

RE-EVALUATION OF THE BARBARIAN AND THE PRIMITIVE IN THE (PRE) AVANT-GARDE*

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The heteroimage of the Southeast European semiperiphery was subjected for centuries to geopolitical stereotypes of the Slav, either as a noble savage, as in the works of Fortis and Herder in the 18th and 19th centuries, or as a political “powder keg”, as a Balkan barbarian in more recent perspective. In such a geopolitical imaginary, the Balkans were perceived (described) primarily negatively, representing not only an Oriental Other, but above all a European semi-Other, a barbaric and primitive “Other within” (Todorova). The image of the “noble savage” in the exotic vision, which sets the world in binary oppositions, is used and reinterpreted by the artists of the (pre) Avant-Garde. The movement’s inherent impulse to resist and re-evaluate traditional aesthetics, history and institutions, as well as to transgressively redefine both the instances of authorship and the criteria for creating and evaluating artworks, is evident in the way barbarism and primitivism are used as counterparts to the bourgeois normative value system. Their artistic texts and performances have an inherent orientation towards the primitive and the barbaric, which are traditionally presented in opposition to Western culture and civilisation, i.e. the politics of globalisation. At the level of artistic transgression, this transposed “otherness” is treated as a dialogical opponent, an object of fascination and identification, and a site of appropriation of time. This article deals with the way the primitive and the barbaric were treated in the Yugoslav avant-garde, either in some collective undertakings (Zenitism, Surrealism) or in individual

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creations (Ujević, Krleža). This topic will be addressed in three steps: 1. in the context of reflections on literature as a response to geopolitical prejudices (stereotypes); more specifically, in the concepts of the centre (especially Eurocentrism), civilisation and primitivism; 2. in a consideration of the use of primitivism, barbarism and bohemianism as expressions of aesthetic and public (political) resistance to regulated social practises and value systems; 3. an interpretation of these phenomena in the context of either imaginary or actual literary and social transformations.

Keywords: (Pre) Avant-Garde literature, Barbarian, Primitive, transfer of ideas, re-evaluation, social transformation

In the earlier history of literature and culture, the opposition between civilized and barbaric determined the difference and status of high culture and literature. The introduction of elements of “low” culture, style and dialect in the 19th century, after the process of canonization of national literature, is connected to the acceptance and development of the modality of irony in modernistic expression. This new use of literature also means some kind of “barbarization” with the use of popular and dialectal elements in the creation of the modern novel¹. At the turn of the century, these elements took part in an inherent impulse of the avant-garde to resist and re-evaluate traditional aesthetics, history and institutions. Transgressively redefining both the instances of authorship and the criteria of creation and evaluation of works of art, those impulses were manifested in the manner in which barbarism and primitivism are used as a counterpart to the bourgeois normative value system. Therefore, artistic texts and performances in the avant-garde display an inherent orientation towards the primitive and the barbarian, which are traditionally presented as being opposed to Western culture and civilisation, i.e. politics of globalisation. At the level of artistic transgression, such a transmitted “otherness” is treated as a dialogic adversary, an object of fascination and identification, and a place of appropriation of time, which is denoted as regressive in the swing of modernism and loss of the artistic aura (W. Benjamin). This paper deals with the ways in which the primitive and the barbaric were treated in the Yugoslav avant-garde, either in some collective undertakings (*Zenitism*, *Surrealism*) or individual creations (Ujević, Krleža). This will be done in three steps: 1. by putting the broader scope of this theme in the context of understanding literature as a response to geopolitical prejudices, more concretely

¹ Aleksandar Flaker, *Stilske formacije* (Zagreb: Liber, 1976), 198. Explicating this process, Flaker (1976) interprets narrative processes in Ante Kovačić's novel *U registraturi* [In the Registry]. For a more detailed view on the formation of the canon in Croatian 19th century literature see Marina Protrka, *Stvaranje književne nacije. Oblikovanje kanona u hrvatskoj književnoj periodici 19. stoljeća* (Zagreb: FFPress, 2008).

dealing with the concepts of centre (Eurocentrism in particular), civilisation and primitivism; 2. by approaching aesthetical and public resistance in the avant-garde using primitivism, barbarism, and bohemianism? (Zenit, Ujević, Krleža); 3. by interpreting these phenomena in the previously mentioned context of literary and social change.

Geopolitics, Literature and Socio-Political Change

Modern literature has always been a part of wide commercial and communicational networks and connected to the invention of new technologies for its transmission. As Vladimir Biti pointed out: “Communicational, mercantile, monetary, and spiritual mobility foster and accelerate each other. To pick up on just three well-known illustrations, Paul Gilroy emphasised the role of slave shipping in the establishment of Western modernity (Gilroy 1993), Benedict Anderson pointed out that print-capitalism enabled growing numbers of people to relate to others in profoundly new ways (Anderson 1991: 36), and Arjun Appadurai clarified to what extent the rise of the mass media increased the influence of imagination in the shaping of global processes (Appadurai 1998: 54). This is how the artistic subjects that feel injured by their countries’ state of exception sense the need and get the opportunity to co-create a spatial, temporal, cultural and/or political ‘elsewhere’. By compulsively meeting this need and using this opportunity, their literary works enter the process of worlding.”² In this process Biti claims: “Literature opens itself to distant otherness in order to heal the traumatic experience of the indistinction characteristic of its authors’ dispossessed present.”³

For centuries, the auto/imagination of the semi-periphery of South-East Europe was subject to the geopolitical stereotypes of the Slav either as a noble savage, as in 18th and 19th century works by Fortis and Herder, or as a Balkan barbarian in imaginary developed from the eighteenth century to the present, as Maria Todorova demonstrated in her seminal book *Imagining the Balkans* (1997). In such a geopolitical imagination, the Balkans were mainly perceived (described) in negative terms that were not a mere oriental Other, but rather and more specifically a European half-other; Todorova’s “Other within” is in an interstitial position, being neither here nor there and therefore the more harassing. On the other hand, in the burgeoning field of postcolonialism in Central and Eastern Europe, Janusz Korek claims that “the

² Vladimir Biti, *Post-imperial Literature: Translatio Imperii in Kafka and Coetzee*. Culture & Conflict, 20, De Gruyter: Berlin/Boston, 2021), 9.

³ Biti, *Post-imperial Literature*, 10.

category of ‘Orientalism’ could also be applied with some success to Western scientific discourses on the subject of Central and Eastern Europe⁴ for, like Edward W. Said’s ‘East’, Central and Eastern Europe have also been epitomised “by sensualism, irrationality, traditionalism or conservatism, despotism, primitivism, compliance and femininity”⁵. Therefore, similarly to the global South and East, in the Western imagination, as Domínguez and Dziub claim⁶, Europe’s East and South regions function as heterotopias (Foucault 1984/1986, 26), places “linked to slices in time – which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies.”⁷ As they explained in more detail “the image of the ‘Noble Savage’ re-evaluates the simple and non-technological lifestyle of Pacific and American natives in terms of innate morality and unspoilt innocent honesty. Herder’s ethnotyping of the Slavic nations, at roughly the same time, praises their meekness and gentle emotionality⁸. These exoticist appreciations also remain powerful tropes until today. Against them, Europe stands out as a continent caught up in a rigid and artificial over-refinement that risks losing sight of intuitive human morality. Rousseau’s and Herder’s ethnotypes obviously form part of a Counter-Enlightenment discourse; accordingly, Romanticism is marked by a strong tendency towards a positive, exoticist valorisation of Europe’s Others.”⁹ Ambivalences in the Western imaginary that produce a negative or disconcerting Other are explicated by Mary Shelley in her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), and by Robert L. Stevenson in *Dr Jekyll and*

⁴ Janusz Korek, “Central and Eastern Europe from a Postcolonial Perspective”. In *From Sovietology to Postcoloniality: Poland and Ukraine from a Postcolonial Perspective*, edited by Janusz Korek (Stockholm: Södertörns högskolan, 2007), 14.

⁵ Korek, “Central and Eastern Europe from a Postcolonial Perspective”, 14.

⁶ Vladimir Biti, Joep Leersen and Vivian Liska, eds., *The Idea of Europe: The Clash of Projections* (Leiden: Brill, 2021).

⁷ “Being temporally and spatially ‘out of joint’, these spaces constitute a special type of heterochronies, creating ‘a new kind of temporal heterotopia’ which ‘has been invented: vacation villages, such as those Polynesian villages that offer a compact three weeks of primitive and eternal nudity to the inhabitants of the cities.’ In such ‘vacation villages’, ‘the two forms of heterotopias [...] come together’, because everything works there ‘as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge’ (Foucault 1984/1986, 26)” (Biti, Leersen, Liska, *The Idea of Europe*, 162).

⁸ More details about Herder’s philosophical views and his significance in Slavic national movements can be found in Nikola Ivanišin, “J. G. Herder i ilirizam”. *Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru* 2, no. 2 (1963): 196–225, Wolfgang Kessler, “Die Südslawen und Herder. Einige Anmerkungen”. *Festschrift für Wolfgang Gesemann*, Band 3, *Beiträge zur slawischen Sprachwissenschaft und Kulturgeschichte* (München, 1986): 157–175, and Vlasta Švoger, “Recepcija Herdera u hrvatskome narodnom preporodu na temelju Danice ilirske”. *Časopis za suvremenu povijest*, 30, no. 3 (1998): 455–478.

⁹ Biti, Leersen, Liska, *The Idea of Europe*, 91.

Mr Hyde (1886) and Joseph Conrad in *Heart of Darkness* (1899). According to Leersen, “A ‘Heart of Darkness’ discourse takes hold, in tandem with a ‘Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde’ view of the human personality: under the veneer of European civility, there lurks a frightful, atavistic inner savagery”¹⁰.

Aesthetic and Public Resistance in the Avant-Garde: Primitivism; Barbarism, and Bohemianism?

Assimilating and rejecting previously normalised cultural and public binarities at the same time, some avant-garde artists reinterpret them as part of a cultural and geopolitical imaginary. Some of them are especially concerned about primitive and barbaric gestures, so they re-evaluate them, and use them as an important part of their artistic procedures. Interest in the irrational, the unconscious, the mythical and the primitive became evident at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century. They are further used and developed in literature as well as in the art of Surrealism, Futurism and other avant-garde movements. Futurism used primitivism not only as a source for their artistic work, but also, according to Sartini Blum, to celebrate the inherently “contradictory dynamics of progress”¹¹. With the same motivation, the Zenitists and Ljubomir Micić, first in Zagreb, then in Belgrade from 1921 to 1926, explicitly rejected the negative connotation of the terms barbarians, Balkans, and savages. In *Zenit* international magazine, they established the pan-Balkan idea of new primitivism as a critique of European civilisation and traditional values. Barbarogeny (barbarogenij) was created as a counterweight to Western artificiality and utilitarianism, its false civilisation that produced the horrors of the First World War.

¹⁰ Biti, Leersen, Liska, *The Idea of Europe*, 92. Vladimir Biti (*Post-imperial*, 158) also examines the imperial borderlands, which are portrayed as populated by backward and underdeveloped noble savages, and interprets them in the context of the crises of the empires and their post-imperial consequences. As the zones of “national indifference” (Zahra 2010) they become, according to Elisabeth Povinelli, “reservoirs of suppressed possibilities that distribute their potentiality into the aggregate that they are (an unacknowledged) part of, setting in motion its disarticulation (Povinelli 2011: 3–4; 11–13; in Biti, *Post-imperial*, 34)”. According to Biti, they act as “internal ‘pockets of resistance’ to the imposed unification as the direct outcomes of the ‘egalitarian discrimination’ genuine to modernization’s globalization.” Following Agamben, Esposito and Butler, he finds them as a part of “the collateral effects of the production of a homogeneous human world”, some kind of “the would-be humans, the spectral humans, and the non-humans who are prevented from becoming legible within the established space of humanity.” Biti, *Post-imperial*, 34.

¹¹ See in: Zrinka Božić, *The Community in Avant-Garde Literature and Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 60.

Following that Micić presents Zenitism as “the Balkan totaliser of new life and new art.” In the manner of Nietzsche, they advocate a new birth of Europe that “can only be reborn, inseminated with crude force and new seeds, but cannot experience a renaissance of its own.”¹² The anti-European and anti-civilisation movement stood up against the musealisation of culture and mediocrity, and stood up for art which is an expression of life. As well as in? *Zenit* magazine, Micić promoted similar ideas in the book *Hardi! A la Barbarie* from 1928 illustrated by Branko Ve Poljanski; *Zéniton, L’Amant de Fata Morgana* from 1930 and *Barbarogénie le Décivilisateur* from 1938, which was translated into Serbian in 1993 under the title *Barbarogenije decivilizator*.

In the *Zenit* manifesto (1922; February, issue 11 p. 1), this re-evaluation is formulated as follows:

- We take off Molière’s fragrant and greasy wig: what is left is the head of a royal and court supplier of folly.
- We tear Dante’s Catholic black cassock: what is left is the nudity of a church Lucifer who wants Paradise only for himself and Hell for everyone else.
- We pluck Shakespeare’s Italian beard: what is left is Lord Bacon’s pathos and the homosexus of Danish Prince Hamlet with his pathetic ‘To be or not to be.’
- We take out Kant’s brain and cut his navel: What is left is common sense of Germanic philosophy on the tips of our dull nails.¹³

The very same issue calls for the assertion of Balkan art and Balkan culture. It is emphasised that “Historia NON vitae magistra!”¹⁴ and brotherhood with Dostoevsky’s character Raskolnikov is asserted. The subtitle of the manifesto stresses: “Zenitism is liberation from all the fetters of the academia and recognised lies of European Classicism and Barnumian civilisation.”¹⁵

Although things later turned out quite differently and came to an inglorious end in Micić’s last decades of life, his project of Zenitism in the form of a manifesto proclaimed the utopian idea of an international, supranational art that sees its mission as a humanistic anti-war decision and preaches the man of art. The first issue of *Zenit* bearing Micić’s signature presents Zenitism as “an abstract meta-cosmic expressionism”, which asserts Man and art. In

¹² Ljubomir Micić, “Zenitizam kao balkanski totalizator novog života i nove umetnosti“. *Zenit*, Zagreb, no. 21 (1922): 1.

¹³ Ljubomir Micić, “Zenit Manifest“. *Zenit*, Zagreb, no. 11 (1922), 1.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Zenit issue 24, the Balkans are declared the sixth continent belonging to the poets of Zenitism. As emphasised by Dijana Metlić¹⁶, its definition stems from Ivan Goll's French anthology of modern poetry (*Les Cinq Continents*), which contains an overview of Yugoslav poetry in its Slavic section. Irina Subotić highlights Micić's advocacy of a new art as a representation of its time, and at the same time art as a creator of that time (...) stressing the importance of the principle of non-mimeticity, freedom of creation, secondary nature of the form and the precedence of "the spiritual – abstract – absolute." (...) He sees art as a product of society and as a purpose of society... sending the message 'Art to All People! All!'¹⁷

Internationalism and cosmopolitanism are a logical consequence of such a perspective: "We are entering a new decade today, and we must cross the borders of Yugoslavia. In the last decade, we were beyond the borders as soldiers of war and of murder for the people's liberty. From now on, we want to be soldiers of all-man Culture, Love and Brotherhood. We enter as hurt and transformed people. We enter as crippled and wounded people, but with the strength of those who suffered, who were humiliated, who were stoned on the pillory of Europe. Let our entry into the third decade of the 20th century be a fight for humanity through art."¹⁸

Turning to primitivism and barbarianism in the avant-garde impulse for "re-evaluating all values" at least in the first years of the movement for Zenitists meant turning to the sources of creativity. Through art, they could elevate demolished humanity towards the zenith of a new Easter – as the 1922 manifesto stipulates. Later conflicts with the authorities first in Zagreb, then in Belgrade¹⁹ contributed to a stronger national profiling of the movement which, finally, ended up relying on completely different prerequisites than those of its beginnings.

¹⁶ Dijana Metlić, "The Europe-Balkan and primitive-civilised antinomies in Micić's *Zenit* Magazine", *Zbornik radova Akademije umetnosti* no. 9 (2021): 46-67.

¹⁷ Irina Subotić, "The Visual Culture of the *Zenit* Periodical and Its Publications", in *Zenit 1921-1926*, ed. Видосава Голубовић, Ирина Суботић., Народна библиотека Србије Институт за књижевност и уметност, (Загреб: СКД Просвјета, 2008), 478.

¹⁸ *Zenit* (1921): 1–2.

¹⁹ A total of 43 issues of *Zenit* were published. Micić's 1922 sojourn in Berlin influenced the shaping of its watershed 11th issue. Disagreements with the Croatian cultural authorities caused the editorial board to move to Belgrade in 1923. However, problems soon appeared there as well, and the final issue of *Zenit* was prohibited in 1926 pursuant to the State Protection Act on account of the article entitled "Zenitism Viewed through the Prism of Marxism." It is assumed that Micić was the author of the article published under the pseudonym M. Rasinov. Towards the end of that year, Micić emigrated from Belgrade first to Italy to avoid arrest and then, in January 1927, to France with Marinetti's assistance, where he stayed until 1936.

Bohemianism, Barbarogeny and Re-evaluation of All Values

The same year, 1925, when Micić was trying to establish his own movement as an artistic activity, he sent an open letter to Tin Ujević, whom he knew very well, not only because of his publicity, but also because of their joint work and correspondence. In the letter, he attacks Ujević, who was then called the Yugoslav “king of the bohemians” and resents his bohemian lifestyle. In the “Open Letter to the Elevated Poet and Harlequin of the Bourgeoisie Augustin Ujević” in Belgrade, Micić criticises Ujević’s public appearance and claims that he twists and betrays artistic status with his bohemian lifestyle. He therefore calls on Ujević to change his habits and turn away from those who make him a public attraction. Micić sees the desecration of the dignity of the artist (sic!), in Ujević’s public appearance, showing that he did not regard the bohemian lifestyle as an expression of independence and artistic opposition to the petty-bourgeois mentality, but as its servant, i.e. as a “harlequin”.

On the other hand, it is known that bohemianism developed out of resistance to and in protest against the norms of civil society. In artistic and cultural life in general, as a lifestyle and phenomenon, bohemianism was perceived as almost primitive and barbaric: at the same time socially deprived and existentially authentic. At the time discussed, at the beginning of the 20th century, it was recognised by the avant-garde movements as the expression of a project that connects life and art in an authentic way. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979), Dick Hebdige argues that subcultural styles, such as body language or clothing, act as cultural statements, everyday “performances” that run counter to the behaviour of the status quo. Hebdige states that “style interrupt[s] the process of ‘normalization’” thereby “offend[ing] the silent majority” and “contradict[ing] the myth of consensus”²⁰. In a similar vein, Sarah Burns²¹ argues that “the construction of bohemia involved fabricating a stage or an area for its display,” asserting that it was “a kind of media-made theatre, operating in a space adjacent to that of ordinary life, but distanced from it, either by theatrical make-believe or nostalgic memory-making”. According to MacDonald²², the bohemian acts “as a radical whose stage was wherever he liked, a concept that informs all four of the primary texts”. Therefore, their performances in public life function as an extension of their artistic work. Ujević’s public appearances in this and subsequent periods are part of the realisation of authorship, which takes place as a continuation of artistic habitus

²⁰ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge, 1979), 18.

²¹ Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 247.

²² John Brad MacDonald, *Ambivalent Ambitions: The fin-de-siècle Bohemian’s Self-Division* (Montreal: Department of English McGill University, 2016), 8.

in the public sphere. His public performances of authorship, which, as I have already shown, take place “in the spaces of the café and the street, become statements of the author through which Ujević comes into conflict with the logic of capital, political dogmas and his own stigmatisation.”²³ For Ujević, bohemia and poetry are two sides of the same coin – authentic art that does not recognise parasitism, lies or imitation. In his essay “Sumrak poezije” [The Twilight of Poetry], using banking and money terminology in brackets (Otkinuta glava jednog predujma [The Severed Head of an Advance Payment]), he connects the advance payment to anticipation enabling artists to attain knowledge much sooner than it becomes visible to society at large. In that sense, he emphasises:

“Unlike Benedetto Croce, who said that art is ‘an auroral form of knowledge’, i.e. a beginner’s path for revealing the truth, my independent judgement is that art is crepuscular, a final form of knowledge. Rational difficulties encountered by the human spirit in the attempt to resolve riddles of the universe are nicely and harmoniously eliminated in art, which is itself a justified form of religion and deserves the honorary title of cosmic sociology. There is a skill in art that deletes or hides the difficulties of thought. All extrapolations, all anticipations of science are based on similar skills, on the ‘art’ of drawing a conclusion. In addition to this role played by art in philosophy and science, there are other roles, which it plays, which it creates in practice, in politics, in the creation of social olins²⁴ and certainties.”²⁵

Here and elsewhere, Ujević suggests that writing is the capacity to anticipate knowledge and existence, the profound private and political foundations for social and aesthetic change that eventually culminate in the final “socialisation of art” and its absorption by everyday life²⁶. In this sense, in the essay “Izvor, bit i kraj poezije” [The Source, Essence and End of Poetry] (1934)²⁷ he rejects somnambulist and surrealist elements in poetry as an escape from “the

²³ Marina Protrka Štimec, *Politike autorstva. Kanon, zajednica i pamćenje u novijoj hrvatskoj književnosti* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2022), 82.

²⁴ Ujević here probably made this word “olin” as an eponym connected with one of the richest families in the USA. Manufacturer and distributor of chemicals and ammunition, the Olin Corporation has amassed millions since the end of the 19th century.

²⁵ Tin Ujević, “Sumrak poezije. (Otkinuta glava jednog predujma)”. [The Twilight of Poetry. The Severed Head of an Advance Payment]. *Novo doba* 12, (Split), December 24, 1929, no. 312: 18-20, in Tin Ujević: *Sabrana djela* [Collected Works], vol. VI, *Ljudi za vratima gostionice, Skalpel kaosa* (Zagreb: Znanje, 1965), 382.

²⁶ Ujević, “Sumrak poezije”, 392.

²⁷ Tin Ujević, “Izvor, bit i kraj poezije” [The Source, Essence and End of Poetry], in *Sabrana djela* [Collected Works], vol. IX, (Zagreb: Znanje, 1965), 237-240.

gloomy ground of reality”.²⁸ In contrast, he believes that modern poetry “of the cult of nature” should, through necessary changes, “arrive at the cult of social ethics, and this should not be manipulated or entirely artificial.” In this way, it will achieve the seemingly paradoxical effect of transcending reality through the consumption of reality. As an authentic literary existence, bohemism here marks artistic freedom in creativity, resistance to mercantilism and the logic of market capitalism, which aims to affirm an art that participates in the movement towards the imaginary horizon of utopian projection. True bohemians are the intellectual and artistic avant-garde: at once supporters of art and socially visible opponents of the oppression of an unjust social order.²⁹

Miroslav Krleža, an author whose entry into literature in the second decade of the 20th century seemed like a primeval force of nature, also follows this line, using the barbaric and primitive and making poetic choices that are linked to social awareness and political impact. In his manifesto “Hrvatska književna laž”³⁰ he too affirms the art proclaimed by Micić as an independent sixth continent and directs the interest in his literary work to creativity and artistic creation as a primal, transformative human force. He resolutely calls for burning the foundations of “the Croatian literary lie” – referring both to the Croatian Revival, which revived no one, and to the ornamentalism of modernism and the “lie of national heroism”. Like that of Micić, whom he vehemently opposed, Krleža’s judgement represents the optimal projection of the internationalism of “the Russian Commune”, the event that radically reassessed the existing symbolic, economic and political order (cf. Aleksandar Flaker). In the manifesto, the concept of the people is the fundamental antithesis of the Croatian literary (and artistic) lie. The people are described as “a huge mass dominated by sinister drives”, an unrecognised and unpredictable “blind monster” that will play a decisive role in “the downfall of all the old values”.³¹

In these examples, literature is established as a response to geopolitical constellations; to the dispossession of individual and collective trauma – towards causes and effects of the First World War, related to the mass media, industrialisation and capitalism. In these cases, the reaction is not necessarily observed as an explicit reference to concrete social and political issues,

²⁸ Ujević, “Izvor, bit i kraj poezije”, 240.

²⁹ For more information about bohemism, economy and social justice cf. Marina Protrka Štimec, “Boema u avangardi: ekonomija stvaralaštva i kapital”, in *Ekonomija i književnost*. Zbornik radova, ed. Marijana Hameršak, Maša Kolanović and Lana Molvarec (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2022), 208-221.

³⁰ Miroslav Krleža, “Hrvatska književna laž” [The Croatian Literary Lie], *Plamen*, no. 1 (1919), 1.

³¹ Krleža, “Hrvatska književna laž”, 1.

although the engagement of Zenit (Micić), Ujević or Krleža is also visible on this level. What is at stake here is the creation of literature, art in general, as a privileged sphere of realisation of human potential for creation, and against destruction, for creativity, individuality, dedication and uniqueness, and against uniformity, alienation and deprivation. The interest in the mechanisms of creation, in form and cut, in the work that defies organicity, is an opportunity for art as life and for life as art to absorb and transform habitual perceptions and separations, to create resistance and the new again and again. In this sense, bohemianism, the Balkans, barbarian and primitive, conceived as an image of the people, become artistic concepts that transcend reality through their consumption, to use Ujević's words.

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