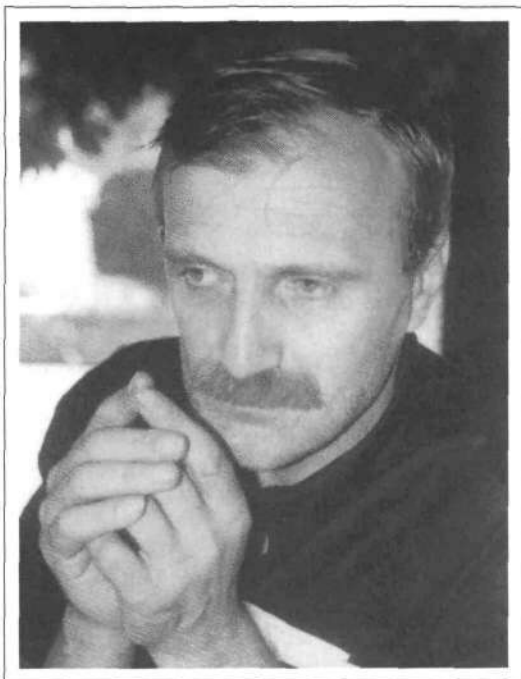


KARAHASAN, Dževad



Dževad Karahasan, born in 1953 in Duvan (Tomislavgrad), graduated in comparative literature and theatre studies from the Faculty of Arts in Sarajevo and received his Ph.D. in 1986 in Zagreb. He has worked as dramaturg of the National Theatre in Zenica, editor of *Odjek*, journal for culture and the arts, and as lecturer in the history of drama and theatre at the Academy for Dramatic Arts of Sarajevo University. So far he has published hundreds of articles and many books of short stories, novels, plays and collections of essays, among them: *Theatre and Criticism*, 1980, *Royal legends*, 1980, *The King Nevertheless Does Not Like Acting*, 1986, *On Language and Fear*, 1987, *Model in Dramaturgy*, 1988, *Eastern Divan*, 1989, *Shame on Sunday*, 1990, *House for the Tired*, 1993, *Diary of Moving*, 1993, and *Shahriar's Ring*. He has published stories and essays in practically all important European magazines, and has received many national and international awards.

Dževad Karahasan, rođen 1953. u Duvnu, završio studij svjetske književnosti i teatrologije u Sarajevu i doktorirao iz teorije književnosti na Filozofskom fakultetu Sveučilišta u Zagrebu. Radio je kao dramaturg Narodnog teatra u Zenici, urednik revije za kulturu i umjetnost *Odjek* u Sarajevu i kao profesor dramaturgije i historije drame i teatra na Akademiji scenskih umjetnosti sarajevskog Univerziteta. Objavio preko stotinu stručnih radova u časopisima i knjigama, pripovjetke, romane, drame i knjige eseja, pored ostalih: *Kazalište i kritika*, 1980, *Kraljevske legende*, 1980, *Kralju ipak ne sviđa se gluma*, 1986, *O jeziku i strahu*, 1987, *Model u dramaturgiji*, 1988, *Istočni diwan*, 1989, *Stid nedjeljom*, 1990, *Kuća za umorne*, 1993, *Dnevnik selidbe*, 1993, i roman *Šahrijarov prsten*. Eseje, pripovijetke i studije objavljivao u gotovo svim uglednim evropskim časopisima. Dobio je više nacionalnih i međunarodnih nagrada.

DŽEVAD KARAHASAN

The Principles of Mechanical Metaphysics

When I was still a child, my mother often went to hospital and left me in the care of our neighbour Marica, who was, I must point out at this time, a Catholic and a Croatian. Every time Marica would take pots and pans from our house to cook in for me, explaining each time that I could not eat with her children because they ate pork. "It's a sin for you and if I give you pork to eat in my house, the sin would burden my soul," she would explain to me. I believe that my mother also told me not to eat pork, but I know for certain that I owe it to Marica for adopting this information through my feelings and experience, through something that was deeper and stronger than rational knowledge.

My father was a communist so that we observed religious holidays secretly, celebrating them as if we weren't celebrating them. This observance consisted of two quite recognisable activities: the baking of cakes and the visit by our relative, the guardian of the Duvan monastery, friar Klemo. If my mother baked a heap of cakes and friar Klemo came for a visit, it was Bairam. If it was only one of the two, it had to be some other festive occasion, but certainly not Bairam. The recognisable sign of a holiday, which was celebrated, even if this was discouraged, was the combination of cakes and the visit by friar Klemo. Friar Klemo and other Catholic relatives who visited us for Bairam behaved as if they were paying us an ordinary visit, and my father, likewise, pretended that his friends by chance dropped in by chance. But my mother did not pretend. She just brought out the cakes. And I didn't pretend either, but looked

forward to all those visits. Every new visit meant new cakes also for me. For Catholic holidays the situation was similar: We visited our friends, my father pretending to be in the neighbourhood by chance; my mother openly congratulating and I, openly eating whatever they served us.

When I was a little older, I noticed yet another telltale sign of a religious holiday. Every time a fight between a Muslim and a Catholic – believing themselves to be skilled fighters – would break out in the restaurant *Kologaj* or in the *Eating Establishment of the Restaurant Bosna and Rooms*, which we proudly called “hotel”. The two of them fought, while the guests cheered for one or the other, but in the end, celebrated the victory of one of them. And this is how it was for every religious holiday; be it theirs or ours. Let everyone know who has the better man until the next holiday. Before my departure for Sarajevo, a liberal wind swept through Yugoslav politics, and the standard of living sufficiently improved so that religious communities got up the courage to tackle large construction works on religious buildings. I remember that there wasn’t a single Muslim house that didn’t help out by providing meals for the workers renovating the church of St. Ante, which was later renamed the church of Nikola Tavelić. And I also remember that literally every catholic house helped out by giving food to the workers working on the mosque of Duvan.

One of the first experiences in the everyday life of Sarajevo was my introduction to the so-called Sarajevo circle. Whenever you have a bad dream you must offer a donation to the religious institution, so that the dream doesn’t come true. In Sarajevo the giving of this donation consisted of observing the “Sarajevo circle,” that is, visiting and giving a donation to the four “holy places”. These were the church of St. Ante on Bistrik (Catholic); the turbeh of the Seven Brothers (turbeh is a mausoleum; the turbeh in question is a public Muslim shrine); the little Orthodox church on Bašćaršija and the Jewish community building. The Sarajevo circle is observed by every superstitious person who has nightmares, and often also by those who are not superstitious and have good dreams, but do it simply because the Sarajevo circle is the unavoidable part of the culture of everyday life of the city.

I spent 22 years in Sarajevo and became quite familiar with not only everyday life but also with what I would term “local mythology”, a set of beliefs that are taken for granted and are staunchly represented by all those who feel they are a true citizen of the town. Important places in this “local mythology” were the small Orthodox church on Bašćaršija, containing one of the richest museums of Orthodox art in the world; the bey’s mosque, boasting one of the richest collections of carpets in the world; the church of St. Ante on Bistrik, a large and beautiful structure thanks to our Franciscans who knew how to cope with the Austro-Hungarian rulers, who didn’t particularly like them. Each of these spots is associated with a number of legends or true anecdotes, which make up the “local mythology” of every city to which its citizens are so dearly attached. But today, it is important to point out that the stories of the local

mythology were told, and the pride of their "holy places" equally shared by the people of all religions. The fantastic collection of the Orthodox church was the pride of the Muslims, the Catholics, the Jews as well as the Orthodox believers, while the church of St. Ante was simply considered their own.

In Sarajevo, I celebrated every Bairam with Milo Babić and Ivan Bubalo, professors of the Sarajevo Franciscan School of Theology. I was also introduced to the professor of the Islamic School of Theology, Enes Karić, by our mutual friend Rada Iveković, a lady from Zagreb, whose religious persuasion was, in my opinion, that of a writer and an intellectual. I met some other professors of the Islamic School of Theology at the Franciscan School of Theology, on the occasion of a Catholic religious holiday. This is how it was until recently, until the 1990's. At that time, it was discovered in Belgrade that Serbians were under threat throughout the world but most particularly in Bosnia. And so "intellectual missions" emerged, striving to "preserve the threatened serbianism" and separating the Orthodox element from the other segments of everyday life. In truth, this was without any particular success, because "local mythologies," adopted through the centuries of mutual coexistence, were simply stronger than new ideologies. And for this reason, the new ideologues decided to expand politics through other means. It began with an armed attack on Bosnia which was spearheaded, from the beginning of April 1992, by the Yugoslav National Army, which simply abolished itself to become the Yugoslav Army, the Serbian Army, or whatever it's called today.

I spent a year of war in Sarajevo, living in a building together with 11 Bosnians (Muslims), 7 Serbians (Orthodox), 5 Croatians (Catholics) and two people born in the so-called mixed marriage, which made it rather difficult to define their religious persuasion in "pure terms." For a year, we ran together to the basement; for a year, we shared and offered water and food to each other, or stole from one another; for a year, we argued about our place in the queue for collecting rain water that ran from the gutter outlets. And we spent a year persuading each other that we would certainly win because there were simply too many of us to disappear without a trace.

After a year of this kind of life, I left Sarajevo and Bosnia, because I felt useless. The students in their last year of studies graduated, and for the rest of them I couldn't organise further instruction. The hospital where I helped was organised to the extent that my every attempt to help was insignificant. And so I became just another hunger, just another fear, another consumer of water in a city of too much fear and hunger and too little water. And so I first moved to Austria and then Germany, and then on to the happy world of freedom called Western Europe.

I arrived in the happy world of freedom and became so confused that now, after a year in this world of plenty, I can ask myself and others: Did I in fact exist? Did I really experience what I remember? Am I in fact a wicked liar

and a mystifier who falsified his forty years of life, or am I nothing but a wretched, sick person who believes he remembered something that naturally never happened, because it could not have happened? I learned that in Bosnia we are not the victims of raging chauvinism who knew how to take advantage of the enormous decapitated army at the moment of its quest for a country and a leader ready to employ it, but rather, the victims of our own nature. I learned that the Bosnia, where I spent my middle age – speaking optimistically – does not exist and never did. I learned many things that confused me and compelled me to ask painful questions about myself. I learned these new confusing things from people who think of themselves, and rightly so, of some importance in contemporary European thought. And if you come from the Balkans, and from poor Bosnia to boot, you would be interested in European opinions and certainly in those trains of thought that articulate the so-called modern Europe. The reflections about my destiny – since it is a question of my destiny after all, for I am no ideologue and cannot rise above the individual's destiny, and even less so if it's a question of my destiny – which confused me so painfully, are undoubtedly an important contribution to modern European thought; important not only due to the influence that this type of thinking has on the so-called public opinion, but also due to the role that this attitude has in the European tradition. It is certainly also important because this thought is able to clearly and simply articulate certain ideas, suppositions and images and offer them as the consciousness of itself, of a given time or a given culture. Thus I feel the need and obligation to reflect upon – with the presence of eye witnesses – several typical testimonies which clearly and paradigmatically display this type of mentality. Not only because these testimonies about my personal experience convey exactly the opposite message of what I have experienced (for this type of mentality, I would be satisfied with a narrow circle of eyewitnesses and would be grateful to them for each reaction), but rather, because I consider the authors of these testimonies to be persons of some import and I consider the kind of mentality that comes across in their testimonies, quite significant in the self-proclaimed modern European thought.

A well-known German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger believes, for example, that what is happening in Yugoslavia is a civil war between two tribes. Enzensberger inherited – without any merit on his part – one magnificent culture and also inherited – without any guilt on his part – the national socialist barbarism. As is well known, the heir inherits material property as well as debts. Enzensberger, therefore, in order to legally inherit Hoffman, Kleist, Goethe and Schiller, must also accept Himmler as part of this inheritance. When I say inheritance, I have in mind the knowledge, understanding and acceptance, thus, every possible meaning of the cultural tradition. But Enzensberger is a serious poet and serious intellectual, so he inherits only what is legal.

How is it possible that, in view of all this, he fails to recognise what has been happening in Yugoslavia since 1988, i.e., since the time when the government

that is still in power in Serbia, clearly formulated its basic positions? The fundamental information, even if only from newspaper reports, was sufficient for a person of knowledge to recognise and understand everything. Paraphrasing one of Enzensberger's verses, I could perfectly describe and define what has been taking place in the Balkans since 1988. This was the beginning of a period when everyone spoke in italicised Cyrillic. Yes, that's right: italicised Cyrillic has played the same role in Serbia since 1988 as the Gothic alphabet in the Reich in the period that Enzensberger describes as the time when Gothic was spoken. It has been a long time indeed since Enzensberger wrote that poem, a very long time ago. But still, how is it possible that he does not recognise his own verses in current events? Or are these events, in fact, reality? Is the place where I squandered many years of my life a reality for the German poet?

The time when everyone began speaking in italicised Cyrillic began when the programme, essentially summarising the following three standpoints (these could be heard in any public appearance of any current politician from Serbia) was announced: 1. All Serbians must live in a single state; 2. Serbia is where Serbians live; 3. Serbia has the right to use all available means, including military force, to protect the interests of Serbians wherever they are under threat, while the government of Serbia shall decide where this is so. This programme, or the right to such a political programme, is justified on the basis of Serbians being a divine nation. This standpoint was not formulated by the government, but is present every day in the mass media. It can be heard every day at mass gatherings, where it is pronounced by the highest representatives of the official establishment.

Sounds familiar? The heavens are, in fact, high so that the divine nations could, at least technically, have something to do with a higher race. In order to obtain the right to read Meister Eckhart, Enzensberger certainly read an identical programme of a state in which, a long, long time ago, Gothic was spoken. Yet he still believes that Serbia, ruled by a government which had published this programme, only engages in civil wars? He believes that the military clashes in Czechoslovakia in the 1930's, when the people who spoke Gothic protected the interests of their compatriots, fought a civil war, one of the civil wars to which the inhabitants of Czechoslovakia are unusually inclined?

When I refer to the situation in Bosnia, I have in mind primarily several typical destinies, because I experienced this entire tragedy through several destinies; let us say through the destiny of two old people from the neighbouring building whose son, Jasmin, was blown up by a mortar shell in our backyard in July 1992 and whose daughter had been imprisoned in one of the Serbian concentration camps for forced impregnation of women since the beginning of the war. The destiny of little Amina, both of whose parents died before her eyes and who was wounded in the knee. The destiny of one handsome young boy called Samir who lives in the town with his mother, while his father is shooting at the two of them from the hilltop. From the great

men that Hans Magnus Enzensberger inherited, from Lessing, among others, I learned that individual persons have destinies, while large communities have histories and that literature deals in destinies. I know this because I learned it from the German classics. How is it possible that Enzensberger, a German poet, who adopted German classics together with the odours of his family home, the way one adopts the connection between darkness and sleep; how is it possible that a poet of any stature does not know that, for a writer, a human destiny is the most truthful interest (for he was the contemporary, perhaps he even met Böll!)? Does the poet Enzensberger know this? Does he know it at least as well as he knows the second law of thermodynamics? But to know it from the inside, to know in the way that writers do (the way Böll knows it), one would have to feel – in connection with a specific war – the link between the war and an individual destiny. But to feel it, one would have to feel that “that there” is real, and that it happens to people, because only real people can have destinies. This would then mean that there are no tribes “there”, only Amina, Jasmin and Samir, and that everything is still happening to us and not to someone in some exotic “there” which, by definition, is not real ...

I believe that this is the issue. Enzensberger is undoubtedly a poet, and I want very much to believe that he is a well-intentioned man. There is no doubt that he would think about the current situation in the Balkans through italicised Cyrillic, pseudo-mythical image of the divine nation, and through the fate of Jasmin’s parents, if he could feel that all of this is really happening. But what we see, recognise and understand in this world is what our culture and mentality, which we adopted (or it adopted us) are showing us, what they allow us to see. A mentality that was prevalent in Europe in the second half of the past century does not allow “there” to be recognised as anything, since everything that is outside Western Europe was exoticism. Western Europe is reality, all the rest is exoticism, and in the exotic “there,” there are no destinies, no people, no reality.

The same type of mentality, but in its caricaturised, simplified version, is manifested by the prominent politician, author and, I daresay, official expert on the Balkans, Peter Glotz. The thoughts and words of this famous person undoubtedly deserve our attention. Because the mechanism of a specific mentality, the “technology” of that mental activity, can be, in his case, very well understood precisely thanks to the caricaturised reduction to the elemental, which is quite clearly revealed by this mechanism (the basic characteristics and relationships in the caricature are visible much more clearly than in the actual prototype). Several randomly selected examples should be enough to illustrate the type of mentality I am dealing with here and which reveals itself as crucial in what could be called the European mentality.

The text “Wer kämpfen will, soll vortreten” (*Die Zeit* No. 3, 15 January 1993) is a veritable treasure-trove of testimonies which in their essence reveal the mechanisms and characteristics of this type of mentality. At the very

beginning of the text, its author, Glotz, ironises (in fact ridicules) the decision of the German Minister of Postal Service to quit the Government, due to its passivity towards "south-eastern Europe." Mr Glotz supports his ironic attitude by several facts: 1. The Minister who stepped down is a technocrat; 2. He is a sinologist by education; 3. He is not an expert on south-eastern Europe. A human being is therefore ridiculous if he feels a human responsibility towards a tragedy in which he is involved ever so indirectly, and sympathises with the suffering people, even though he is no expert on the region where the tragedy is taking place. As a sinologist, a man has the right to feel sympathy for the Chinese and also feel human responsibility (in the meaning of Kant) towards the situation in China. But sympathy for the Bosnians he must leave to the balkanologists as there is no such person as a bosnologist.

I must admit that, at first, I was dumbstruck by the monstrosity of this logic. I wanted to escape from this happy world of freedom where this kind of mentality exists. I yearned painfully after my primitive world in which we mourned the misery of strangers extremely unprofessionally, but from the heart. Thus overwhelmed by fear, I at the same time tried to solve the riddle of why all of this sounds so familiar to me; why I seem to recognise what I have read and what has so deeply terrified me. And in the end I remembered that it seems familiar because I recognised the patterns of thinking, because by learning scientific socialism and other blessings of progressive humanity, I obtained a relatively thorough understanding of the mentality conveyed by Mister Glotz's testimony. This is the caricaturised version of rationalism, which is called scientific optimism, scientism, a pseudo-religious attitude towards pure sciences. It is precisely this mentality that has scientifically proven that the victory of socialism is necessary. It is this mentality that established the scientific aesthetics and the value of music measured in terms of the intensity of glandular secretion during the listening to a musical piece. It is this mentality that has determined, through scientific debate, that South American Indians are people and that they can receive the sacrament of baptism (which would be determined somewhat later also for blacks). It is this mentality which deified and sanctified the objective, positive, measurable and transferable (therefore mechanical) Knowledge. This mentality which abolished God, but did not succeed in amputating the religious experience, so it cast Knowledge in the role of God.

The destiny of the followers is to parody those whom they follow. How does the holy Knowledge of the Balkans look in the example of the Balkan expert, Peter Glotz? Referring to Ranke, Mister Glotz maintains that the Croatians, Serbians and Dalmatians are one single nation, and that the Slovenians, Croatians and Serbians speak the same language. I am no linguist and could not debate this question with Mister Glotz with the assistance of Knowledge. I could only speak from experience and from my feelings. What I have experienced and what I feel

is that the Slovenians have been speaking their own language for a long time, a language that has nothing in common with any other language in the world. And the Slovenians would like to keep it that way for some time to come, if only Mister Glotz would allow it. About the rest of the nations that speak the same language, linguists could say more than I.

At some other point in the text, Peter Glotz first confused me and then deeply saddened me. Invoking the parliamentary delegate, (Reichstagsabgeordnete) Herman Wendel, Peter Glotz argues that Yugoslavs are a single nation. He confused me because I don't know what to say on this topic to the point that I don't have a point of view. I know that the bonds among the communities in this region are quite strong and numerous. I know that in complex structures, the emphasis on differences between its parts seems dangerous, as well as the emphasis of the unity of structure (I know this from literature). I know that fanatical emphasis on unity destroyed the First Yugoslavia and caused the war between two of its communities during the Second World War. I know that fanatical emphasis on the differences, of which I am a witness, also seems dangerous, because it provincializes, stifles and saps the dynamic energy of the community in its effort to respect and preserve the differences in relation to its neighbour. I know all of this and believe it to be true, but I truly do not know when two communities are a single nation and when two separate nations.

All I can say is that I have had some experience in this area and I do know certain facts. I know, for example, that my father was a communist who fought passionately and completely honourably for Yugoslavia in the Second World War. I know that in every census since 1945 he declared himself as nationally uncommitted (thus non-existent). He declared himself so because he was faced with three options, none of which he felt were right for him; he could have opted for the nationality of Serbia, Croatia or Yugoslavia, but he adamantly felt that he was something else. My father fought for Yugoslavia and could not be anti-Yugoslav. There were two million like him in Yugoslavia. They felt Bosnian in terms of national affiliation. My father was born in 1917, two years before the First Yugoslavia. He was a firm believer in Yugoslavia and he had to declare himself as nationally uncommitted until very late in his life, a status that is nationally non-existent.

There is another undeniable fact that I know. I know that during the current war, 200,000 of those people were killed who could not feel nationally Bosnian. They were killed only because they did not succeed in feeling themselves to be nationally different.

And there is another undeniable fact that I know. I know that in the Second World War, and also in the current one, a great number of people who felt themselves to be Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, Montenegrin and Slovenian disappeared. They disappeared mostly because they felt that way and because they did not feel only Yugoslav. I also know that in this region 11,000,000 people

feel Serbian, 5,000,000 feel Croatian, 2,000,000 feel Bosnian, 500,000 feel Montenegrin and many hundreds of thousands of them have been killed or their lives ruined. But all of this could have been avoided if they all felt Yugoslav. When I fathomed this I was deeply saddened. "Oh, God," I thought, "how much misery could have been avoided if only people read more *Die Zeit* and Peter Glotz to whom everything is so very clear because everything is so very simple!"

I repeat that I truly do not belong to those people who glorify differences and are prepared to stress them to the detriment of similarities. I repeat that I do not know for certain what a nation is, what the difference between a nation and a nationality is, and where runs the border between a cultural community and a nation. I repeat that I was never blessed by a strong feeling of affiliation to any community and that I am a person of very weak political persuasion. However, I am still insulted by the aggressive self-confidence with which Peter Glotz explains all the confusions and solves every problem.

At the same time I am indeed impressed by the quiet dignity with which Peter Glotz repels every possible influence on his thinking. He refuses the people from the Balkans to influence his attitude towards them, and calmly explains to them that they are all one. He does not allow the facts to influence his attitude. He refuses to as much as glance at the geographic map, so that in the text, which we have been discussing all this time, he maintains that the population of Knin is 800,000. In terms of the Balkans, this is a metropolis. If we are to believe Peter Glotz, then Knin is the third largest city of the Balkans. Oh, these experts!

But all began quite innocently, almost lyrically – I mean, my need to know the thoughts and activities of Peter Glotz. I watched the programme *Live ZDF*, broadcast on 10 February 1994. The talk show on Bosnia was aired 10 days before the expiry of Nato's ultimatum to the besiegers of Sarajevo. The talk show obviously featured Mr Peter Glotz who, at one point, declared: (I quote from a video recorded programme): "And here I bring into question the idyll of the common Bosnian state" (Und da stelle ich in Frage die Idylle des gemeinsamen bosnischen Staates).

My attention was drawn by the world "idyll". In one of my essays, written long ago, I attempted to explain kitsch, as a semiotic or as a mental structure, in which reality is represented (experienced) either only as horror or only as an idyll. According to the idea, as well the experience of kitsch-sensibility, the world is either an Arnold Schwarzenegger film, dripping with violence and horror "in pure state", or a story of the happy love between a shepherd and a shepherdess. The kitsch-sensibility is incapable of understanding and, thereby, is not capable of articulating a complex, many-voiced structure, which exists precisely in the tension between the different voices, constituting this structure. For example, a serious dramatic play in which different perspectives are used to articulate relations, different viewpoints and connections in a single whole and in relationship to a single action. Or an example of a cultural

environment, an environment of everyday life in Bosnia, an environment constituting four "voices", four possibilities of co-operation in a single effort. The play exists precisely thanks to the tension which unavoidably occurs in the encounter between different views towards the one. If the differences are not preserved between these viewpoints, the characters are lost, the autonomy and relative perfection of their characters is lost; lost is the tension. Thus the play is lost and in its place emerges kitsch-structure where everyone is the same and everything is one. Everything is pure violence or everything is pure goodness; everyone is a more or less successful tyrant, or all of them are shepherds filled with love and goodness, divided only by their gender. For this reason kitsch-sensibility cannot generate a serious play. In its experience, everything is one and all are the same; literally the same at the level of primary attributes; mechanically fused into one, so that in that environment there can be no different voices, viewpoints, tensions and conflicts which would lead to a union of a higher order.

For this reason Bosnia cannot understand kitsch-sensitivity. Catholics and Jews, Muslims and Orthodoxists, with all their differences amongst them, with all their own identities, yet still together. This cannot be an idyll because they all have their own identity with everything that this concept encompasses. This means that here they are all passionately and savagely killing each other, as in every horror-environment. How can one explain that it is precisely because every cultural community in Bosnia preserves its identity; precisely because four voices, with all their differences, are united, that there is created a tension on which a single whole can be founded? A whole of which the parts are not mechanically fused, but are interconnected through productive dialogue. How can someone be convinced that Bach did in fact compose the music, even though one can neither march, nor seduce the shepherdess to the beat of his composition? There is no use trying. One cannot persuade someone with kitsch-sensitivity. And thank God it is so.

The Bosnian idyll, which Peter Glotz brought into question, turned my attention to the speaker and sentimentally reminded me of my early works on kitsch. I was interested in the man. I was cheered up by this man who made the connection between Bosnia and idyll. In the long years of my life, nothing similar ever came to my mind, nor, as far as I know, to anyone else's mind. Bosnia has always been a place of tensions, a region in which four cultural communities, with their identities and their differences, themselves built a broader community, filled with tensions – in itself polemic – but also fulfilled through dialogue and understanding. All in all, a community, a single symphonic unity which is united, yet not a mechanical whole. A community which, as such, has existed – more or less happily (rather less than more, but this is a topic for some other discussion) – since the beginning of the 16th century, since the arrival of the Jews (in 1492) who were driven from Spain. Never as an idyll, very rarely, and for a relatively short time (in the Second World War and

in the current war, for example) as a horror. Thus a community hardly comprehensible to Peter Glotz. It is indeed hellish what is happening today in Bosnia, but this does not prove that Bosnia is a possibility. It only proves that the delicate, complex structures are very weak in the face of mechanical forces. You can break the mosaic with a hammer, but you cannot break the hammer with a mosaic. This is clearly evidenced by the current events in Bosnia. How does one convince Peter Glotz that five centuries last longer than three years and that laws are applied on the basis of a several centuries long tradition?

Later on in the same programme, Mr Glotz said: "And now I quote today's *FAZ*. Ivo Andrić, the Nobel laureate, writes in 1920 – and so completely uninfluenced by our discussion today – about the hourly rhythms of the Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Jewish – as the churches there are called ..." (Und jetzt zitiere ich die *FAZ* von heute. Da schreibt Ivo Andrić, der Nobelpreisträger, im Jahre 1920, also völlig unbeeinflusst von unseren heutigen Debatten, darüber, wie also die Stundenrhythmen der Orthodoxen, der Katholiken, der Muslime, der Juden – wie die Kirchen dort läuten ...) I am trying to ascertain, from the thematic description and the date which the speaker mentions, what this is all about. I realise that one of the viewpoints contained in the statement by Mr Glotz is certainly true. One may be true, but all the rest are false. It is true that Ivo Andrić is a Nobel laureate. It is perhaps true that Mr Glotz read *FAZ* on 10 February 1994, but all the rest is a confusion of which only a Balkan expert the likes of Peter Glotz is capable. Ill-informed about some things, self-convinced and aggressively prepared to explain something he may have heard somewhere. What is in fact at stake here?

The text which Mr Glotz may be referring to is Andrić's story *Letter from 1920*. The story indeed mentions the "hourly rhythms" of the Bosnian religious communities and the title also contains the year that so excited Mister Glotz. The story was not written in 1920, but soon after the Second World War (if I remember correctly, in 1947). That is the beginning of the Second Yugoslavia, a time when politics (and, by God, also common sense) was required, not only of literature but also of all human activities, to articulate the condemnation of the glorification of differences, the reduction of all relationships between Yugoslav nations to nothing but a set of differences (I have already discussed this). A time when the foundations of a new union were being built. (A discussion on the nature of that union and to what extent it is regretful that the union was not different, shall be left for some other occasion.) 1920 is the first year of the First Yugoslavia. A knowledge of the basic facts of Andrić's biography and the basic elements of his literary technique would have been enough for an intelligent reader to understand why he used that date in the title of his story. (The reader would understand that it is a veiled polemic intended to convince the new rulers that they have marked the point of discontinuity, a beginning of a new age in terms of quality; that they have enabled the leap from zero to one, from non-existence to existence.) I cannot unfortunately

explain at this point all the implications of the fact that the story *Letter from 1920* was written immediately after World War Two. This information I mention only to demonstrate once again to what extent Mr Glotz is informed, to what extent he is capable of reading and understanding what he reads. He sees the date in the title and understands that the text was written that year; he sees the word "letter" and understands that it is in fact a letter; he reads the sentence "that difference has always resembled hatred" and understands that this is the living experience and, ultimately, the conclusion of the author. (I feel quietly happy for the fact that Peter Glotz did not read my novel. Reading the letters of my heroine Begzada to her husband, who is a historically real person, he would conclude that I was the poor fool passionately in love with the long dead man. And then I would make him sad or even worse.)

Peter Glotz has the right to be uneducated, but, as a career politician, he has no right to be uninformed. He is required to know to which genre belongs the text he is quoting; he must know that Knin does not have 800,000 inhabitants; he must know that Slovenians have a language of their own. It would be desirable that he knew, but is not obligatory, something that I shall explain to him without being intentionally ironic. The so-called narrative literary forms also contain text spoken by the characters. In order to completely understand these parts of the text, as well as the entire work, we must understand which character is saying what to whom at a given moment and for what purpose. When I say "which character", I have in mind its destiny in the work, its characteristics, current situation, relationship to the character it is speaking to, etc. (I have in mind therefore all that can be understood under the terms character). Not a single statement in the text of this kind is directly related to the extra-literal reality, so that it is not justifiable to conclude that Goethe was a necrophile, even though his character in the play, *Faust*, displayed certain tendencies towards the deceased Helena. All of this, and much more, was said by a man who is, unfortunately, already dead. His name was Aristotle, and all of these confusing things can be learned in his work, *Poetics*.

This short lesson means that the standpoints of the *Letters*, which are "quoted" in the story *Letter from 1920*, cannot be ascribed to Andrić, but can be understood only if we keep in mind the fact that they were "written" by a character (what type? with what destiny? at what moment?) on the basis of experience acquired at the time "before the establishment of unity," and that it addresses them in a specific psychological situation (what kind?) to someone (to whom). The story cannot be quoted as a source of political information. This much should be clear even to the high political officials. Bertrand Russell in his time proposed that, in schools, newspapers should be read with distrust. Following the experience of reading the literature, which I have gathered during the year of exile, I propose a far stranger lesson which could be called the *Basis of the theory of literature*.*

But is there something else at stake here? I believe that even Peter Glotz would be confused if I judged the *Thirty-Year War* on the basis of Kleist's *Michael Kohlhaass* (Even though the subtitle clearly states that it is based on "one old chronology."). Another question altogether is *Who gives me the right to behave like Peter Glotz!?* (To be honest, thank God I have no such right.) And where do I get the foolish notion that someone strong should treat Bosnia properly, and even admit that literature is being written there that should be read as literature?! Is it perhaps that the issue is completely different, namely the type of mentality in which we are caught up, but which is in fact our experience of the world and of ourselves in this world (and not the mere technology of cerebral activity)?

I believe this third option to be true. It is the type of mentality that defines us as much as our own skin. A mentality that we cannot abandon, just as we cannot shed our skin. I do not believe that Enzensberger would deliberately ridicule his own verses, and I do not believe that Peter Glotz would deliberately ridicule, with his expertise, the people who are able to use logic. I do not believe that they refuse to learn something about what they teach humanity. I believe that they cannot learn, simply because they are prevented by the mental mould which defines their capabilities of comprehension.

I believe that the examples I proposed demonstrate the basic principles of this type of mentality very clearly, and that it is, therefore, not difficult to recognise the mentality I am talking about. As I said before, this is a caricatured version of rationalism, a rationalism reduced to the faith in reason and in simple mechanics. From the above mentioned and briefly commented examples, it is not difficult to infer the basic principles of this type of mentality: 1. What I don't understand does not exist; 2. The other is, in fact, not real; the other is my representation about him; everything that is not me, everything that I have not adopted and not made a part of my image of the world, is merely an object and can only be an object; 4. Pure mechanical power is the only criterion of the truth, the good and beauty. These principles and this type of mentality are well-known attributes of the European tradition. They created the foundations and alibis for colonial conquests; they articulated the truth that the English must occupy India in order to civilise it, and that North American Indians and Australian Aborigines are excited to no end (literally to no end) about similar civilisational endeavours. These principles created the spiritual environment in which it is normal to produce nuclear weapons or conduct the most morbid genetic experiments with the same measure of innocence as selling Christmas cards. They pushed out ethics and metaphysics (as well as the question on meaning) from the circle of relevant topics, because God and ethical sensations adamantly refuse to be mechanical phenomena. They have articulated the notion of ethical neutrality and ascribed it, first to the pure sciences, and then also to all other human activities.

Of course I do not believe that misters Enzensberger and Glotz are responsible for all that I have mentioned here. I do not believe that they are responsible for anything under the heavenly dome, and I did not make all of the above statements because of them. Manifesting precisely that type of mentality, they spoke of my destiny and of things that concern me very much. And I am confused, worried and desperate, trying to understand what it is all about, because I believed that the Europe of multiculturalism, openness and multiplicity of voices has freed itself from the vulgar-mechanical mentality. I truly believed that in the new Europe, only a minority of people believe that they possess (in themselves) more truth, good and beauty if they have more money and weapons. These people believe that their money and weapons grant them the right to decide on life and death (so they only decide about death). Because I believed that Europe has articulated the idea of unity that transcends mechanical unity, I wondered whether or not I was stupid to remember what I have remembered, to think of my home the way I thought. For this reason I felt the need to question myself about what others are explaining to me about myself. Misters Enzensberger and Glotz are not a random selection, because they are very typical of several Europeans who offer their explanations to me. They are not included here as themselves, but rather, as a model of mentality that so clearly manifests itself in their statements, a mentality that is still very strongly present in the Europe of intellectualism, openness and dialogue.

Enzensberger and Glotz represent the establishment, as do many others who offer me explanations on how I lived. Karl May is an outsider, as are many others who talk with me as if I were a true person. Was Karl May able to speak about us Indians with so much love and understanding because he was an outsider, or did he remain an outsider because he loved and understood us Indians?

* The same kind of misunderstanding of Andrić's story, and of literature in general, was displayed by the Swiss literary critic, Christoph Gassmann (WoZ, 4 February 1994). He also does not know what a comparison is and how it functions in literature. He therefore does not know something that my students understand implicitly.

Translated by Marjan Golobič