

As old genre of literary scholarship, the repertory of poetic forms - well represented by such erudite works of the turn of the century as Ph. Martinson's survey of French stanzaic poetry (1912) - has attained a new significance in the last ten years or so. All around the world one can notice attempts meant to record more or less completely the content, the statistical composition and the distribution in time of the inventory of metrical, stanzaic and other fixed forms in poetry. Poetry in no single language has yet been thoroughly described in that way so far, and not much of a systematic and comprehensive nature is available in print as yet. But Russians have already published (in book form, in 1975) a part of that vast material which has been collected thanks to the coordinated labour of several teams of scholars during the last decade, there are two fairly extensive surveys of German stanzaic forms (F. Schläpke's register, 1972, and H. J. Frank's Handbuch, 1980), and also a large number of studies in individual poets, forms and periods, and a number of projects in progress, among them at least one conceived as a comparative study of metrical repertoires, the one initiated and coordinated by the industrious team of Polish versalogsists. By now one already starts noticing the difficulties involved in such work, and the aspects in which the whole enter-

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prise seems to be opening more questions than it can answer, but these issues - extremely interesting as they are - are not those I will be dealing with here. Here I will just try to use that still very incomplete knowledge we today have, of the repertory of poetic forms in Serbian and Croatian literature of the nineteenth century, for a particular purpose.

One uses such repertories nowadays primarily in order to gain the background against which it would be possible to examine adequately the individual uses of a form, and to open the more general question of the function and semantics of poetic forms. But one can use them also, if one uses them scrupulously, as an easily perceptible clue to the more basic patterns of continuity and change in literary history, as a more or less objective instrument in testing our more or less subjective general impressions and our not easily verifiable general hypotheses about the scope, direction and transformation of particular literary traditions. It is with this other aim in mind that I want to make here two observations about my topic. The observations themselves will necessarily be of a very general nature, and it is obvious that it will not be possible to illustrate them properly, not to speak of documenting them, in the course of this short exposition, but it is anyhow a particular critical procedure, rather than a particular historical hypothesis, that I am on the way of advocating here.

My first observation derives from the comparison of the Serbian and Croatian repertory with the formal repertories of European romanticism. While, of course, it may be a stupendous task by itself, and one that perhaps defies its ultimate completion, to formulate a neat common repertory of Romantic poetic forms, our experience in European poetry of the period has produced certain formal expectations which for our purpose here it may be enough to assume. These expectations will as a rule be frustrated in the poetry in Serbo-Croatian we customarily describe as romantic.

Two examples may suffice: one concerns the enjambement, i.e. the issue of the run-on versus the end-stopped versification, which means a feature that basically affects the versification of a language; the other concerns the international repertory of fixed stanzaic and poetic forms, that repertory which is the most clearly perceptible external sign of the unity of the European poetic tradition but is also, in metrical terms, little more than a set of conventions which can be easily adapted to any language without affecting its original norms of versifying in any significant way. As I have shown elsewhere, enjambement is widely used in both Serbian and Croatian poetry of the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, and it will reappear later in the nineteenth century on both sides again, but it is significantly absent from the poetry we describe as romantic, with the exception of some of the

second observation. Stated even most briefly, it is bound to stress the wide variety of response the folk models have produced in the poetry we describe as romantic.

The basic metrical repertory of the Serbian and Croatian romanticism is certainly composed of the verse-forms of the native folk tradition, and some of the rules of the original syllabic versification - for instance, the rule of the caesura, i.e. of the division of the line into cola - have been as generally observed here as they have also been observed elsewhere throughout the history of Serbo-Croatian versification. But as often as not the basic forms were now transformed by different poets in a variety of ways. Some of the transformations were relatively innocent, for example the imposition of rhyme, something that was already done to the folk verse in the eighteenth century, with similar metrical consequences (for instance, the neutralization of the quantitative close in the asymmetric decasyllable). In other cases the transformation proceeded from a tendency already potentially contained in the original syllabic line, but then developed that tendency to a point at which a new form would appear, for instance a syllabo-tonic line, bound to the original form by the basic syllabic frame but of a structure that permits the challenge to some of its basic rules (for instance, an occasional dropping of the caesura). In yet other cases seemingly slight changes have been introduced which nevertheless questioned the basic principles of the original Serbo-Croa-

Still, the popularity of the international fixed forms in other Slavic literatures does not seem to be the most important factor in deciding their distribution in Serbo-Croatian. The final striking thing about that distribution is that the repertory of international fixed forms in what we take to be the Serbian and Croatian romanticism, when represented as a system, an ordered hierarchy of forms according to their frequency and importance, seems to be an inverted picture of the repertory of Romantic poetic forms in that foreign poetry they knew best: terza rima, the original contribution of German romantics to the inventory of German poetic forms, the most frequent international fixed form during the major part of the German nineteenth century (according to Frank's Handbuch, in the period between 1830 and 1900 almost twice as frequent as all the types of German Stanze taken together), is certainly the form most carefully avoided in the main body of both Serbian and Croatian romantic poetry.

It is, of course, reasonable to interpret the whole described departure by referring to that canonization of folk models in written poetry, coinciding with the victory of the new literary language, which we customarily refer to when discussing the specific character of the Serbian and Croatian romanticism. But the relationship of the written poetry of the times to the formal models of oral poetry is not quite simple in itself, and it is from their comparison that I want to derive my

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earliest texts, in the stylistic characterization of which we are anyhow often ambiguous. So I was able to conclude in my study on enjambement: "While almost everywhere else, from France and England to Russia, enjambement was a valued acquisition of the romantic movement, and a clear mark of romanticism, as contrasted to classicism, in versification, in Serbo-Croatian the case strikes one as being exactly the opposite".

With the international repertory of fixed forms, basically the same pattern is repeated. Most of the Romance stanzaic forms, both those which were originally introduced to German poetry by German romantics and those which were only popularized by them, are widely used in the Serbian lyric poetry of the first half of the century, but they almost completely disappear in the poetry of the typical Serbian romantic poets; in Croatian poetry some of these forms persist, though on a smaller scale and only after they have been fully adapted to the native decasyllabic line, and sometimes also adapted to the new context in some other ways (sonnet, for example, passes under about a dozen different native names in the Serbian and Croatian nineteenth century). Some of the rare uses of these forms in Serbian poetry are really mocking the form itself; for example, B. Radičević's parody of terza rima, actually the only use of the form in the main tradition of Serbian romanticism, or Zmaj's parodies of the sonnet form and ottava rima. A curious phenomenon of cryptoforms - forms in different

ways disguised so as not to be easily recognizable (half-lines being graphically presented as lines, sonnet tercets being graphically rearranged so that the poem looks like a series of quatrains with a distich, a poem in terza rima being published as a series of continuous lines) - is most often the result of the attitude which also accounts for poets rewriting the poems with the intention of neutralizing their original fixed form, or leaving poems in fixed forms altogether unpublished.

The dichotomy between foreign and native has, of course, something to do with this attitude toward the form. Forms accepted into other Slavic traditions were therefore more likely to be used in Serbo-Croatian as well. The characteristic rhyme-scheme for the sonnet tercets in both Serbian and Croatian poetry of the nineteenth century - a thing not very important in itself but a valuable finger-print of the assumed model - is the one (cdc ede) never used by Petrarch, hardly known to any major European sonnet tradition, unknown even to Serbian and Croatian native textbooks of poetics, but preferred by J. Kollár. Or, to add another example, the Sonettenkranz (sonnet corona of the strict type) was indeed a very rare form of the European nineteenth century, one of those phantom forms which are passionately described in textbooks but hardly ever used in poetry; its popularity in Croatian poetry, starting in the sixties, is certainly to be explained by the existence of the famous corona of the Slovenian poet F. Prešeren.

fication (by using them in a significant, carefully marked or exaggerated manner), the romantic verse produces the effect of would-be complete adherence to the original folk models. In other words, the versification of the poets usually described as romantic, in its relationship to the formal repertory of the oral folk poetry, should be thought of not primarily as being influenced by it, or patterned on it, but as marking a preference for it.

The two observations I have made here come to the confluence at this point. It is not in terms of the poetic forms themselves - of the metrical or any other formal preferences as such - nor even in terms of their objective foreign or native origins that the choices I have described can be completely understood. The enjambement, an old familiar procedure of written poetry in Serbo-Croatian, was rejected since for centuries in this tradition it was also an index of the attitude - a negative attitude - to the oral folk poetry. The recently introduced foreign convention of the alternance de rimes, in some respects as destructive to the basic structure of the folk verse-line but unburdened by similar connotations, was at the same time freely left to flourish. Our choice of forms, to paraphrase the words of L. Gál-di, was essentially an act of solidarity with a civilization we wanted to maintain and in the same time an act of rejection of the civilization we did not want to assimilate. At this point, obviously, history of poetic

forms mingles freely with the history of ideas if not the history itself.

A more detailed examination of our repertoires of poetic forms could show also some finer types of correspondences between ideological and formal attitudes in the Serbian and Croatian poetry of the nineteenth century, and noticing those correspondences would certainly provide an important key to the most significant event in the history of the Serbo-Croatian versification of the second half of the century, the long anticipated emergence of the iambic verse as a major type of versification. Still, if there is a single very important thing this exposition seems to be indicating, it may easily concern our concept of romanticism itself, as applied to Serbian and Croatian literature. On the evidence of the repertoires of poetic forms - from the examination of those general criteria we use, on this level, in deciding whether a poetry is romantic - our concept of romanticism would turn out to be an essentially ideological concept. If that would be true, at least a part of the enormous difficulties we nowadays ordinarily experience in trying to use it as a period-concept in literary history might be easier to understand. And the agonizing attempts of the last twenty years or so to see the whole of the Serbian and Croatian nineteenth century in some other basic classification, either by some radical reinterpretation of the concept of romanticism or by the introduction of a number

of alternative or additional concepts, may at least in part be interpreted as an attempt of adjusting a traditional ideological concept to the needs of literary scholarship. It would be enlightening to probe the specific meaning of these ^mattempts with the help of our repertoires of poetic forms as well - for that purpose our knowledge of the repertoires would have to be supplemented by our understanding of the rules which govern their functioning, something I have only indirectly referred to in this short essays- but this probe, obviously, would have to be delayed till some other occasion.

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