasional and ephemeral, inspired by the moment and burnt up with it, the pioneers of experimental scene were introducing new principles of form and seeking new solutions, thus setting permanent signposts for the future, which also meant for our present.

In our search for similarities and analogies, we do not wish to claim them for immediate Babić's predecessors, but rather name them as a proof of the modernity of his solution and the only possible way to reveal the true vanguard value of his work.

Although Babić had even before occasionally reduced the realistic factors on the scene, leaving only the most allusive ones (Othello, 1918) and applied the "cubist" type of stylisation (1921) in the character of Mephisto for his puppet show of Faust (1921), as well as "abstract" spatial elements in Debussy's opera "Pelléas et Mélisande" (1923), the true revolution of his and Croatian scenography was his set for "Richard III" (1923).⁹

Here one can easily notice the tradition of the earliest reformer of scenography

— historicističko djelo. Koristeći se ne samo leksikom nego i arhaičnom ortografijom, Krleža naglašava povijesnost, “historicizam”, citiranjem povijesnih događaja i izvora, pa čak, da ne bude zabune, i “datiranjem” pojedinih balada (pretežno 16. stoljećem). To nije samo povijesna tematika, već pokušaj — u biti historicistički — da se oživi i dočara “stil epohe”, kako rječnikom i stilom govora, tako i (pretpostavljenim) oporim, antiromantičarskim i antiromantičnim duhom. Time se Krleža bitno razlikuje od najčešće i pretežno sladunjavih i romantičnih pisaca i pjesnika historicističkog usmjerenja u toku 19. i 20. stoljeća. Ne mami ga sjaj i slava prošlosti, nego ga vuče blato, nasilje, ludost, nepravda i zločin. Ali htijenje je ipak “historicističko”.

Napokon, želim istaknuti još jedan aspekt Babićeve stilske pripadnosti koji se očituje izvan slikarstva i nije na prvi pogled prepoznatljiv, a bez njega je teško objasniti najznačajnije Babićeve scenografije.

Općepoznate i općepriznate po svojoj kvaliteti, najbolje Babićeve inscenacije Shakespeareovih drama moramo također gledati u njihovu povijesnom kontekstu, “stilskoj” pa i “modnoj” pripadnosti, ne želimo li Babića proglasiti samostalnim tvorcem toga stila i načina. Najznačajniji dio Babićeva scenografskog opusa, dakle arhitektonsko-slikarskog, nezamisliv je bez iskustva suvremenih istraživača, “suvremene tradicije” evropske teatarske avangarde, pretežno u tragu kubističkih eksperimenata i koncepcija, srodnih konstruktivizmu.

Po formalnim svojstvima, ali jednako toliko i po kinetičkom, mobilnom principu i koncepciji transformativnosti, Babićeva rješenja scenskog prostora nisu odoljela “napasti” “nečastivih duhova” podjednako zapadnoevropske kao i ruske avangarde.⁶

I o njoj je Krleža pisao negativno. Zapravo, pišući 1976. godine (u povodu Babićeve retrospektive) o modernoj umjetnosti, Krleža dosljedno iskazuje ono isto stanovište koje je zauzeo pola stoljeća ranije, 1925. godine u “Izletu u Rusiju”. Kao što sada tvrdi da je kubizam “nažalost kraj”, tako tada — priznavajući i pozdravljajući revolucionarni prevrat u nizu moskovskih kazališta, naročito režijska ostvarenja Meyerholda, Vahtangova i Tairova⁷ — scenografiji (arhitektonsko-likovnoj opremi pozornice) ne priznaje stvaralačku invenciju, negira funkcionalnost i revolucionarnost.

Postavljajući principijelni zahtjev da bi “poetska riječ suvremene dramatike, koja

bi htjela da se eshilovski izrazi stvarnost, trebala da bude isto tako masovna, jasna i jednostavno plastična”, Krleža nastavlja: “Mjesto toga scenska ilustracija teorijski jasnih dramaturških sudara jeste dekadentna i apstraktna, jer se povodi za likovnim ukusom vremena a taj je u rasulu, kao nesumnjiv simptom izumiranja jedne civilizacije koja se ne raspada samo u likovnim oblastima nego i u predjelima sviju duhovnih disciplina podjednako.” I ponovo postavljaajući normu: “Dok bi naša današnja, suvremena društvena drama trebala da bude modelirana skulptorski njen je scenski izražaj bespredmetan i eksperimentalan, pokoravajući se lirski apstraktnoj pustolovini suvremenih slikarskih izleta u ništavilo”, zaključuje općom ocjenom, koja je ujedno i osuda “... ako se pravo uzme, što se tiče scenskih ostvarenja u dvadesetom stoljeću baš i nije tako mnogo planulo”.⁸

Očita je neprevladana dihotomija verbalnog i vizuelnog: dok Riječ uspijeva izraziti i pratiti Revoluciju, Slika nastavlja dekadentno odumiranje ancien régimea. Krležin zahtjev za “skulptorski modeliranom” scenom temelji se na ideji da bi se “težinom” skulpturalnog volumena, “mase”, neposredno izrazila udarna težina “masovnih, jasnih i jednostavnih” riječi; zahtjev je dakle “doslovnog” prevođenja iz verbalnog u vizuelno. Ali, pri tom je zanemareno da je u likovnim umjetnostima s kubizmom došlo do revolucionarnog prevrata u kojem je upravo dokinuta dominacija statičnog volumena, i on je “razbijen” u *novoj koncepciji odnosa “prostor-vrijeme”*, koja je paralelna i srodna Einsteinovom *revolucionarnom obratu* koncepcije “fizikalnog” vremena i prostora. Scenografija 20. stoljeća u svojim najboljim ostvarenjima uključila se upravo u tokove takvih istraživanja. A i što se tiče ruskih kazališta, ako je veći broj dramskih tekstova bio prigodničarski i efemeran, nadahnut trenutkom i sagorio s njim, pioniri eksperimentalne scene, uvodeći nove principe oblikovanja i tražeći rješenja, postavili su trajne putokaze budućnosti, a to znači i našoj sadašnjosti.

Tragajući za srodnostima i analogijama ne navodimo ih kao neposredne Babićeve uzore već kao dokaz suvremenosti njegovih rješenja i kao jedini mogući način da se otkrije prava avangardna vrijednost njegova djela.

Iako je već prije Babić ponekad reducirao realističke činioce na sceni na krajnje aluzivne (Otelo, 1918), u liku Mefista za marionetsku predstavu Fausta primi-

jenio “kubističku” stilizaciju (1921), a za Debussyjevu operu “Pelléas i Mélisanda” primijenio “apstraktne” prostorne elemente (1923), pravu revoluciju njegove i hrvatske inscenacije znači scenografija za “Richarda III” (1923).⁹

Tu je očigledno tradicija najranijeg reformatora scene Appie, koji je očistio prostor na univerzalne elemente stubišta i praktikabla, kreativno spojena s kubističkim invencijama kosih rampi, deformiranih volumena, presijecajućih ploha. A na tim su izvorima gradili tada i svi Babićevi avangardni suvremenici: Behrens za M. Reinhardta, ruski scenografi Exter za Wildeovu “Salomu” (1917), arhitekt Vesnin za Racineovu “Phèdre” (1922), ili Tatlin — jedan od osnivača konstruktivizma — za “Zanguenzi” Hlebnikova (1923).¹⁰ Značajnija je od novih oblikovnih elemenata promjena odnosa scene i scenografije, kao prostora i kulise-pozadine. U Babićevim je scenografijama udio prostora veći nego u mnogim suvremenim rješenjima, pa je oblikovanje scene doista oblikovanje prostora u čitavoj dubini: *prostorni projekt arhitekta*, a ne slikarski oslikana “pozadina”. Već legendarna scenografija “Na tri kralja” (1924) nije samo najkreativnija Babićeva invencija i vrhunski evropski domet tog trenutka — što je i priznato dodjelom Grand prix-a na Svjetskoj izložbi u Parizu 1925. (gdje Malikov gradi “futuristički” sovjetski paviljon, a Le Corbusier paviljon “L’esprit Nouveau”) — već je to jedno od onih djela koja pripadaju kategoriji apsolutno “klasičnih”. S dva poluvaljka kojima gradi konkavitetom prostor, a konveksnom stranom volumenom, u mnoštvu varijanata, Babić je dosegao granicu čistoće i neponovljivosti kao Mondrijan svojim crveno-žutomodrim pravokutnicima ili Brancusi svojom “Pticom u letu”. Ovo Babićevo djelo bez ikakvih ograda ugrađujem među najsamosvojnija djela moderne umjetnosti.¹¹

Logično je i prirodno da su Babićeva najsmionija ostvarenja potaknuta i nadahnutu Gavelloom, jer su sva avangardna scenografska ostvarenja rezultat suradnje, stimulacije, novih i većih zahtjeva režisera: od Stanislavskog do Meyerholda, Reinhardta, Piscatora, Brechta... Ali je isto tako nesumnjivo da je sam bio sklon traženju, istraživanju i preuzimanju iskustava drugih likovnih istraživača.

Babić je bio duboko ukorijenjen u svom vremenu, pa tako nije bio imun ni na morfologiju stilova kojima se ono likovno

Appia, who had purified space by dividing it in the universal elements of the staircase and the *practicable*, creatively fused with his cubist inventions of sloping ramps, deformed volumes and intersecting surfaces. Those were the sources on which all Babić's vanguard contemporaries were building upon in those times: Behrens for M. Reinhardt, Russian scenographer Exter for Wild's "Salome" (1917), architect Vesnin for Racine's "Phedra" (1922), or Tatlin - one of the founders of constructivism - for Hlebnikov's "Zanguezi" (1923).¹⁰ Even more important than these new elements of design was the change in the relationship between scene and scenography as space and the set/background. In Babić's sets, the participation of space is greater than in many modern solutions, so that scene design indeed equals space design in its entire depth: it is the *architect's spatial project* rather than a painted "background". Even the legendary set for the "Twelfth Night" (1924) was not only the most creative among Babić's inventions and the pinnacle of European scenography in those times — which was acknowledged by the Grand prix at the World Exhibition in Paris in 1925 (where Malikov built his "futuristic" Soviet pavilion and Le Corbusier his pavilion "L'esprit Nouveau") — but also one of those works of art that belong to the category of absolutely "classical". With two semi-cylinders comprising space with their concavity and volume with their convexity, and that in a number of variants, Babić reached the level of purity and uniqueness that is comparable with Mondrian's red-yellow-blue rectangles or Brancusi's "Flying Bird." This set of Babić's I would count without any reserve among the most original works of modern art.¹¹

It is only logical and natural that Babić's most daring pieces were provoked and inspired by Gavella, since all works of vanguard scenography are a result of cooperation, stimulation, of always new and greater demands of the director: from Stanislavski to Meyerhold, Reinhardt, Piscator, Brecht... But it is equally certain that he was himself inclined to search, research, and appropriate the experiences of other visual innovators.

Babić was deeply anchored in his time and therefore not immune to the morphology of styles in which this time had found its visual expression, and it is only in this context that one can place his creative power, by which he transformed the "general" into a

"specific" or "personal", into an appropriate context. Pluralism of stylistic orientations is certainly among the features of "his" style, in the same way in which this can apply to most of the significant modern visual artists. Another Croatian writer, A. G. Matoš, concluded it as early as 1913, on the occasion of the first Babić's exhibition, implicitly and on the basis of his broad erudition: when looking at Babić's paintings, Matoš associated with them impressionism and pointillism, Manet and Cézanne, Velásquez and Daumier, Meštrović and Rački, Mašić and "our countryside pleinarists"... But at the same time, Matoš announced the "talented young painter" with a critical intuition, since he had observed that Babić was already then able to solve "very laborious colouristic problems" and to create "several exquisite Croatian landscapes" and two of the "best engravings that we have had until now."¹²

Krleža's definition of the relationship between the individual opus of Babić and stylistic categories leads us to an alternative: to choose the hypothesis or the statement. It is absolutely necessary to reject the hypothesis in order to save that high Krleža's evaluation of Babić's work, with which we agree and for which Krleža must have cared more himself. Thus, if we accept his categorical conditional statement that "if Ljubo's work... remained truly sublime, it will live on," it means that it is sufficient to prove the link with the style and fashion of the time (which any second-rate critic can do, since Babić, for example, did not experiment with scenography that way after the 20s, when the "fashion" was over) in order to deny that conditional assessment about the permanent value and significance of Babić's work.

However, I believe that it is possible to prove that, within that style and fashion, Babić's art was of lasting value, independent, and original.

Since we are already into comparisons, let us recall that Krleža's opus was likewise marked by some of those stylistic currents that had determined Babić. Beside symbolism — present in both early Krleža and early Babić — a crucial style was that of *expressionism: the "stamp" of Krleža's work, the "flame" of his verse, and the "flag" of his prose*. Both with Krleža and with Babić, speaking of affiliation, we can only show how much they had raised themselves above the mere "followers", "adherents", or "partisans" of the style. When writing on

Grosz, Krleža implicitly acknowledged the Dadaist painting method, but in some components of his own work, he mocked and denied it in a hyper-cynical way. If we treat style as structure rather than according to its external morphological features, we can go even further and say that Krleža's method of social criticism and polemic is "stylistically" undoubtedly part of our times (and cannot be conceived of in any other period) and the piece that stands closest to it in the field of visual arts is precisely Malevich's "White Square in a White Field."

In my opinion, the most original and most valuable contribution of Krleža's to the cultural and perceptive sphere of our milieu seems to be dialectic thinking. Which is, of course, relatively unappreciated and mostly unacknowledged.

The criterion for judging the veracity of the afore-said statement is the evaluation of two fundamental polemic writings by Krleža, which are unique in their "duality" within the European literature of the 20th century: "The Dialectic Antibarbarus" (1939) and "Settling Accounts with Them" (1932). It is only by establishing a correlation between them, a parallel, and (I should say) a simultaneous montage of these two texts that the entire spatial and temporal picture of Krleža will appear. It is symptomatic that they are rarely (if at all) cited and experienced that way in Croatia: one part of the readership gladly quotes "The Barbarus", another "Settling of Accounts". Namely, most intellectuals have still not overcome the level of the political axiom "he who is not with us is against us" and cannot be reconciled with Krleža's extreme individualism (or expressionist subjectivism), which allowed him to *agree neither with "us" nor with "them"*. Moreover, he saw the only possibility of his individual integrity outside of various groupings, cohesive forces, or unifying standpoints. But this citizen and petty bourgeois of ours (and that by mentality, regardless of his political allegiances), though acknowledging one direction of Krleža's critical reflection, but himself endorsing — at least partly — the "other", which Krleža had likewise deconstructed, was asking himself (and still does): "where shall I stand then?" After the positions of his favourite platforms, such as "the Left" and "the Right", had been destroyed, Krleža's reader and contemporary between the two World Wars had suddenly found himself in the void: before a white square in a white field! Krleža had offered his readership

izražavalo, i samo mu se u tom okviru može naći dostojno mjesto po kreativnoj snazi kojom "opće" pretvara u "posebno", odnosno "osobno". Pluralizam stilskih usmjerenja svakako je jedna od oznaka "njegovog" stila, kao uostalom i većine značajnih suvremenih likovnih umjetnika. Implicitno je to na temelju široke erudicije zaključio već 1913. godine na prvoj Babićevoj izložbi jedan drugi hrvatski književnik A. G. Matoš: gledajući Babićeve slike Matoš je asociirao impresionizam i pointilizam, Maneta i Cézannea, Vélasqueza i Daumiera, Meštrovića i Račkog, Mašića i "naše ladanjske plainairiste"... Ali, istodobno je kritičkom intuicijom Matoš najavio "darovitog mladog slikara", uočavajući da je već sada sposoban riješiti "vrlo mučne kolorističke probleme", ostvariti "nekoliko izvrsnih hrvatskih pejzaža" i dvije "najbolje gravire koje dosle imamo".¹²

Krležina definicija odnosa individualnog Babićeva opusa i kategorija stila stavlja nas pred alternativu: odabrati tezu ili sud. Prijeko je potrebno oboriti tezu da bismo spasili visoku Krležinu ocjenu Babićeva djela s kojom se slažemo i do koje je i samom Krleži sigurno više stalo. Prihvatimo li, naime, njegovu kategoričku uvjetnu ocjenu "ako je Ljubino djelo... ostalo doista uzvišeno, ono će poživjeti", značilo bi to da je dovoljno dokazati vezu sa stilom i modom vremena (što može svaka kritičarska šuš, jer Babić, na primjer, nakon 20-ih godina, kad prestaje "moda", više ne eksperimentira tako na sceni), pa da se obori uvjetna ocjena trajne vrijednosti i značenja Babićeva djela.

Vjerujem, međutim, da se može dokazati kako unutar stila i mode Babić stvara suvereno i samosvojno, djela trajne vrijednosti.

Kad smo već kod usporedbe, podsjetimo da je i Krležin opus obilježen nekim od ovih stilskih strujanja koja su odredila i Babića. Uz simbolizam — ranog Krleže i ranog Babića — sudbonosan je bio *ekspresionizam*: "pečat" Krležinu djelu, "plamen" njegova stiha i "zastava" njegove proze. I kod Krleže kao i kod Babića ukazujući na pripadnost možemo tek pokazati koliko se uzdigao iznad pukih "pripadnika", "pratilaca" i "poklonika" stila. Pišući o Groszu prihvatio je Krleža implicitno i dadaističku likovnu metodu, ali po nekim komponentama djela i sam je hipercinički rugač i dadaistički negator. Ako stil ne tretiramo po vanjskim morfološkim obilježjima, već kao strukturu, onda možemo ići i dalje jer je nesumnjivo da Krležina metoda društvene kritike i polemike "stilski" pripada našem

vremenu (i nezamisliva je i nemoguća u bilo koje drugo vrijeme), a najbliži joj je na likovnom području upravo Maljevičev "Bijeli kvadrat na bijelom polju".

Najoriginalnije i najvrednije što je Krleža unio u kulturnu i misaonu sferu naše sredine čini mi se da je dijalektički način mišljenja. To je, naravno, razmjerno najmanje cijenjeno i uglavnom neprihvaćeno.

Kriterij za ocjenu istinitosti prethodnog suda jest odnos prema dvjema fundamentalnim Krležinim polemikama, jedinstvenim u njihovu "dvojstvu" u evropskoj literaturi 20. stoljeća: "Dijalektički Antibarbarus" (1939) i "Moj obračun s njima" (1932). Tek povezivanjem, paralelnom i (rekao bih) simultanom montažom ovih dvaju tekstova iskršava cjelovita prostorno-vremenska slika Krleže. Simptomatično je, međutim, kako se u našoj sredini malokad (jedva) tako citiraju i tako doživljavaju: jedan dio čitača rado citira "Barbarusa", a drugi "Obračun". Većina, naime, intelektualaca ipak nije prevladala razinu političkog aksioma — "tko nije s nama, taj je protiv nas", i ne može se pomiriti s krajnjim Krležinim individualizmom (ekspresionističkim subjektivizmom) koji sebi dopušta da se *ne slaže ni s "nama", ni s "njima"*. Štoviše, jedinu mogućnost svoga individualnog osovljenja vidi izvan i mimo grupaških, povezujućih sila i unificirajućih stanovišta. Naš građanin i malograđanin (po mentalitetu, bez obzira na političku pripadnost), priznavajući jedan smjer Krležina kritičkog mišljenja, ali sam zastupajući — barem djelomično — ono "drugo" što je Krleža također razorio, pitao se (i pita se), "na čemu ću onda stajati?" Nakon što su mu bila razorena uporišta omiljenih platformi kao što su "Ilijeva" i "desna", Krležin čitalac i suvremenik između dva rata našao se odjednom u praznom: pred bijelim kvadratom na bijelom polju! Krleža je literarnoj publici priredio istu onu senzaciju i jednako je toliko iziritirao kao što su Maljevič i ostali revolucionarni umjetnici iziritirali likovnu publiku, pa i samoga Krležu, koji (uslijed razlike metode likovnog i verbalnog mišljenja i govora) nije prepoznao istomišljenike. Naravno, naći će se u tom destruktivnom nihilizmu kod Krleže uvijek i ona "konstruktivistička" izgrađujuća komponenta, ali svedena na mjeru koju je najsazetije izrazio baš Georg Grosz u naslovu svoje knjige: "Ein grosses NEIN und ein kleines ja" (1946). To bi geslo odlično pristajalo čitavu Krležinom opusu.¹³

Primijetili ste, međutim, u netom citi-

ranom Groszovu naslovu neposrednu vizuelnu izražajnost i komunikativnost grafičkog znaka (velika slova "NEIN"). To je uvod u završnu "literarnu" temu: Krleže kao sljedbenika i širitelja suvremenih metoda vizuelnih istraživanja. Tiskana je riječ dvojake prirode: vizuelne i verbalne, vizuelni znak za verbalni oblik nekog pojma. U modernoj umjetnosti prvi su kubisti upozorili na vizuelnu samostalnost i neposrednu izražajnost štampanog slova; cjeloviti ili fragmentarni naslovi i riječi, često u disproporcionalnom odnosu s isto tako fragmentiranim predmetima na slici, pokazali su sugestivnost tipografskog znaka. "Interdisciplinarna" istraživanja "vizuelne poezije" tragala su za mogućnostima i granicama polazeći od kompozicije grafičkih znakova u kadru stranice, a završavajući nejezičnim znakovima Morgensterna, na primjer. U ta se strujanja upleo i na njih nadovezuje u nas Miroslav Krleža, ali naravno na njemu svojstven način, mijenjajući i smisao i metodu te rabote. Umjesto u lirskoj, poetičnoj igri, primijenio je to u oštroj polemici i okrutno se narugao protivnicima. Slijedeći likovni princip kvantitete kao "težine" i "jačine", Krleža se u "Antibarbarusu" inventivno koristi različitim mogućnostima tipografskih slova da naglasi riječ, istakne smisao, a kad smatra da je prisiljen ponavljati i vikati (onome u "posljednjoj klupi"), slova postaju "masna" i poprimaju dotad nevidene dimenzije i deset puta veće od osnovnog teksta. Po tome je Krležin "Antibarbarus" ne samo jedan od najoriginalnijih polemičkih tekstova prve polovice 20. stoljeća, nego i najoriginalniji primjer "vizuelne proze" u nas, a vjerujem i u svijetu.

U kontekstu problema stila i mode o kojem govorimo, naglasimo još jednom da je Krležin postupak sasvim u duhu i stilu vremena. Jer, ma koliko je bio zajedljiv, bespoštedno obračunavao s ideološkim protivnicima, Voltaire, na primjer, nikad nije došao na tu ideju. A nije ni mogao doći, jer su mu nedostajali vizuelni istraživači koje je Krleža imao. Pa čak, ako ni od koga i nije bio neposredno potaknut, opet (pretpostavljena) kongenijalnost situira Krležu u istu stilsku, avangardnu grupu "nečastivih duhova" koji šire modu "urlanja" i ne daju "časnim" sugrađanima da mirno spavaju i sanjaju svoje banalne snove (uz pjevušenje poznatih im uspavanki). A takav "nečastivi duh" — u najboljem i najpozitivnijem smislu riječi — bio je i ostao Miroslav Krleža na literarnom planu, kao što su njegovi "tzv.

the same sensation and irritated it just as much as Malevich and other revolutionary painters had irritated their spectatorship, including Krleža himself, since he (owing to the divergence between visual and verbal thought and language) did not recognize his fellow-thinkers. Certainly, one could always find that “constructivist” building component in Krleža’s destructive nihilism, but it was reduced to a measure that was most tersely expressed by Georg Grosz himself, in the title of his book “Ein grosses NEIN und ein kleines ja” (1946). That slogan fits Krleža’s entire opus excellently.¹³

However, you must have noticed that the above-mentioned title by Grosz contains some direct visual expressiveness and communicability in its graphics (the capital letters of “NEIN”). That is an introduction into our final “literary” theme: that of Krleža as the adherent and promoter of modern methods in visual research. The printed word is twofold: visual and verbal, a visual sign for the verbal form of a notion. In modern art, early cubists were drawing attention to the visual autonomy and direct expressiveness of the printed letter; entire or fragmentary titles and words, mostly disproportional with respect to the equally fragmented objects in a picture, indicated the suggestiveness of the typographic symbol. “Interdisciplinary” research in “visual poetry” aimed at discovering the possibilities and limitations, starting from the composition of graphic symbols within the page frame and ending with Morgenstern’s non-verbal symbols, for example. In our region, Miroslav Krleža was the one who joined those currents, but in his own, characteristic way, changing both the sense and the method of the whole thing. Instead of the lyrical, poetic play, he applied it in his fierce polemic, thus cruelly mocking his adversaries. By following the visual principle of quantity as “weight” and “strength”, Krleža inventively used various possibilities of typographic letters in his “Antibarbarus” in order to accentuate single words and emphasize their meaning: when he felt that he needed to repeat or shout (to the one sitting in the “last row”), his letters became “bold” and acquired unprecedented dimensions, sometimes ten times larger than the basic text. This makes Krleža’s “Antibarbarus” not only one of the most original polemic texts in the first half of the 20th century, but also the most original example of “visual prose” in Croatia and probably also world-wide.

Regarding the afore-mentioned problems of style and fashion, we should point out once again that Krleža’s procedure was entirely in the spirit and style of the times. For example, no matter how sarcastic Voltaire had been and how mercilessly he had dealt with his ideological adversaries, he would have never come to that sort of idea. And that would also have been impossible, since he lacked the visual innovators that Krleža did have. And even if Krleža was not influenced directly by anybody, the (assumed) congeniality situates Krleža in the same vanguard stylistic group of “spirits unclean” that spread the fashion of “howling” and did not allow “honourable” citizens to sleep soundly and dream their banal dreams (with their favourite lullabies). And such a “spirit unclean” — in the best and most positive sense of the word — Miroslav Krleža was and remained in the field of literature, just as his “so-called revolutionary” fellow-thinkers, from Picasso to Grosz, were in the field of visual arts.

THE MOTIF OF FLAG IN BABIĆ’S PAINTING

The permanent and profound affiliation between painter Babića and writer Krleža was expressed, among other things, symbolically by the motif of flag, both in early paintings by Ljubo Babić and the “Flags” from Krleža’s later phase. Regardless of how we define the motif more closely — whether as a black funerary flag or a red revolutionary one, as a national tricolour or the “colour” of allegiance — as a visual and verbal motif — the flag corresponded to the individual styles of both artists with its directness and expressive power, at the same time attracting them with its symbolism, ideologically, since it answered to their deep common need to interpret, to raise their voices, to react.

The motif of flag reappeared consistently in a number of Babić’s painting between 1916 and 1929: “Black Flag” (1916), “Black Flags” (1918), “Red Flags” (two versions, 1919), “Football Match” (1924), “Funeral” (1926), “Ilica” (1928), “Ilički Square” (1929).¹⁴

Close to the Flag, to its fluttering in the wind, is the flicker of flames: Krleža introduced it as a Word and Babić as a Figure on canvas and on the cover of the “Plamen” journal (1919); thus, we must also include it as a borderline motif in this iconological study.¹⁵

The “Black Flag” (1916), although belonging to the earliest phase, the first

decade of Babić’s art, is a work of exceptional quality, not only as regards his opus,¹⁶ but also in the context of the Croatian and European art of its time. It might be best to compare this painting with others by Babić in order to be able to isolate and define it better. The often quoted and much more frequently reproduced “Golgotha” (1917) from the Modern Gallery in Zagreb¹⁷ is only a masterful sketch in comparison with the completeness and perfection of the “Black Flag” as a whole. Even a fleeting glance at Babić’s retrospective catalogue clearly shows that this huge painting resists the book presentation and the usual “formatting” with its elongated form (181 x 100 cm), unprecedented in Babić’s opus. The format itself, which fits well the main motif, was certainly neither accidental nor exceptional in its time, but rather an outspoken feature of the painter’s stylistic affiliation: it is a typically Secessionist, disproportional and vertical elongation.

Visually speaking, there is a huge disparity between these two paintings. In “Golgotha”, the entire brown brim of the rock is even, equivalent, and subject to the overall (scenographic) effect of the whole; in the “Black Flag”, even the tiniest piece of setting, the ground, or the skies (the “background”) is exquisitely rich in colourism and utterly finely treated in terms of technique. Moreover, it is painted in a transparent way, unlike the thick layers of paint in “Golgotha”.

Apart from its format and design, an equally important aspect is the audacity of composition with respect to the relationship between its elements and the spectator’s angle. A gaze from above (from the window) is obstructed by the flag, with its heavy tassel and its long, torn end, as well as a tiny piece of the façade (irritating to all those who know and respect the “principles” of composition), while below, in the “street”, there are indifferent and finely dressed people strolling around in couples and groups: holiday atmosphere combined with funerary gloom, a confrontation charged with the symbolism of the black flag that is literally “hanging over their heads”. But the mourning is rather mocking than tragic, owing to the raggedness of the flag.

The most exceptional element of this painting is the invention of space: first, there is an illusion of definite space limited by distance (the street below the house) and then, almost invisibly (and with no possibility to determine the borderline between the ground

revolucionarni” istomišljenici od Picassa od Grosza bili na likovnom.

MOTIV ZASTAVE U BABIĆEVU SLIKARSTVU

Trajno, dublje srodstvo slikara Babića i književnika Krležje izraženo je, uz ostalo, simbolički motivom zastave u ranim djelima Ljube Babića i “Zastavama” kasne Krležine faze. Ma kako pobliže odredili taj pojam — pogrebna crna ili revolucionarna crvena zastava, nacionalne trobojnice ili “boje” pripadnosti — kao vizuelni i verbalni motiv — zastava je odgovarala individualnom stilu obojice svojom neposrednošću i ekspresivnom udarnošću, a simbolikom, ideološki, privlačila ih je iz zajedničke dubinske potrebe da protumače, progovore, da odgovore.

Motiv zastave javlja se perseverativno u nizu Babićevih slika od 1916. do 1929. godine: “Crna zastava” (1916), “Crne zastave” (1918), “Crveni stjegovi” (dvije verzije, 1919), “Utakmica” (1924), “Pogreb” (1926), “Ilica” (1928), “Ilički trg” (1929).¹⁴

Blizak Zastavi, njezinu viorenju na vjetru, jest treptaj plamena: Krležja će ga pronijeti u Riječi, a Babić kao Lik na plakatu i koricama časopisa “Plamen” (1919), pa i to kao granični pojam moramo uključiti u ovu ikonološku studiju.¹⁵

“Crna zastava” (1916), iako pripada najranijoj fazi, prvom deceniju majstorova stvaranja, djelo je izuzetne kvalitete ne samo unutar Babićeva opusa,¹⁶ nego i u hrvatskoj i evropskoj umjetnosti svoga vremena. Komparacija s djelima samog Babića možda će ovu sliku najbolje izdvojiti i definirati. Toliko puta citirana, pa i nerazmjerno češće reproducirana “Golgota” (1917) iz Moderne galerije zagrebačke,¹⁷ samo je majstorska skica u odnosu na dovršenost i savršenost cjeline “Crne zastave”. Čak površnim prelistavanjem kataloga Babićeve retrospektive očigledno je kako se ova golema slika već svojim izduženim formatom (181 x 100 cm) — neponovljenim kod Babića — opire kalupu knjige i prosječnom “formatiziranju”. Sam format sukladan glavnom motivu, naravno, nije ni slučajno ni izuzetan u vremenu, već je izrazita odlika stilske pripadnosti: tipično secesijska disproporcionalna vertikalna izduženost.

Likovno ove dvije slike dijeli ponor. U “Golgoti” je čitav smeđi obrub stijene jednoličan, jednako-vrijedan, podložan ukupnom (scenografskom) efektu cjeline; u “Crnoj zastavi” je i najsitniji djelić podloge, tla ili neba (“pozadine”), izvanredno koloristički

bogat i slikarski krajnje rafinirano tetošen. Slikana je osim toga lazurno za razliku od debelih namaza “Golgoti”.

Uz format i oblikovanje podjednako je značajna kompoziciona smionost s obzirom na odnos elemenata i kut gledanja. Pogled odozgo (s prozora), prepriječen zastavom s jednom teškom resom i drugim potrganim krajem i minimalnim djelićkom fasade (iritantnim za sve koji poznaju i priznaju kompozicione “principe”), a dolje, na “ulici”, nezainteresirani otmjeni šetači u parovima i grupama: blagdansko raspoloženje i pogrebna žalost, konfrontacija nabijena simbolikom crne zastave koja im doslovno “visi nad glavom”. Ali ta korota nije tragična, nego posprdna, jer je i zastava već otrcana.

Najizuzetnija na ovoj slici jest invencija prostornosti: najprije se stvara iluzija određenog, udaljenošću omeđenog prostora (ulice pod kućom), a zatim neprimjetno (bez ikakve mogućnosti da odredimo granicu tla i neba, postojećeg i nepostojećeg, pojedinačnog i općeg), sve obuhvaća silovit pokret bljedog oblačnog neba koje duboki modri proboji paraju i presijecaju kao “negativne”, mračne munje; taj atmosferski val (vidi: Hokusai) nalik je na kozmogonijski zamah sila, ukoliko nije uništavajući vjetar Apokalipse koji će sve otpuhati i odnijeti. I dok se konkaviteti oblačnih masa nad stijenama “Golgoti” nadvijaju gotovo simetrično, kao školjka, i međusobno uravnotežuju, pomiruju i smiruju, ovdje je sve povučeno asimetrično u blagoj, ali potentnoj krivulji iz donjeg lijevog kuta u zamahu prema gore, uzgonu, i nastavlja se unedogled izvan okvira slike.

Već iz ove primarne analize naziremo dokle sve moramo posegnuti u “duboki bunar prošlosti” da bismo otkrili trag: ta je Babićeva slika strukturalno srodna baroku ili manirizmu. Smještanje nerazmjerno velike “draperije” u prednji plan tipično je barokna invencija (riječ je izvedena iz istog korijena kao i zastava: drapeau, franc.), što omogućuje očitavanje dubine i “beskonačnosti” prostora čak i u malom omeđenom prostoru interijera. Vermeer van Delft jedan je od klasika u primjeni toga principa, a njegova slika “Slikar i model” paradigmatična naročito po Sedlmayrovoj analizi.¹⁸ Pokret i neizmjenost barokna su mjesta u ovom Babićevu djelu, jer se tako i na Guardiјevim slikama venecijanskih laguna, na primjer, figure slikovito rasplinjuju, a nebo stapa s morem bez granice. Međutim, s obzirom na kut gledanja, kao i kozmički pokret u

slici, najrodnija joj je u evropskoj slikarskoj baštini također golema

“Aleksandrova bitka” Altdorfera (1529).

Uz isti rakurs odozgo, princip sugeriranja dubine pomoću istaknutog, blizog predmeta riješen je ovdje kruto i statično “pločom” s natpisom što iluzionistički “visi s okvira” slike, a potpuna je srodnost u pokrenutosti svjetlosti i oblačnih masa u nesagledivoj dubini slike.

Međutim, u Babićevoj slici očigledan je i jedan drugi, suvremeniji tok tradicije. Na to ukazuje i na to nas obvezuje sam motiv zastave, koji je neodvojivo vezan uz nastup “modernog” slikarstva, kao i urbano viđenje velegrada: pogled na ulicu kroz prozor, odozgo, s kata. Dokinuvši dominaciju “pješačke” vizure utemeljene renesansom, impresionisti su otkrili “pogled na svijet” s prozora višekatnice: pratimo ga na slikama Renoira (“Pont Neuf”, 1872), Sisleya (“Boulevard des Italiens” 1897), Pissaroa... A zastave se kao motiv javljaju u slikarstvu 19. stoljeća paralelno s težnjom pročišćenju boje, zapravo njezinu ponovnom rađanju: francuski “tricolor”, sadržavajući oba suprotna pola spektra, crveno-modro, toplo i hladno, nije mogao ostati nezapažen kao slikarski motiv par excellence. Stidljivo se javlja najprije kod Sisleya (1884); zatim na divizionističkim platnima Seurata kao “Port en Bassin un dimanche” (1888); Van Gogh i Rouault uveli su tipično urbanu ikonografsku temu ulica okićenih zastavama na Dan Republike 14. srpnja, ali je puni proplamsaj zastava na kućama tek na početku našeg stoljeća na slikama fovista.¹⁹ Kod Manguinea 1905. godine lepršaju 14. srpnja zastave na jedrilicama u luci, dok su za Duffyja raspjevane zastave na brodovima u lukama i na gradskim ulicama postale osobni znak raspoznavanja i potpis. Najsimptomatičnija je njegova “Rue paviosée au Havre” (1906), ne samo zbog naslova koji bi se mogao prevesti kao “Pozastavljena” ulica (a termin je pomorski: označuje brodove koji se svečano okite svim signalnim zastavama; “Beflagte” engleski), nego stoga što su tri velike zastave dominantna tema i ispunjavaju gotovo čitavu površinu slike. Videne s prozora, kao i Babićeva, pokrivaju ulicu tako da samo u uskim međuprostorima naziremo šetače. Marquetova “Plage au Fécamp” (1906), gledana odozgo, sa sitnim šetačima na neomeđenoj obali mora što se pretapa u nebo, dok u naglašenu prednjem planu uz tricolor vijori i jedna crvena zastava, a čitavo tlo je “podignuto” prema

and the skies, existing and non-existing, particular and universal), all is embraced by the violent move of the pale, cloudy skies, torn and cut by deep blue crevices like “negative”, dark strikes of lightning; that atmospheric wave (see: Hokusai) seems like a cosmogonic surge of forces, unless it is the destructive wind of the Apocalypse, bound to blow and carry away everything. And while the concavities of the masses of clouds above the cliffs of “Golgotha” are almost symmetrical, like a shell, balancing, conciliating, and pacifying each other, here everything is recessed asymmetrically, in a mild, but potent curve drawn from the lower left corner upwards, uplifted, and continuing endlessly, beyond the frame of the painting.

Even this preliminary analysis offers some clue of how deep we must reach into the “deep well of the past” in order to discover a trace: that Babić’s painting is structurally close to baroque or to mannerism. The location of a disproportionately large piece of draping into the foreground is a typically baroque invention (the term is derived from the same root as the word for “flag”: *drapeau*, franc.), which makes it possible to read the depth and the “endlessness” of space even in a small and limited interior. Vermeer van Delft is one of the classics in the application of this principle and his painting “Painter and His Model” is especially paradigmatic in Sedlmayr’s analysis.¹⁸ Movement and immeasurability are the baroque elements in this work of Babić’s, since on Guardi’s paintings of Venetian lagoons, for example, figures are likewise dispersed in this picturesque manner and the skies merges with the sea without a horizon. However, with respect to the viewpoint and the cosmic movement, the work of art that stands closest to it in the European painting tradition is the equally large “Battle of Alexander” by Aلدorfer (1529). Apart from the same view from above, the principle of suggesting depth with the help of an accentuated, closely set object is solved here stiffly and statically, with an inscription “plaque” that “hangs from the frame” of the painting in an illusionist manner, while complete parallelism is visible in the movement of light and masses of clouds in the immeasurable profoundness of the painting.

However, Babić’s painting reveals another, more modern current of tradition. It is evident and enforced in the very motif of the flag, which is inseparably tied to the appearance of “modernist” painting, as well

as the urban vision of the city: a view from the window, from above, from the upper floors. By abolishing the dominance of the “pedestrian” viewpoint, established by the renaissance, the impressionists discovered a “view on the world” from a multi-storey building: it can be observed on paintings by Renoir (“Pont Neuf”, 1872), Sisley (“Boulevard des Italiens”, 1897), Pissaro... And flags appear as a motif in 19th-century painting, parallel with the tendency to clarify, or rather reinvent colours: the French “tricolour”, which contains the two opposite poles of the spectrum, red and blue, warm and cold, could not remain unnoticed as a painting motif par excellence. Bashfully, it first appeared with Sisley (1884); then on the divisionist canvases of Seurat’s, such as the “Port en Bassin un dimanche” (1888); Van Gogh and Rouault introduced a typically urban iconographic theme of streets decorated with flags for the Republic Day of 14 July, but the full blossoming of flags took place only early in the 20th century, on Fauvist paintings.¹⁹ With Manguine, flags flatter on 14 July 1905 on all the yachts in the harbour, while for Duffy, playful flags on ships in harbours and on city streets had become a personal brand mark and signature. The most typical example is his “Rue paviosée au Havre” (1906), not only because of the title, which may be translated as the “flagged” street (the term coming from maritime terminology, denoting ships that are decorated with all the signal flags for festivities; Germ. “Beflagte”), but also because the three large flags are its dominant theme and fill almost the entire surface of the painting. Viewed from the window, just like Babić’s flag, they cover the street so completely that one can discern passers-by in the street only through the narrow gaps between them. Marquet’s “Plage au Fécamp” (1906), seen from above, with its tiny people strolling along the limitless coastline merging into the skies, while a red flag is fluttering in the accentuated foreground along with a tricolour and the whole ground is “raised” to match the level of the painted canvas — reminds with its entire composition of Babić’s “Black Flag”, almost like a mirror image.

I have listed all these examples only in order to point out the depth of cultural layers absorbed or intuitively taken as a basis by young Babić (and he could not and did not have to know all of these at the time — he was only 26 years old), adding some gen-

eral analogies with modern painting in order to demonstrate the way he lived in his time and with his time. All these visual associations and established parallels point to an affinity in the moment of painting, but also delineate differences in artistic spirit.

They are separated, first of all, by the historical time: instead of the optimistic Fauvist greeting to the “beginning of the century” (which was considered very promising), Babić’s painting reflects the atmosphere in the second year of World War I. But regardless of that, it is typical for Babić to counter the cheerful French tricolour with his achromatic black flag (by the way: black colour was sanctified by the 17th century, with motifs ranging from the altar and the tomb to clothes and jewellery, and permeated the painting of Spanish baroque). That black flag falls from the skies like a fatal curtain onto the frivolous theatre of bourgeois world. Experiencing the cataclysm of World War I as the end of a society, Babić re-enacted the scene of leaving the world scene, this time with the bourgeoisie, just like he had painted Watteau for feudal aristocracy (after the arrival of bourgeoisie) on his symbolic “Boarding for Khitera”.

Coming back to the relationship between Babić and his contemporaries, one should add that, by treating gently his canvas, with a dry and sparse layer of paint, by pampering the painted texture, he equally countered the playful Fauvist palette and the crude and cruel dramatism of the expressionists (and the link between these two currents was emphasized at the exhibition in Paris in 1966).²⁰

Does this not demonstrate a deeper affinity with Krleža from the historical viewpoint, just as we have mentioned in the beginning? Does Krleža not relate equally towards both tradition and modernity? Are his “expressionist” themes and theses not also enveloped and formed in long “baroque” sentences and phrase cycles, always evolving — instead of being programmatically lapidary and epigraphically direct, as his fellow-thinkers sought to proclaim — in long ellipses, connecting experiences from ancient past with the present moment? Even when speaking of the revolutionary art of the 20th century, as in the sentence we have quoted above, he could not avoid mentioning “spirits unclean”, a syntagm that inevitably reminded of a particular historical period, the “waning of the Middle Ages” (Huizinga), mannerism, and the baroque

ravni oslikanog platna — podsjeća cijelom kompozicijom kao zrcalna slika na Babićevu “Crnu zastavu”.

Sve te likovne primjere navodim samo zato da ukažem na dubinu kulturnog sloja što ga je upio ili intuitivno nadgradio mladi Babić (koji još tada nije mogao ni morao sve poznavati — bilo mu je tek 26 godina), a opće analogije s modernim slikarstvom da pokažem kako je živio u svom vremenu i s vremenom. Sve te vizuelne asocijacije, uspoređujući slično, ukazuju na srodstvo u trenutku slikarstva, ali ocrtavaju jasno i razlike u slikarskom duhu.

Dijeli ih, prije svega, povijesno vrijeme: umjesto optimističkog fovističkog pozdrava “početku stoljeća” (za koje se vjerovalo da mnogo obećava), na Babićevoj slici otkucava druga godina prvoga svjetskog rata. Ali i mimo toga tipično je babićeovski da veseloj francuskoj trobojnici suprotstavlja svoj akromatski crni stijeg (usput: crnu je boju posvetilo 17. stoljeće, od oltara i grobnice do odjeće i nakita, a provlači se kao nit kroz slikarstvo španjolskog baroka). Ta crna zastava pada iz visina kao sudbinska zavjesa na neozbiljni, svjetski građanski teatar. Doživljavajući kataklizmu prvoga svjetskog rata kao kraj jednog društva, Babić ovdje s građanstvom ponavlja scenu odlaznja sa svjetske pozornice kao što je to za feudalno plemstvo naslikao Watteau (uочи nastupa građanstva) na simboličkom “Ukrcavanju za Kiteru”.

Vratimo li se odnosu Babića i suvremenih mu slikara treba dodati da on njegovanjem slikarske površine, suhim i škrtnim namazom, tetošenjem obojene materije proturječi podjednako raspjevanoj fovističkoj paleti kao i neobuzdanoj ali sirovoj i surovj dramatičnosti ekspresionista (a veza između tih dvaju smjerova naglašena je na izložbi u Parizu 1966. godine).²⁰

Nije li time iz stanovišta prema povijesti iskazana dublja srodnost s Krležom, koju smo spomenuli na početku? Ne odnosi li se Krleža jednako tako prema tradiciji i suvremenosti? Nisu li njegove “ekspresionističke” teme i teze zavijene i oblikovane u duge “barokne” rečenice i rečeničke cikluse i — umjesto programski lapidarno i plakatski neposredno, kako su to nastojali objaviti pristalice istih ideja — razvijaju se uvijek u dugim elipsama povezujući iskustva daleke prošlosti s trenutkom sadašnjosti? “ak ni onda kad govori o revolucionarnoj umjetnosti 20. stoljeća, kao u rečenici koju smo citirali na početku, Krleža ne može mimoći “duhove nečastive”, sintagmu koja

neminovno asocira određeno povijesno vrijeme, “jesen srednjeg vijeka” (Huizinga), manirizam, baroknu inkviziciju, kad je tema “Nečastivog” bila dio svakodnevice. Već smo spomenuli Krležin vlastiti iskaz i dataciju u “Baladama”, a dodajmo da je to doba oslikao u njegovu realističkom aspektu Brueghel Stariji († 1569), a preradio nadrealističkom fantastikom Hyeronimus Bosch († 1516). Babić i Krleža, povezujući iskustva tradicije koju su odlično poznavali — od manirizma i baroka do simbolizma i ekspresionizma — sa suvremenom stvarnošću, stvorili su svaki svoju osebuju sintezu kojoj je teško naći adekvatnu u evropskoj umjetnosti. Srodnost im je u jezgri djela, u strukturi, čini mi se znatnija no što je iskazana u pozitivnim Krležinim ocjenama Babića, gdje se javljaju razlike u metodi pristupa likovnog i literarnog. Ali nepogrešivom je intuicijom ovaj književnik prepoznao (a dijelom i usmjerio) “svoje” slikare: Ljubu Babića koji mu je najbliži po strukturi djela i ličnosti i Krstu Hegedušića koji se veže na vanjsku, literarnu, stilsko-morfološku tradiciju stila “seljačkog” Brueghela u svom djelu općenito, a u “Baladama” napose.

“Crna zastava”, autorova “najmilija slika”, ističe se rekli smo kvalitetom i osebujuošću ne samo u evropskom slikarstvu 1916. godine, već i unutar Babićeva opusa,²¹ pa tako i među svim ostalim slikama s motivom zastave. Vezane uz određeniju urbanu scenografiju, doživljene kao slikarski motiv ostale slike nisu dosegle razinu simbola, a u tijeku vremena sve su više naturalistički opisne: ukoliko im značenje i jest simboličko, ono proizlazi iz narativno-literarne dogradnje, a ne više neposredno iz likovne transpozicije. Tako je, na primjer, na crtežu “Ilica 1928”, u povodu ubojstva Stjepana Radića, uz crne zastave očita nametljiva prisutnost žandara s puškom i bajonetom što se raskrećio na potpuno opustjeloj Ilici, dvojice što dolaze iz daljine držeći se također sredine ulice, oslijepjelih zatvorenih prozora, spuštenih roloa na trgovinama: sve su to prepoznatljiviji znaci strahovlade, terora. Realistički pomnjivo crta Babić arhitekturu sjeverne strane Ilice od ugla Mesničke s baroknom jednokatnicom, uz koju je uvučena visoka trokatnica Obrtne banke, netom izgrađena po projektu arhitekta Ehrlichia, te niz jasno diferenciranih kuća do knjižare “Kugli” (sada “Mladost”), a zatim krivulja stopljenih uličnih fasada i igra raznolikih krovovišta. S obzirom na tu

preciznost može se sa sigurnošću utvrditi i otkud je prizor gledan: s prozora prvoga kata (u dnu crteža je streha istaknutog vijenca nad prizemljem) kuće na južnoj strani ulice, na mjestu gdje se Mesnička ulica slijeva u Ilicu. A to znači iz tadašnjeg ateljea kipara Hinka Juhna.²²

Usporedbom ovog crteža s prvom slikom koju smo analizirali mogao bi se ilustrirati raspon različitih likovnih metoda kojima se Babić služi, ali ne spominjem ga na ovom mjestu samo zbog toga niti slučajno preskačemo kronološki slijed spomenutih slika s motivom zastave: u toku analize nametnula mi se sugestivno spoznaja da je ne samo kut gledanja isti kao na “Crnoj zastavi”, već i detalj jednako “rubno” rezanog fragmenta fasade kuće iz koje se gleda (desno), s istaknutim vijencem. Ako izdvojimo uzak vertikalni dio crteža “Ilica 1928”, sa zastavom uz sam desni rub, dobit ćemo kompozicionu shemu “Crne zastave”. Prva je slika bila potaknuta, dakle, također pogledom s istog prozora iz ateljea Hinka Juhna, gdje je Babić u to vrijeme često radio. Nije bilo važno samo locirati sliku u prostor grada, niti mislim da je cilj istraživanja pedantno utvrđivanje činjenica, nego se tako, usporedbom s realističkom verzijom “Ilice 1928”, još očiglednije iskazuje snaga i moć prerade objektivne stvarnosti — “slikanja po prirodi” - u jednom od najranijih majstorovih djela, “Crnoj zastavi”.

Također — bolje od mnogih arhivskih dokumenata političkih analiza i konstatacija — usporedba ovih dvaju djela pokazuje povijesnu situaciju u nas: revolucionarni zanos mladog Babića (jer to je sadržaj “Crne zastave” i dviju narednih slika sa zastavama, adekvatan mnogim onovremenim Krležinim tekstovima), koji je u trećoj godini svjetskoga rata osjećao dovoljno snage da otvori “kozmičke prostore”, iščezava strmo glavom krivuljom u toku jednog decenija (Krležinih “Deset krvavih godina”) kad se sve “zatvorilo”, zabrtvilo i ogoljelo u nemilosrdnoj stvarnosti kraljevsko-žandarmarijske diktature koja simbolički kulminira ubojstvom Radića. Duboko ukorijenjene u povijesni trenutak ove su dvije slike interpretacija povijesti same, viđene s prozora iličkog ateljea jednog majstora prodorna pogleda i senzibilne ruke.

Ostale citirane Babićeve slike s motivom zastave različitih su ugođaja i naboja.

“Crne zastave” (1918) duktusom su najbliže fovizmu, a još su mu srodnije po emotivnoj indiferentnosti, kojom se slikarski jed-

Inquisition, when the theme of “Antichrist” was a part of everyday life. We have already mentioned Krleža’s own statement and dating in his “Ballads” and we should add that this period had been depicted in its realistic aspect by Brueghel the Elder († 1569) and reinterpreted in a surrealist, fantastic style by Hieronymus Bosch († 1516). Both Babić and Krleža, fusing the experiences of the tradition, which they knew very well — from mannerism and baroque to symbolism and expressionism — with the modern times, created each of them his own, personal synthesis, barely paralleled in European art. Their affinity is in the essence of their work, in the structure, and it seems more profound that it had been expressed in Krleža’s positive evaluations of Babić, where differences in approach between the visual and the literary had come into the foreground. But with his infallible intuition, this literary artist recognized (and partly even guided) “his” artists: Ljubo Babić, who stood closest to him in the structure of his work, and Krsto Hegedušić, who continued the external, literary, and morphological tradition of the style of “peasant” Brueghel, in his work in general, but more particularly in his “Ballads”.

The “Black Flag”, its author’s “favourite painting”, sticks out with its quality and originality, not only in the European painting of 1916, but also within Babić’s opus²¹ and all other paintings using the motif of the flag. The other paintings, linked with the more specific, urban scenography, did not reach the symbolic level in terms of motif and with time they became even more naturalistically descriptive: even if their meaning was sometimes symbolical, it stemmed from the narrative-literary superstructure rather than directly, from visual transposition. A good example is the drawing entitled “Ilica 1928”, made on the occasion of the murder of Stjepan Radić, where black flags are accompanied by the conspicuous presence of a gendarme carrying a gun with bayonet and standing with his legs spread on the completely empty Ilica street, as well as two others, who are coming from far away and are also keeping to the middle of the street, marked by blinded windows and shuttered shop-windows: all of these being recognisable symbols of the reign of terror. Realistically meticulously, Babić has depicted the northern side of Ilica, from the corner of Mesnička street, with a baroque two-story building, next to which there is a four-story

building of the Crafts Bank designed by architect Ehrlich, recessed with respect to the street line, which was new at the time, as well as a row of clearly differentiated houses next to the “Kugli” bookshop (today’s “Mladost”) and a curve of merged street façades with an interplay of diverse roofs. That precision even makes it possible to establish with certainty where the observer was standing: at the first-floor window (at the bottom of the drawing, there is a pitch of the protruding cornice above the ground floor) of a house on the southern side of the street, opposite the spot where Mesnička Street flows into Ilica. Which means - in the former atelier of sculptor Hinko Juhn.²²

By comparing this drawing with the first painting analysed in this text, we could illustrate the range of various methods of painting that Babić was using, but I am not mentioning it here only for this reason, just as I am not accidentally disturbing the chronological sequence of paintings using the flag motif: in the course of my analysis, I have come to the insight that the viewpoint is not the only element that is identical to that in the “Black Flag”; there is another detail, that of an equally “marginally” cut fragment of the façade on the house of the spectator (to the right) with a protruding cornice. If we concentrate upon the narrow vertical strip of the drawing “Ilica 1928”, with the flag at its extreme right margin, we shall obtain the composition scheme of the “Black Flag”. Thus, the first painting of the artist was inspired by the same view, that from the window of the atelier of Hinko Juhn, where Babić was working rather often at that time. The important point was not only to locate the painting within urban space and I do not think that the aim of this research is primarily to establish precise facts, but rather to compare the realistic version of “Ilica 1928” and thus express more evidently the power and strength of transforming the objective reality — “painting from nature” - in one of the earliest pieces of the artist, the “Black Flag”.

Moreover, the comparison of these two paintings reveals the political situation in Croatia much better than many an archival document with political analyses and statements: the revolutionary enthusiasm of young Babić (for that is the content of the “Black Flag” and the two subsequent paintings with flags, which correspond to a number of Krleža’s texts from the same period), who felt enough power in the third year

of World War I to open up “cosmic spaces”, vanished within one decade in a precipitating curve (Krleža’s “Ten Bloody Years”), in which everything was “closed”, blocked, and bare in that merciless reality of the royalist-gendarmist dictatorship, reaching its symbolic pinnacle in the murder of Radić. Deeply anchored in the historical moment, these two paintings are an interpretation of history as such, seen from the window of the Ilica atelier, by an artist with a piercing eye and a sensitive hand.

The rest of the afore-mentioned Babić’s paintings with the flag motif are marked by various atmospheres and charges.

The “Black Flags” (1918) stand closest to Fauvism in their ductus, but even more in their emotional indifference, with which the masses of people, the flags, and the house windows are equally “materially” evaluated in terms of art. However, the importance of the sketch is in the fact that it was preparing a creative reformulation of the motif in the “Red Flags” from 1919, the following year, where the triangle of people in the street would curve up and twist, thus gaining on dynamics and depth with respect to the “neutral” composition from 1918 and enhancing the movement of the stream of people, in which the artist accentuated the immensity of masses by making the people tinier, while the whole thing would be raised to the symbol of poster-like suggestiveness in the best sense of the word: in the same sense in which Babić himself created his poster and in which Delacroix’s “Liberty on the Barricades” (1831) had been a fine example of that genre. The crucial modification with respect to the “Black Flags” was that, in the synthesis of the “Red Flags”, Babić clearly differentiated in his painting technique and matter the triangle of the excited masses and the static, smooth, and blind façades of houses, shaped like the surfaces of a unique, formless, dirty green channel, through which anxious masses are flowing like the still glowing, red-brown human lava. Red sails of the flags, floating above the heads of the multitude, suggest with their prospective, gradual growth the crescendo of the approaching and rushing stream. The flags, shaped like arrows, are all tightened in a similar way, just like the main curve of the composition, which undulates dynamically, expanding from the upper right corner to the lower one. There is no doubt that the painting shows Mesnička Street, seen from that very same window

nako "materijalno" vrednuju ljudska gomila, zastave i prozori kuća. Važnost je, međutim, ove skice u tome što je ona bila priprema za kreativnu preradu motiva u "Crvenim stjegovima" iduće, 1919. godine, gdje će se trokut ljudstva na ulici zakriviti i svinuti dobivajući na dinamici i dubini u odnosu na "neutralnu" kompoziciju iz 1918. godine, potencirajući pokret rijeke ljudstva u kojoj će se usitnjavanjem istaći neizmjernost mase, a sve će se uzdići do simbola plakatne sugestivnosti u najboljem smislu riječi: u onom istom smislu u kojem je sam Babić oblikovao plakat i po kojem je Delacroixova "Sloboda na barikadama" (1831) uzoran plakat. U odnosu na "Crne zastave" bitna je promjena što u sintezi "Crvenih stjegova" Babić jasno diferencira u slikarskoj tehnici i materiji trokut uskomešane mase i statičke glatke slijepe fasade kuća, oblikovane kao plohe jedinstvenog bezličnog, prljavo zelenog kanala kojim teče uznemirena bujica još užarene crvenosmeđe lave ljudstva. Crvena jedra zastava koja plove nad glavama mnoštva sugeriraju svojim perspektivnim stupnjevitim rastom crescendo približavanja i nadiranja bujice. Zastave strelasta oblika napete su slično, kao i vodeća krivulja

kompozicije koja dinamično skreće, šireći se, od gornjeg desnog dijela slike u donji. Nema sumnje da slika prikazuje Mesničku ulicu, viđenu s istog onog prozora s kojeg je crtana "Ilica 1928" i slikana "Crna zastava" 1916, te je ona također povijesni zapis slikara u burnim poslijeratnim godinama.²³ O pokretu revolucionarnih masa nije tada u našoj sredini na takav način mislio nitko — osim Krleža.²⁴

Na posljednjoj slici iz ovog niza, "Iličkom trgu" (1929), zastave su samo dekorativne plohe skladno raspoređene u tkivu djela kojim odzvanja sumarnost Babićevih španjolskih akvarela. Kompozicija je dinamički uravnotežena kontrapunktalnim suprotstavljanjem bijega u perspektivnu točku lijeve donje trećine smirenom kvadratičnom formatu i razmjerno praznoj plohi gornje i donje trećine; jasna konstruktivna potka prividnoj skicoznosti i lakoći.

Napokon, iako ne posljednja, crveno-bijela zastava na igralištu, na slici "Nogomet" iz 1924. godine, ključni je akcent kompozicije. Zastava je žižak iz kojeg se otvara lep-eza igrališnog polja i žarište u kojem se sve sabire, jedino "vruće mjesto", najistaknutiji "subjekt" kompozicije. Izdvojena, osamljena

u prednjem planu na širokoj plohi zelenila, kornerska crveno-bijela zastava drži magnetskom silom u napetosti svu onu pasivnu masu tmastosmedeg gledališta. U izuzetnoj i smionoj kompoziciji i likovno "prazno polje" igrališta postalo je passe-partout za raspon kolorističkog (zastava) i tonalnog (gledalište) kao dviju polaritetnih komponenata Babićeva ranog slikarstva. Ovdje je dokraja koloristički vedro ogoljen i ozvučen onaj isti tročlan crveno-smeđe-zeleno, koji se ugašen i mračan bio javio na "Crvenim stjegovima" (crvene zastave — smeđa masa ljudstva — zelenkaste fasade i nebo).

Ovim bilješkama ni približno nije iscrpljena problematika djela o kojima je bilo riječi, a još manje Babićeva djela u cjelini. Otvarajući neke nove mogućnosti njihova čitanja prvenstveno sam želio dokazati da jesu zaista umjetnička, jer su samo takva djela neiscrpna: samo se u njima po zakonu odnosa mikrokozmosa Slike i makrokozmosa Svijeta može beskonačno otkrivati uvijek novo lice spoznavajući usporedo i recipročno i Stvar i Stvarnost sve dublje i složenije. ×

Život umjetnosti, 29/30, 1980.

from which “Ilica 1928” was sketched and the “Black Flag” painted in 1916, and that this painting is likewise a historical note of the artist, made in the agitated years after the war.²³ In Croatia, nobody was thinking at that time about the movement of revolutionary masses in the same way — nobody except Krleža.²⁴

As for the last painting from this series, the “Ilički Square” (1929), the flags are here merely decorative surfaces, harmoniously distributed in the texture of the painting, echoing the terseness of Babić’s Spanish watercolours. The composition is dynamically balanced by the opposition between fleeing into the perspective point of the lower left third on the one hand and the serene square format with a relatively empty surface of the upper and the lower thirds on the other; a clear constructive basis for the apparent sketchiness and lightness.

Eventually, there is the red-white flag of the football field on the painting entitled “Football” from 1924, the key accent of its composition. The flag is the core from which the fan of the football field opens up and the nucleus in which everything converges, the only “hot spot” in the painting, the most accentuated “subject” of the composition. Isolated and alone in the foreground, against the broad surface of green grass, the red-white flag marking the goal line keeps all that passive mass of dull brown stands in tension with its magnetic force. In this exceptional and daring composition, even the visually “empty area” of the football field has become a passe-partout for the range of colouristic (the flag) and tonal (the stands) components as the two poles in Babić’s early painting. Here the same trio of red-brown-green, which was dim and obscure in the “Red Flags” (red flags — brown

masses of people — greenish façades and the sky) is vividly bare and resounding in terms of colour.

This text has far from exhausted the issues related to the discussed paintings, let alone Babić’s art as a whole. By opening some new possibilities of their interpretation, my wish was primarily to prove that they are indeed art, since only true works of art are inexhaustible: it is only in art that one can, in accordance with the law of the relationship between the microcosm of the Painting and the macrocosm of the World, always discover some new facet and obtain a proportional and reciprocal insight into both the Thing and the Reality in a more profound and complex way. ×

PRIJEVOD: Marina Miladinov

¹ Ljubo Babić died on 14 May 1974; late in the following year, a large retrospective exhibition was opened at the Modern Gallery in Zagreb, prepared by Jelena Uskoković. Along with her contribution, entitled “Prikaz djela Ljube Babića” [Overview of Works by Lj. B.], the catalogue included a “Preface” by Miroslav Krleža — Ljubo Babić, retrospektiva 1905-1969. Zagreb, 1975. The quoted passage is from Krleža’s text on p. III.

² See Krleža’s essays in: “Izlet u Rusiju” [Trip to Russia], published in 1925.

³ It is needless to prove that the constructivist visions of Russian painting vanguard would be much better “illustrations” of Krleža’s texts on revolution than, for example, those extremely popularised academic and idealized portraits of Lenin and the revolutionary events, for it is a contradiction in adjecto: “idealism”, “academicism”, and — revolution.

⁴ Op.cit., pp. V-X.

⁵ Catalogue of the retrospective exhibition, No. 75 (p. 52).

⁶ Sources of Babić’s scenographic approach and models for his scenographic solutions have been pointed out by S. Batašić: Videnja Ljube Babića [Visions of Lj. B.], pp. 5-42, Forum, January-February 1974. Studying the stage set at Künstlertheater in Munich, with its shallow stage (instead of the “illusionist box”) forced the scenographer, E. Stern, and architect P. Behrens (for the theatre director Reinhardt) to apply stylisation and sparing indication of stage elements; thus, Babić also began, “from the very first moment that he had set his foot into the theatre, to reflect in his scenographic creativity upon the dilemma related to the problem of space and the function of the stage; and he was solving that dilemma daringly and inventively for decades.” — On the parallel Russian scenography of the same period, see

the representative book by Denis Bablet, with the characteristic title “Les révolutions scéniques du XX siècle”, ed. by Société Internationale d’Art XX siècle,” Paris, 1975.

⁷ M. K., Izlet u Rusiju 1925 [Trip to Russia, 1925], Sarajevo, 1973, p. 178.

⁸ Op. cit., pp. 170-171. Here the author also mentions “the first attempts at scenographic synthesis with the futurist and Dadaist scenographers’ nonsense...”

⁹ See the catalogue, No. 275, 288, 327, 299, and 300.

¹⁰ See: D. Bablet, op.cit. (n. 5), ill. 155, 156, 166, 167, etc.

¹¹ Catalogue, No. 336-342. Thus, any overview of the world “revolution in scenography” will remain incomplete without Babić’s set for the “Twelfth Night”. For it was not just another solution in a row, but unique and unsurpassable. Despite the stylistic affinity among all examples in Bablet’s monograph, there is none that would have such a clear spatial concept. Among the examples with the formally similar cylindrical forms, mostly cubist images appear as a backlash: what used to be the analysis of volume on plain surface in the image, is returning in space as the “scale model of the image.”

¹² A. G. M., Misli i pogledi A. G. Matoša [Thoughts and views of A. G. M.], Zagreb, 1955, p. 16. (From: “Oko Zagreba i po Hrvatskoj” [Around Zagreb and Croatia], Zagreb, 1939, Vodom i kopnom [By water and by land], pp. 187-8).

¹³ That is why in the first years after the war, when Krleža was not taught in schools, because the teachers still did not know “what was his standing” (and it was not particularly good, since one of the three “rams” against which he had debated in his “Antibarbarus”, Radovan Zogović, was now in charge of culture), the favourite question in secondary-school literary circles was: what has remained at all after Krleža’s criticism, where were the “positive characters”?

- 1 Ljubo Babić umro je 14. 5. 1974. godine, a potkraj iduće godine otvorena je velika retrospektivna izložba u Modernoj galeriji u Zagrebu, koju je pripremila Jelena Uskoković. Uz njezin "Prikaz djela Ljube Babića" u katalogu je objavljen i "Predgovor" Miroslava Krleža. — Ljubo Babić, retrospektiva 1905-1969. Zagreb, 1975. Citirani je pasus Krležina teksta na str. III.
- 2 Vidi Krležine eseje u "Izlet u Rusiju", objavljene 1925. godine.
- 3 Treba li dokazivati da bi konstruktivističke vizije ruske likovne avangarde bile mnogo bolje "ilustracije" Krležinih tekstova o revoluciji no što su to, na primjer, svi toliko popularizirani akademski idealizirani portreti Lenjina i revolucionarnih zbivanja zajedno, jer je riječ o contradictio in adjecto: "idealizam", "akademizam" i — revolucija.
- 4 N. dj., str. V-X.
- 5 Katalog retrospektive br. 75 (str. 52).
- 6 Na izvore Babićeva scenografskog pristupa i uzore njegovih scenografskih rješenja upozorio je S. Batušić: Viđenja Ljube Babića, str. 5-42, Forum, siječanj—veljača 1974. Studij inscenacije u Künstlertheateru u Münchenu, s plitkom pozornicom (umjesto "iluzionističke kutije") prisiljavao je scenografe E. Sterna i arhitekta P. Behrensa (za redatelja Reinhardta) na stilizaciju i škrtu indikaciju elemenata scene, pa je i Babić "s dilemom o problematici prostora i funkcije pozornice u svojoj scenografskoj kreativnosti krenuo od prvog časa kako je zakoračio u teatar i rješava tu dilemu smiono i inventivno decenijama". — Ostvarenja ruske scenografije tog razdoblja, kao paralelu, vidi u reprezentativnom djelu Denisa Bableta, s karakterističnim naslovom "Les révolutions scéniques du XX siècle", izd. Société Internationale d'Art XX siècle, Paris 1975.
- 7 M. K., Izlet u Rusiju 1925, Sarajevo 1973, str. 178.
- 8 N. dj., str. 170/171. Spominju se i "prvi pokušaji scenske sinteze sa futurističkim i dadaističkim scenografskim besmisлом..."
- 9 Vidi katalog br. 275, 288, 327, te 299 i 300.
- 10 Vidi: D. Bablet, n. dj. (bilj. 5), slike 155, 156, 166, 167 ...
- 11 Katalog br. 336-342. Stoga je svaki pregled svjetske "scenske revolucije" bez Babićeve scenografije "Na tri kralja" nepotpun. Jer to nije bilo samo jedno u nizu rješenja, nego jedinstveno i neponovljivo. Unatoč stilskom srodstvu među svim primjerima u monografiji Bableta, nema ni jednog tako čisto prostorno koncipiranog. U nizu primjera gdje se javljaju formalno slični valjkasti oblici najčešće se variraju kubističke slike u povratnoj igri: ono što je na slici bila analiza volumena u plohi, vraća se prostoru kao "maketa slike".
- 12 A. G. M. Misli i pogledi A. G. Matoša, Zagreb 1955, str. 16. (Iz "Oko Zagreba i po Hrvatskoj", Zagreb 1939, Vodom i kopnom, str. 187/8).
- 13 Zbog toga je u prvim poslijeratnim godinama, kad je Krleža bio u školama prešućivan, jer profesori još nisu znali "kako stoji" (a nije stajao baš naročito kad je od tri "ovna" s kojima je polemizirao u "Antibarbarusu" jedan, Radovan Zogović, usmjeravao kulturu), tada je bilo omiljeno pitanje srednjoškolskih literarnih "kružoka": što uopće ostaje nakon Krležine kritike, gdje su "pozitivni likovi"? "Obračunavajući" i desno i lijevo Krleža praktički zastupa "nesvrstanost" i bori se za njezinu afirmaciju na intelektualnom, kulturnom i umjetničkom planu mnogo prije nego što će ona postati političkom idejom i praksom. A osvrćući se gnjevno na dogmatski komunizam i strukturu "vrebajućeg razuma", koji političkom diskvalifikacijom nastoji likvidirati kritiku i one koji drukčije misle, Krleža odlučno, iako implicitno, ustaje protiv "staljinističke dogmatike" i metoda po kojima su uz ostalo bili zatrti tragovi i ruskoj likovnoj avangardi. Vidi: S. Lasić, Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928-1952, Zagreb 1970, str. 212, 215, 216.
- 14 Katalog retrospektive br. 62, 78, 83, 84, 133, 137, 143, 147.
- 15 Ovu vezu dobro je uočila i J. Uskoković.
- 16 Ono se npr. opire većini "konstanta" koje Z. Tonković pokušava utvrditi za Babićev opus u cjelini. Vidi: Život umjetnosti, 22/23, Zagreb 1975.
- 17 Katalog br. 63 (kolor)
- 18 H. Sedlmayr, Jan Vermeer: Der Ruhm der Malkunst (str. 161-172) u Kunst und Wahrheit, zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte, Hamburg 1958, prevedeno u časopisu Život umjetnosti 24/25, 1976.
- 19 Vidi: Katalog izložbe "Le Fauvisme français et les debuts de l'Expressionisme allemand", Paris—München 1966. Sl. 35, 36, 37, 38, 49, 58, 59, 75. Veselim zastavama radovao se i naivni Carinik Rousseau, i ona daju obilježja nekim njegovim slikama: "Autoportret" (1895), "Sloboda poziva umjetnike na 22 Salon Nezavisnih" (1906), na primjer.
- 20 Na pariskoj izložbi fovizam—ekspresionizam bilo je zanimljivo usporediti kako isti motiv u drukčijem podneblju i s drugom intencijom viđen postaje suprotnog ugođaja: na Henckelovoj slici "Luka u Stralsundu" (1912) unatoč žarkim bojama kuća i gata, u središtu slike i pažnje, pa time i dojma, velika su prljavosmeđa, gotovo crna, ovješena jadra. (Kat. br. 157)
- 21 U formalnom pogledu zamah i pokret (pa i vizuru) ponovit će Babić samo u monumentalnom pejzažu "Tulove grede", 1954, inače potpuno drukčijeg, sunčanog, optimističkog ugođaja i značaja. — Iako je pitanje vlasništva i "sudbine" slike kao predmeta obično nelikovni problem, u slučaju "Crne zastave" i ono ima specifično značenje. Sliku je (za tada golemu sumu, kojoj nije bila dorasla ni galerija) kupio jedan "privatnik": slikar Josip Vaništa (na dug). U njegovu malom stanu, najskromnijoj suvremenoj stambenoj konfekciji, ova slika seže gotovo od poda do stropa i jedina je Slika u sobi, kao što je nekoć Biblija bila jedina Knjiga u kući vjernika. Ovaj odlučan izbor jednog od najboljih majstora tonalnih rafinmana u modernom hrvatskom slikarstvu, pobornika i pripadnika "apstrakcije" (koju Babić nikad nije prihvatio), još jednom dokazuje izuzetno visoku likovnu vrijednost Babićeva djela, ali ujedno svjedoči i o poštovanju koje je Babić kao slikar, kritičar, književnik i čovjek nepodijeljeno uživao među Učenicima. Babić je to saznao kad smo o njemu snimali film i bio je duboko ganut, kao što je i rekao u intervjuu sarajevskom "Svijetu": "A sad, pri kraju, da vam se pohvalim, i to posebno istaknem, moju meni najdražu sliku 'Crna zastava', bez mog znanja, kupio je jedan sadašnji veliki talenat" ("Svijet", "Iskušenja i pod streći", razgovor vodila B. Peko, Sarajevo).
- 22 Poznato je i često citirano da se Babićev atelje nalazio u Ilici, ali budući da je to bilo na drugom mjestu (br. 52, na sjevernoj strani u dvorištu), pokušavao sam, uzaludno, konzultirati različite stručne izvore informacija da doznam kako je Babić dospio na prozor koji je postao tako sudbonosan za njegovo djelo. Napokon, udova slikareva, gospođa Cvijeta Babić, rekla mi je da je Ljubo pričao kako je prijateljevao s Hinkom Juhnkom, i ovaj mu je često ustupao svoj atelje u Ilici br. 37. - Istražujući ono malo podataka što je sabrano o Juhnku, na što se s pravom žalio M. Peić, tj. da "80 godina nakon

- By “settling accounts” left and right, Krleža was practically endorsing the principle of “non-alliance” and fighting for its affirmation in the field of intellect, culture, and art much before it would become the leading political idea and practice. And by spilling sulphur on dogmatic communism and the structure of “lurking reason”, which sought to abolish criticism and all those that thought differently by discrediting them politically, Krleža raised his voice decisively, although implicitly, against “Stalinist dogmatism” and the methods that had, among other things, erased Russian vanguard in visual arts. See: S. Lasić, *Sukob na književnoj ljevici 1928-1952 [Conflict within the literary Left]*, Zagreb, 1970, pp. 212, 215, and 216.
- ¹⁴ Catalogue of the retrospective exhibition, No. 62, 78, 83, 84, 133, 137, 143, and 147.
- ¹⁵ This link has also been observed by J. Uskoković.
- ¹⁶ For example, it resists most of the “constants” that Z. Tonković has sought to establish for Babić’s opus as a whole. See: *Život umjetnosti*, 22/23, Zagreb, 1975.
- ¹⁷ Catalogue, No. 63 (in colour).
- ¹⁸ H. Sedlmayr, *Jan Vermeer: Der Ruhm der Malkunst* (pp. 161-172), in: *Kunst und Wahrheit, zur Theorie und Methode der Kunstgeschichte*, Hamburg, 1958, translated in *Život umjetnosti*, 24/25, 1976.
- ¹⁹ See the catalogue of the exhibition “Le Fauvisme français et les debuts de l’Expressionisme allemand”, Paris-Munich, 1966. Ill. 35, 36, 37, 38, 49, 58, 59, and 75. Vivid flags also delighted the naïve painter Rousseau Le Douanier and they appear on some of his paintings, such as the “Self-Portrait” (1895) or the “Liberty Invites Artists to the 22th Salon of the Independent” (1906).
- ²⁰ At the exhibition on Fauvism and expressionism in Paris, it was interesting to compare how the same motif could acquire opposite connotations when seen in a different region and with a different intent: on Henckel’s “Port of Stralsund” (1912), despite bright colours of houses and piers, the large, dirty brown, almost black hanging sails are in the focus of attention and thus also impression. (Catalogue, No. 157).
- ²¹ As for the form, Babić repeated this momentum and movement (and even vision) only in the monumental landscape from 1954 entitled “Tulove Grede”, which has a completely different, sunny and optimistic atmosphere and significance.
- Even though the question of ownership and “destiny” of a painting as object is largely a non-artistic issue, it has a specific meaning in the case of the “Black Flag”. The painting was (for a sum that was huge at the time, more than a gallery could pay) bought by a “private person”: painter Josip Vaništa (on loan). In his small apartment, an utterly modest product of residential confection, this painting reaches from the floor to the ceiling and is the only Painting in the room, just as the Bible was once the only Book in a Christian house. This radical choice by one of the best masters of tonal refinements in modern Croatian painting, a partisan and representative of “abstraction” (that Babić had never accepted), once again proves an exceptionally high artistic value of Babić’s work, as well as the respect that Babić enjoyed among his Disciples as painter, critic, literary author, and person. Babić was informed about this when we were making a film about him and he was deeply moved, which he expressed in an interview to the Sarajevo journal “Svijet”: “And now, at the end, I should mention with pride and especially point out that my ‘Black Flag’, my favourite painting, was bought without my knowledge by a great talent of today.” (“Svijet”, “Iskušenja i podstreci” [Challenges and motivations], interview by B. Peko, Sarajevo).
- ²² It is known and often mentioned that Babić’s atelier was located in Ilica, but it was on another locality (No. 52, on the northern side and in the backyard), I was trying in vain to consult various expert sources of information in order to find out how Babić reached the window that was so significant for his work. Eventually, the painter’s widow, Mrs Cvijeta Babić, told me that Ljubo was befriended with Hinko Juhn and that he was frequently using his atelier at No. 37 Ilica. – Having investigated those few data that have been collected about Juhn, on which M. Peić has lamented with right that “80 years after his birth and 20 years after his death, there are barely 2-3 small articles in his folder” (M. P. “Umjetnik tih i čedan, gotovo nečujan” [An artist quiet and modest, almost invisible], *Vjesnik*, 10 February 1970), I concluded that Babić and Juhn were not only linked as belonging to the same generation (Juhn was only a year younger), but they occupied an equally prominent place within that generation of Croatian artists. In the same year in which Matoš praised Babić as the most talented painter of all, “Savremenik” claimed that Juhn was “the most gifted sculptor of the younger generation” (“Savremenik” No. 6, 1913, p. 386) and “Zagrebački dnevnik” again mentioned them together in 1922: “When Hrvatski Proletni Salon was established, we could see Juhn as a prophet of modern art along with Babić, Miše, Šulentić, etc.” (“Naši kipari, slikari i grafičari” [Our sculptors, painters and graphic artists], 4 February 1922). They had more things in common: their love for art of the past (Juhn studied in Florence) and a high level of culture. Without wishing to enter into a deeper analysis, I believe that, along with the early-Renaissance component pointed out by Peić (Desiderioda Settignano), some of Juhn’s ceramics reveal the influence of mannerism.
- ²³ When writing on the “Red Flags”, Z. Posavac expressed his doubts about the street depicted: “... perhaps we might recognize Mesnička or Radićeva Streets in Zagreb” (Z. P. *Poetika i disciplina slikarskog sklada [Poetics and discipline of harmony in painting]*, p. 22, “15 dana”, 1975. No. 1/2).
- ²⁴ Babić’s paintings reveal themselves as illustrations of Krleža’s motifs especially if we observe them in chronological sequence and superposition: the glowing lava of agitated multitude in the “Red Flags” cover the lost well-dressed strollers under the “Black Flag” and wipes them off the face of the earth... — According to the memories of Miroslav Krleža and a statement of Vaništa, inspiration for the “Black Flag” was the mourning after the death of Franz Joseph († 21 November 1916); that death in the middle of World War I indeed symbolized the death of the Monarchy and heralded the end of a social order. — By the way: in that very year of 1916, the important, though yet insufficiently valued tempera painting by Mirko Rački, the “Austro-Hungarian Monarchy”, was made in the characteristic black-yellow-green palette. This original personification occupies a prominent place not only within Croatian symbolic and political painting, but also within visual arts of the entire Monarchy. See the reproduction in the monograph by J. Uskoković, Mirko Rački, Zagreb, 1979, p. 194 (catalogue, No. 120).

rođenja, 120 godina nakon smrti u njegovom fasciklicu nema ni dva-tri člančića" (M. P. "Umjetnik tih i čedan, gotovo nečujan", Vjesnik, 10. 2. 1970), uspio sam ipak zaključiti da Babića i Juhna nije vezala samo generacijska pripadnost (Juhn je bio samo godište mlađi) već su zauzimali i podjednako istaknuto mjesto unutar te generacije hrvatskih slikara. Iste godine kad Matoš pozdravlja Babića, kao najtalentiranijeg slikara, u "Savremeniku" se tvrdi da je Juhn "najdarovitiji vajar mlađe generacije" ("Savremenik" br. 6, 1913, str. 386), a "Zagrebački dnevnik" 1922. citira ih opet zajedno na prvom mjestu: "Kad se osnovao Hrvatski proljetni salon vidimo Juhna kao profeta moderne umjetnosti uz Babića, Mišea, Šulentića itd." ("Naši kipari, slikari i grafičari", 4. 2. 1922). Zajednička im je također bila ljubav prema umjetnosti prošlosti (Juhnov studij u Firenci), kao i visoka razina kulture. Ne ulazeći dublje u analizu, mislim da uz ranorenesansnu komponentu utjecaja koju naglašava Peić (Desiderio da Settignano) neke Juhnove keramike odaju tragove manirizma.

²³ Pišući o "Crvenim stjegovima" Z. Posavac je izrazio sumnju s obzirom na ulicu koja je prikazana: "... možda prepoznajemo

zagrebačku Mesničku ili Radićevu ulicu" (Z. P. Poetika i disciplina slikarskog sklada, str. 22, "15 dana", 1975. br. 1/2).

²⁴ Babićeve slike postaju ilustracija krležijanskih motiva naročito ako ih promatramo u vremenskom slijedu i superpoziciji: lava užarenog pobunjenog mnoštva "Crvenih stjegova" prelila se preko izgubljenih otmjenih šetača podno "Crne zastave" i zbrisala s lica zemlje... — Po sjećanju Miroslava Krleže, a kazivanju Vanište, povod "Crnoj zastavi" bila je korota za smrt cara Franje Josipa († 21. 11. 1916); ta smrt u jeku svjetskog rata zaista je simbolizirala smrt Monarhije i najavila kraj jednog društva. — Usput: iste, 1916. godine, nastala je i značajna, dosad nedovoljno valorizirana tempera Mirka Račkoga "Austro-ugarska Monarhija" karakteristične crno-žuto-zelene game. Ova originalno zamišljena personifikacija zauzima istaknuto mjesto ne samo u hrvatskom simboličko-političkom slikarstvu, nego i u sklopu likovnih umjetnosti čitave Monarhije. Vidi reprodukciju u monografiji J. Uskoković, Mirko Rački, Zagreb 1979, str. 194 (katalog br. 120).