V

FROM WAR TO WAR (1917-1944)

The span of some twenty-five years between Bulgaria's defeats in the First and Second World Wars was a time of political unrest, particularly in the early years, but also of notable literary productivity. Under the youthful Czar Boris (1894-1943), who ascended the throne after his father's abdication in 1919, the Bulgarian state somehow weathered the internal political crisis caused by the First World War and the formalization of its military disgrace by the treaty of Neuilly in 1919. The communists organized several transport and general strikes at that time, but by May 1920 the situation had been stabilized sufficiently to permit Aleksandər Stambolijski's peasant party to withdraw from a coalition arrangement and establish a government based on the premise that Bulgaria could be ruled by a party oriented toward the peasantry alone. Stambolijski introduced several needed changes, for example the Agrarian Reform Act of May 1920, and pursued a sensible foreign policy. He admitted the remnants of General Vrangel''s White army, driven from Russia after its unsuccessful attempt to unseat the Bolsheviks. Many of these Russians settled in Bulgaria and formed their own organizations there. In order to quell internal political opposition Stambolijski relied primarily upon extra-governmental groupings called the "Orange Guard" and secondarily upon the communists. By 1923 he realized that the communists were most interested in seizing power themselves and turned against them. His non-communist enemies seized this opportunity to stage a military *coup* on 9 June, 1923. The *coup* was relatively bloodless initially, but when Stambolijski attempted a counterattack he was captured on 14 June and brutally murdered.

All during the June events the communists did nothing to help their former ally. But when Moscow learned of the Bulgarian occurrences it issued urgent instructions for some sort of armed resistance. Therefore in August the Bulgarian Communist Party decided to organize an uprising in conjunction with Stambolijski's Agrarian Union even though the

suitable time for such a move had long since passed. The result was the abortive September uprising of 1923, which has remained in popular political folklore as a central event in Bulgarian revolutionary history even though it was sporadic (the large cities did not rise) and the government put it down without much trouble.

The political situation remained fluid for some time after the September uprising. The Bulgarian Communist Party and the Agrarian Union (especially its left wing) continued to collaborate and won almost one-third of the vote between them in the November 1923 parliamentary elections. In May of 1924 the Communist Party under the leadership of its more militant elements (its founder, Dimitər Blagoev, had died in that same month; Vasil Kolarov and Georgi Dimitrov had fled to the Soviet Union after the September uprising) resolved to pursue a policy of violence tailored to incite another rebellion. This gave the government an excuse to engage in outright terrorism in February and March of 1925, when the political opposition was gunned down on the streets by hired assassins. The communists retaliated with terror of their own: the most notable of their projects was the bombing of the Sveta Nedelja cathedral in Sofia at a time when numbers of high government officials were attending a funeral there. The government replied with further repressions in April and May, and some writers and political activists with known communist sympathies vanished at that time. These draconic tactics discredited the government enough to bring it down, but they also laid the groundwork for a political stability which had been lacking for some time previously and which would never again be seriously threatened until September of 1944. It is true that the world depression which began in 1929 had an unsettling effect upon Bulgaria's political equilibrium, but even so the situation never became so acute as it had been in 1923-1925. In 1931 a 'bloc' of parties assumed the reins of government but felt too unsure of itself to press any daring initiatives. When the bloc began to disintegrate, another coup was staged on 19 May, 1934 by the so-called 'Zveno' group of military officers. The new regime suppressed the parliament and all political parties; in foreign policy it oriented itself toward France and Yugoslavia, while at the same time extending diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union. In 1935, however, the Czar ousted the 19 May government and instituted a personal regime which endured down to his death in 1943.

In the years before the Second World War Bulgaria attempted to stay clear of great power conflicts, and announced its neutrality after the German attack on Poland in 1939. In 1940 a new government was

formed under the art historian Bogdan Filov, who supported the country's neutralist policies. German pressure was intensified, however, and on 1 March, 1941 Bulgaria, having no genuine choice in the matter, officially allied itself with Germany. German troops entered its territory the following day. During the Second World War proper Bulgaria played a relatively passive role, though it supplied troops for the occupation of Thrace and Macedonia, which it considered legitimately its own, as well as a portion of Serbia. There had never been much antisemitism in Bulgaria, and only a few Bulgarian Jews suffered during the war. Bulgaria itself underwent little damage except for that inflicted by some pointless allied raids on Sofia in 1944. When the conflict began to go badly for the Axis powers, several successive governments were formed for the purpose of surrendering to the Anglo-American allies rather than to the Soviet Union, upon which in fact Bulgaria had never declared war. All such negotiations could only fail, however, since the western powers had by then decided that the Soviet Union should have Eastern Europe as its sphere of influence. On 26 August, 1944 Bulgaria proclaimed its neutrality. Soviet troops reached Bulgarian borders on 31 August, after Rumania's capitulation, at which point the Soviet Union declared war upon Bulgaria and invaded the country.

The direct consequence of the Soviet invasion was the *coup* of 9 September, 1944. Czar Boris had died suddenly and mysteriously after a trip to Poland in 1943, and his young son Simeon could furnish no effective opposition to a communist takeover. After a transitional period of coalition government between the communists and carefully chosen members of other parties, Bulgaria was formally declared a 'People's Republic' in September of 1946. The first openly communist government was headed by Georgi Dimitrov, who did not return to his native land from the Soviet Union until November 1945. Czar Simeon was exiled, and after further transitional upheavals a communist regime emerged in firm control of the country.

Since 1944 marks a major watershed in Bulgarian history — the end of the old order — and the communist era in literature and culture is still developing today, I shall not attempt to outline the history of Bulgarian literature since that date except to comment on certain individual authors prominent in the interwar years who continued to work after 1944. Suffice it to note here that Bulgarian literature from about 1946 to the end of 1956 was cast in the standard Soviet mold of Socialist Realism. Since 1956 some fresh currents have appeared, but we are still chronologically too close to these years to write an objective account of them.

Bulgarian literature and culture between the wars changed with political developments. In the years immediately following the First World War writers struggled to regain their feet. Works describing war experiences were prominent then. The years from about 1919 to 1925 may be termed the age of ideology *par excellence* in Bulgarian literature, for this period witnessed all manner of 'isms', from estheticism and symbolism on the right through expressionism and modernism to communism on the left. The unsettled political situation of the 1920s was mirrored in the flux of literary life, with writers forming group after group, founding periodicals, deserting symbolism for communism, abandoning communism for a freer art, and so forth. In time the ideological fever of the 1920s subsided. Some communists perished during the political terror of 1925, and symbolism ceased to exist as a coherent literary movement. There remained the comparatively non-ideological approach characteristic of the journal *Zlatorog* (Golden Horn), which, under the editorship of the critic Vladimir Vasilev, from 1920 to 1944 published nearly all the best writers in Bulgaria — the exceptions were mostly individuals who retained some strong ideological commitment. In general the period from the late 1920s to the early 1940s was one of ideological indifference. Certainly in *Zlatorog* one discovers few traces of either communist or fascist ideology. Even during the war, when Bulgaria was officially allied with Nazi Germany, there appeared a strikingly small number of literary or cultural works promoting the National Socialist philosophy. And this is true even though, unlike the Soviet Union, where extremely few scholarly books were published during the war, Bulgaria saw a burst of scholarly and cultural activity in the early 1940s.

During the interwar period lyric poetry attracted the best talents in the national literary life. Although Bulgaria boasted few outstanding poets deserving of recognition beyond her borders, she had many of considerable technical competence who had something to say. The ascendancy of the lyric poem in Bulgarian literature was a logical result of the Bulgarian propensity to produce little. An extreme instance of the unprolific poet in this period is Nikolaj Liliev: he lived a long life, but his total poetic output may be collected in a single volume of medium size.

The only genres rivalling lyric poetry in popularity between the wars were the brief prose forms, i.e. the short story and the sketch. Artistic prose became more important than it had been before the First World War, when there was a noticeable preponderance of poetry over prose. And if before 1914 there appeared few novels save Vazov's worth remembering now, in the interwar period more and better novels began

to be written. On the debit side, the drama went downhill despite the fact that the period could boast one major playwright and saw a few other talented authors try their hand at writing for the stage. Nevertheless, even a purely quantitative flowering of literature encouraged literary criticism. Dr. Krəstev was followed by several important critics and literary historians, and there appeared what was by contrast with the turn of the century a veritable swarm of workaday critics and reviewers. In sum, after the First World War Bulgarian literature came of age and developed rapidly in all directions.

The two most outstanding prose-writers of the interwar period were Elin Pelin and Jordan Jovkov. The former — who in the 1890s gave up his prosaic original name Dimitər Ivanov for the pen name Elin Pelin — published his best work in the prewar period, but attained his greatest renown only after the First World War.

The future Elin Pelin (1877-1949) was born in the village of Bajlovo near Sofia. His father was a farmer who had minimal material resources but great spiritual endowment, and whom his son admired. The writer obtained an elementary and secondary education in Sofia, Panagjurište and other cities, but never advanced beyond this and so acquired no broad literary culture. In the 1890s Elin Pelin was temporarily infatuated with socialist ideas, and sympathy for socialist doctrine always remained a component part of his personal outlook, which, however, was not very consistent or clear. In the last years of the 1890s he tried his hand at teaching and also wrote, printing his first stories and poems in 1895-1898 in such organs as *Vojniška sbirka* (Military Miscellany) and *Bəlgarski pregled.* The stories published in the former journal, one circulated to the military, were pieces set during the War of Liberation and the Serbo-Bulgarian war of 1885. They were harbingers of the stories he would produce in the course of the First World War.

Not knowing what career to choose, Elin Pelin returned to Bajlovo for roughly two years (1898-1899), during which time he absorbed impressions later to be useful in his writing, and began producing serious works. Among them were such stories as "Vetrenata melnica" (The Windmill) and "Napast Božija" (Divine Plague), which established him as a coming writer. Having thus discovered his vocation, Elin Pelin moved to Sofia in 1899, where he took literary odd jobs to earn a living. He worked for various journals and papers, published humorous short stories, and edited the populist journal *Selska razgovorka* (Rural Con-

versation) in 1902-1903. Then the Minister of Education, Ivan Šišmanov, furnished him a teaching post in Sofia and a position at the National Library. In 1906 this same mentor sent him and Pejo Javorov to Nancy and Paris to learn French and absorb European culture. After Šišmanov left the ministry Elin Pelin was given lesser positions in the library and elsewhere. Over this same period he belonged to the circle gathered about the humorous paper *Bəlgaran* (a distorted form of the word for 'Bulgarian'), a group which included cartoonist Aleksandər Božinov and actors Sava Ognjanov and Vasil Kirkov. Elin Pelin published a number of light sketches in *Bəlgaran.*

The primary collections of Elin Pelin's early work were two volumes of *Razkazi* (Stories), the first issued in 1904, the second in 1911. These pieces emphasized the unhappy condition of the peasantry of the 1890s and 1900s to such an extent that Dr. Krəstev dubbed Elin Pelin the "singer of rural misery". Certain of his early studies may be linked with the *bit* (*milieu*) writing of such populists as Mixalaki Georgiev and Todor Vlajkov. Though he was not interested principally in the detailed description of customs and settings and even claimed to oppose *bit* writing, the assertion that Elin Pelin was a *bit* writer had enough truth in it to keep it alive in the public mind. Another major project of the early years was the novelette *Geracite* (The Gerak Family). He wrote at it from 1904 to 1909, publishing parts of it in journals and printing it entire in the second volume of the *Razkazi.* Simultaneously Elin Pelin garnered fame as a writer of humorous stories in the distinctive dialect spoken by the *šopi*, the peasants of the writer's native Sofia region. Elin Pelin is one of several prominent Bulgarian writers now associated with specific regions of their country. Even less serious than Elin Pelin's stories in the *šop* dialect were some frivolous sketches originally printed in newspapers and magazines and gathered in the volumes *Pepel ot cigarite mi* (Ashes from My Cigarettes, 1905) and *Ot prozoreca* (From the Window, 1906).

During the war years, and most particularly from 1912 to 1915, Elin Pelin wrote little fiction. He did undertake a trip to Russia in the summer of 1913 for the purpose of sounding out public opinion on Bulgaria after the First Balkan War. He was accompanied there by Prof. Aleksandər Balabanov, who in the 1920s became such a close associate of his that he was jokingly called the "administrator of Elin Pelin's fame". During the First World War Elin Pelin promoted the official patriotic line in several war stories collected in *Kitka za junaka* (A Wreath for the Hero, 1917), a book which was republished in 1942 and made to serve in yet another conflict. The *šop* writer then reverted to form with his 1918 collection

entitled *Pižo i Pendo*, made up primarily of stories in the *šop* dialect written between 1902 and 1908.

After the First World War Elin Pelin attempted to resume more ordinary literary production. From 1921 to 1923 he contributed to Balabanov's literary newspaper *Razvigor* (the name of a certain type of wind), one of *Zlatorog*'s few serious competitors. He attained the apogee of his career in 1922, when he published his second complete novelette, *Zemja* (Land), and celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his literary activity. But the climax was accompanied by a crisis.

Elin Pelin had always favored the brief literary genres. He took nearly five years to complete *Geracite*. Another longish piece, *Nečista sila* (Unclean Power), though printed in part as early as 1909, was never completed. The history of *Zemja's* creation further illustrates his difficulties with longer works. While the novelette was coming out serially the author simply could not concoct a satisfactory ending for it. Finally the editor of the journal in which it was appearing wearied of his procrastination and stood over him as he wrote the conclusion, practically snatching each page from the desk as it was completed. Though the results were reasonably decent, this method of production *in extremis* was not to Elin Pelin's taste, and after 1922 his writing fell off sharply in quantity. One memoirist recalls that the surest way to anger him in the post-1922 period was to mention literature or the fact that some other author was turning out work, because he simply could not write.

Of course he did not merely sit around for the more than twenty-five years which elapsed before his death. He published a few things for adults, for instance the poems in prose collected in *Černi rozi* (Black Roses) of 1928. But many of these had been written before the war, and a large number of the remainder in 1921. In 1936 he put out two books with little in common. The first, *Pod manastirskata loza* (In the Monastery Arbor), was a gathering of charming little stories — some dating back as far as 1909, others written during the 1920s and 1930s — utilizing legendary subjects from saints' lives. The second, *Az ti toj* (I Thou He), was a group of belletristic *feuilletons*, separately published for the most part in 1933-1934, treating topical subjects. The literary value of these sketches was so minimal that the author later disavowed them, commenting that *Az ti toj* was "not a book at all but a rag of which I myself am ashamed".

Though Elin Pelin penned little for adults after 1922, he contributed much to other areas, particularly children's literature. From 1921 to 1931 he edited one children's magazine and published in others; in addition

he authored larger works designed for the juvenile market such as *Jan Bibijan* and *Jan Bibijan na lunata* (Jan Bibijan on the Moon). Since he could not support himself on his literary income, he obtained extra funds by writing textbooks on the side. He also received a salary as director of the Ivan Vazov Museum, established in 1926 in Vazov's former Sofia home. Elin Pelin retained this position from the beginning until 1 July, 1944, at which point he was pensioned off.

Elin Pelin exhibited some unpleasant personal characteristics during his latter years. He was bitter over the success of his more productive rivals, especially Jordan Jovkov, whom he once publicly accused of having plagiarized *Geracite*. He even envied his old friend and ally, the historian Simeon Radev, who recalled that once when somebody praised Radev's classic *Stroitelite na səvremenna Bəlgarija* (Builders of Modern Bulgaria), saying "This is a book which will remain", Elin Pelin interjected, outwardly jokingly but inwardly seriously, "Remain unsold, you mean?"

All during the 1930s Elin Pelin lived off his accumulated literary capital, mixing with members of the highest political circles and often going hunting for amusement. In 1938 his friends and associates organized a jubilee celebration of his sixtieth birthday and the fortieth anniversary of his literary activity. In 1940, rather to his surprise, he was elected to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. All of this indicates that he was quite at home in prewar Bulgarian society.

This being the case, Elin Pelin might have been expected to encounter difficulties after 1944, but in the event he proved quite adaptable. Thus in December of 1944 he dispatched a letter to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences urging it to purge itself of 'fascist' elements forthwith. He also assisted in the establishment of the communist organization for the very young, as he had had experience in working with juveniles. Such activities as these, enhanced by the halo effect of his turn-of-the-century literary production, when his work could be at least partially interpreted as incorporating principles of 'critical realism', led the new regime to forgive him his former sins and even embrace him with a certain enthusiasm: in 1948 his seventieth birthday was celebrated with fanfare, and yet another jubilee was held for him in April of 1949. He died of heart disease on 3 December, 1949.

After 1944 Elin Pelin did not convert himself into an unquestioning supporter of the new order. He continued to slight adult fiction for the much less politically sensitive area of children's literature. Moreover, when he did discuss the subject of adult literature he sometimes empha-

sized points which sounded a trifle heretical at the time. Thus in a speech of May 1949 to the Union of Writers he spoke at length about his philosophy of creation. The transcript of his remarks, published under the title "Kak piša" (How I Write), contributes much to our understanding of his literary method. In the course of his talk the aging author attacked the brand of socialist realism then standard in Bulgaria, a literature which dealt only with production problems and machines. He rejected the view that one should write always about the external sinews of industry. "If you live in factories," he remarked pointedly,

> you will get to know the life of the factory, you will get to know what happens in a factory, but you will not get to know the life of the individual man. You must study life as it is in its free moments, get to know what it is like outside the factory as well, get to know the shock worker not only as a shock worker, but also beyond the factory walls. ... We write a great deal more about tractors than we do about people, But man is the tractor, and the plow, and everything. Nothing at all happens without man.

Thus did the "humanist of Shopsko", to use Vivian Pinto's phrase, assert his faith in the centrality of the human spirit at a juncture in history when it was not easy to do such a thing. Man had always been at the core of Elin Pelin's literary vision, and he believed strongly that man should continue to occupy this position in all literature which claimed to espouse realism, whether socialist realism or any other kind.

Elin Pelin's own literary method was assuredly realistic. His early stories of peasant life were designed as shocking presentations of the unvarnished truth of existence. In surveying the memoir literature on him scholars discover that his fictional characters were frequently modelled upon his acquaintances, though he was not especially autobiographical in his work. He often received literary inspiration from a genuine occurrence, though perhaps at a remove. A prime example of this is furnished by the history of the creation of *Geracite*. According to the author, the original idea for the novelette occurred to him once when, while hastening to be treated for a painful toothache, he encountered a stranger who told him the purportedly true tale of the disintegration of an entire family. Elin Pelin then elaborated the details, but the nucleus of the story came from somebody else's account of a supposedly true event.

Despite the fact that Elin Pelin's descriptions could be starkly realistic, he did not err in thinking that only the unpleasant is genuine. The citation usually proffered in support of this statement is a passage from a story of 1903, "Kosači" (The Mowers). One of the characters, Blagolaž, begins to tell a fairy tale but is rudely interrupted by a companion, Lazo, who

objects that the fairy tale is entirely concocted, that there is no "truth" in it. Blagolaž eloquently defends his artistic rights, arguing that the "truth" might consist of a description of "uncle Todor's ragged pants" or of mowers setting out on their weary way to Thrace, but who cares about this sort of truth? The people themselves have invented fantastic fairytales so that the wondrous might seem to be the "truth" to them, so that they might forget everyday reality at least temporarily. In practice Elin Pelin never abandoned himself entirely to fantasy in his adult writing, but the lyrical and the poetic occupied a prominent place in it. Indeed he composed some poetry, although it is little remembered. The lyric impulse also found an outlet in his prose poems, in one of which — "Pogledi" (Glances) — he remarks that *if* he were a poet he would write short songs, not about nature, the forests, the mountains, morning or evening, but rather about a human being's youth, which he fails to appreciate until it is past. Such songs, he goes on, he would entitle "Pogledi", to honor the glances of fair maidens. In other prose poems from *Černi rozi* (they resemble the prose poėms of Ivan Turgenev, one of the greatest stylists in Russian literature, who also wrote poems in his youth) the author indulged in philosophical ruminations. In "Vəprosi" (Questions) he describes his love for all living things, even the most insignificant animals and insects. But then he sounds a jarring note by analyzing his bloodthirstiness: he is a hunter, he has killed birds at the height of their mating passion, wounded them and watched them die — and he feels no remorse. He can explain this split in his character only by postulating something of the "beast" in every man's soul.

There is a substantial dose of the unreal in the 'fables', to use the author's term, gathered in *Pod manastirskata loza.* In a small foreword the author recalls the many pleasant hours he has spent in conversation with the abbot of the monastery, Father Sisoj, mulling over the eternal questions of "God, the world, the vanity of life and the mystery of death". The stories in *Pod manastirskata loza* are narrated by Father Sisoj. One of the most moving among them is "Očite na Sveti Spiridon" (The Eyes of St. Spiridon). Spiridon, a youth of unblemished chastity, works as a cobbler. In order to guard against sexual temptation he always has his female clients leave their footprints in a box of sand from which he then takes their measurements. One day a brazen temptress comes to his shop and insists that he measure her foot directly. As Spiridon complies he realizes that he is in imminent danger of being overwhelmed by passion and quickly gouges out his eyes, thinking that in this way he can eliminate temptation. In the end, however, he discovers that the loss of his physical

eyes does not eliminate his trials. There rise before him all sorts of visions, in particular the memory of the temptress, whom he cannot expunge from his mind. In despair when it seems he will be as fiercely buffeted by evil as ever even though he has done everything he can to avoid it, he prays to God for a sign. When he arises from his knees, his eyes have been restored to him, as a mark that he must not negate the beauties of the physical world which God has created.

Despite its legendary tinge, "Očite na Sveti Spiridon" has a solidly realistic foundation, as is plain from the description of St. Spiridon's psychological difficulties, and especially the circumstance that his troubles are caused by a very earthly sexual passion. It is also sexual desire which — though in a crude form — motivates the plot of *Nečista sila* and recurs repeatedly in Elin Pelin's other short stories and novels. In *Nečista sila* the heroine manages, by utilizing her physical charms and particularly by displaying her ample breasts, to befog the minds of her admirers by arousing their lust, in order to deceive and exploit them. In his use of unadorned sensuality Elin Pelin resembles lesser prose-writers of the interwar years like Georgi Rajčev.

Social problems also drew Elin Pelin's attention, especially in his earliest and latest periods. We may consider "Čovekət, za kogoto vsički se grižat" (The Man Everybody Is Concerned About) as almost a random example of the satirical sketches of the 1930s comprising *Az ti toj*. The sketch describes an official committee convened to devise solutions for certain ill-defined social problems. The committee members avoid the real questions, preferring instead to deal with such matters as setting the time for their next meeting. One day a peasant, representing the class for whose benefit all these bureaucrats are supposed to be working, stumbles in by accident and is seized upon as a priceless specimen by the officials, who have never seen one before. He eventually dies in captivity because the committee neglects to feed him. If the committee could not take care of just one peasant, the author asks by implication, how could it possibly make decisions affecting the bulk of the country's population?

Though later on Elin Pelin preferred to forget works like "Čovekət, za kogoto vsički se grižat", he had less reason to be ashamed of the stories dating from his youthful, populist period. Representative of these sketches is "Napast Božija", set in a drought-ridden village besieged by sickness. The local priest interprets the plague as a sign of God's wrath and exhorts the population to repent of their sins. But an intelligent member of the younger generation realizes that the infection is surely spread from a polluted well used by the entire village. The priest anathematizes him for

this blasphemous notion, but with the aid of some supporters the hero closes off the well and prevents people from drinking from it. When the plague subsequently subsides, the people realize that the priest has grossly deceived them. The atmosphere at story's end is one of disconsolate impotence.

Other passions are at the root of some intrigues described by Elin Pelin. In "Ljubov" (Love) pride of social position impels a priest to forbid his daughter to marry a hired hand whom she loves, and the impetuous girl commits suicide. She knows a purity and intensity of passion which her parents' hearts had evidently never felt. In "Səlza Mladenova" (a girl's name) the heroine, who is engaged to be married, eagerly looks forward to an impressive wedding until she is informed by her future in-laws that this would be a waste of money. After overhearing a conversation in which her fiancé participates, she realizes even more clearly how central financial considerations will be to her marriage. Broken and disgusted by this revelation of her future husband's character, she weeps bitter tears but can discern no honorable way out of her predicament. An idealistic girl's illusions have been smashed through contact with unlovely reality.

Elin Pelin's novelettes treat certain less admirable facets of human psychology in detail. *Geracite* describes the gradual descent of the wealthy landowner Jordan Gerak from the apogee of wealth, power and influence which he had attained in his prime, the splitting apart of his sons and their wives, the chasms of selfishness and indifference which separate them all. At the end the old man is so totally ignored by his children that when he quietly dies one day while lying in the sun nobody discovers his passing until his corpse has turned quite cold. *Zemja* is a horrifying account of an individual's moral corruption stemming from greed for land. The hero, Enjo, is obsessed by a driving ambition to acquire the parcels of land needed to fill out his farm. As his brother owns one piece of land which cuts into his holdings, Enjo comes to regard him as an enemy. One day, his mind clouded by alcohol, Enjo assaults his brother with murderous intent and leaves him for dead, arranging things so that he appears to have been killed accidentally. His brother survives, but in the form of a human vegetable incapable of speaking or caring for himself. Enjo comprehends the enormity of his crime, sells off his property and lives out his life almost in poverty. He dies in the winter when the soil is frozen so hard it will not receive him. At the end his corpse catches fire as it lies with a candle in the church and is thoroughly scorched.

The author's perspective in *Geracite* and *Zemja*, as in many of his short

stories, is sufficiently cheerless to justify placing Elin Pelin in the pessimistic camp of Bulgarian letters. His pessimism is shallower than that of a Mixajlovski or a Javorov because it is generally devoid of any metaphysical foundation, but it remains pessimism nevertheless. He saw little hope for the improvement of a corrupt world.

The second great master of Bulgarian prose between the wars, Jordan Jovkov (1880-1937), was a man of quite a different mold. His outlook was fundamentally optimistic, and the keynote of his writing, as critics never weary of pointing out, was the wish to see the resolution of conflicts in Bulgarian society. Though he could describe scenes fully as ghastly as any Elin Pelin created, Jovkov felt that the world was nonetheless good. Those who preached doctrines of class warfare or analogous viewpoints could not stomach Jovkov; he was rather an author for those who valued a smoothly functioning society. He was also a fine stylist. His prose is so closely wrought that the unattentive reader may miss the whole point of a short story of his because he has skipped over a detail tucked away in half a sentence, but when read carefully Jovkov is one of the most rewarding of Bulgarian writers.

Jovkov was born in November of 1880 in the village of Žeravna, Sliven district. He received his elementary education in his native and other villages; then he attended the *gymnasium* in Sofia. In 1902 he entered a military academy in Knjaževo, a village near the capital, and stayed there for two years, but army life did not appeal to so mild a man. Consequently he abandoned the military and enrolled as a desultory law student at Sofia University, but soon left to teach in various villages in Dobrudža, the region of the country with which his name is now inextricably linked. It was during this footloose time that he began to publish, initially some lyric poems of 1905 which he later omitted from his collected works, and a few short stories which he likewise considered substandard afterwards. His only prewar story to endure was "Ovčarova žalba" (The Shepherd's Plaint), whose subheading "Staroplaninska legenda" (A Balkan Legend) supplied him with the idea for his later collection *Staroplaninski legendi.*

Following his provincial period Jovkov moved to Sofia, where he joined a group of young writers and intellectuals, including Georgi Rajčev, Konstantin Konstantinov and others, who would make their marks in Bulgarian literature after the First World War. Jovkov attended the group's informal gatherings at a Sofia coffee house which was a great intellectual center in the capital at that time, and in fact remained a denizen of coffee houses and restaurants the rest of his life. A taciturn individual, Jovkov usually said little at such gatherings, though once he

got started he could tell a better story than most. But ordinarily he preferred to sit in silence, listening to others converse. The spoken word was not his favorite medium.

Jovkov's personality was highly self-contained. He revered the established virtues and verities, which is always easier if one is independent and alone. A similar outlook informed his married life. He held that a wife should be content to be homemaker and mother and not demand equality with her husband. It took him some time to find a person who answered to this requirement, but when he did get married, at the age of thirty-eight in 1918, it was to a woman who lived solely through and in him, who considered that her one aim in life was to see that her husband was comfortable, nurse him in his illnesses, and make it easier for him to write.

After the First Balkan War Jovkov was employed as an editor and librarian at the ministry of foreign affairs. Though he worked most of his life for this ministry, he was thoroughly unfitted for it, as he was not interested in foreign cultures: one cannot imagine his having written anything like travel sketches about trips abroad. During the First World War he served first at the front, then on the editorial staff of *Voenni izvestija* (Military News). At this time he wrote some of the war stories which are an important segment of his literary legacy. When he published two volumes of them under the simple title *Razkazi* (Stories) in 1917 and 1918, their high quality attracted official notice. After the vicissitudes of the wars and then his marriage, in 1919 Jovkov found himself in Varna with no means of material support. When his situation was no better by the following year, a friend interceded with the ministry of foreign affairs and obtained for him an appointment as press *attaché* at the Bulgarian Legation in Bucharest. Bucharest lies in the southern part of Rumania, close to the Bulgarian border, but though Jovkov lived there from 1920 to 1927 he never adjusted to life in a foreign city. In 1927 he was transferred back to Sofia, where he occupied a modest position at the ministry of foreign affairs until his untimely death in 1937.

Jovkov's literary career was more interesting than his personal life during these years. After issuing the novelette *Žetvarjat* (The Harvester) in 1920, in the middle of the decade he offered the public three major collections of short stories: *Posledna radost* (Last Joy, 1926), *Staroplaninski legendi* (Balkan Legends, 1927), and *Večeri v antimovskija xan* (Evenings at the Antimovo Inn, 1927). The stories in these three collections were of such a caliber that in 1929, upon the recommendation of the chairman of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Jovkov was awarded the

Kiril and Metodij prize for literature. Jovkov all along received due recognition and encouragement from the scholarly and intellectual establishment.

By the beginning of the 1930s Jovkov was firmly established as an author, but he did not for this reason modify his modest way of life. He continued to work at the ministry. He sat around a great deal in Sofia coffee houses, especially the "Bəlgarija", claiming that they were his "second study" in which he carried on creative work and that life without them was inconceivable for him. In the 1930s, though Jovkov continued to write short stories, this genre's relative importance in his production declined. For one thing, he turned to the theretofore untouched area of the drama, composing four plays: *Albena* (1930), *Borjana* (1932), *Milionerət* (The Millionaire, 1932), and *Obiknoven čovek* (An Ordinary Person, 1936). The novel also claimed a portion of Jovkov's attention in the 1930s. *Žetvarjat*, labeled a *povest* (novelette), had been his longest work of the 1920s, though he had written some lengthy short stories, such as "Posledna radost". In 1930 he printed *Žetvarjat* in a second, revised edition; in 1934 he came out with his longest and best-known novel, *Čiflikət kraj granicata* (The Farmstead at the Frontier), a narrative set amid the events of the September uprising of 1923. Beyond that, by the time of his death he had composed portions of an amusing satirical work entitled *Priključenijata na Gorolomov* (Gorolomov's Adventures), a variant on the picaresque novel in which the hero encounters sundry mishaps and adventures in Bulgarian villages.

For all his efforts in the novel and the drama, Jovkov by no means abandoned the short story in the 1930s. A third volume of *Razkazi* appeared in 1932, followed by two other collections: *Ženskо sərce* (A Woman's Heart, 1935) and *Ako možexa da govorjat* (If They Could Speak, 1936: animal stories).

At the same time Jovkov's health worsened. Suffering from gall bladder attacks, in the fall of 1937 he traveled to the spa of Xisara, only to suffer a severe attack there. Though quickly removed to a hospital in Plovdiv, he died on 15 October, 1937. His death was an unexpected blow for Bulgarian literary society and occasioned widespread mourning. Collections of articles and poems in his memory were published.

Until very recently Jovkov did not fare nearly so well as Elin Pelin in Bulgarian scholarship. The reason for this lies primarily in his "conciliatory" view of the life he described, his consistent efforts to blunt points of conflict rather than have them develop into sharp clashes and clear-cut tragedies. Jovkov also had no taste for literature with a social purpose.

We know a great deal about the way Jovkov worked thanks to his Boswell, the psychologist Spiridon Kazandžiev, who has published detailed notes on his conversations with Jovkov. A study of this and other sources shows that in his artistic approach Jovkov was what may be termed a 'visionary realist': that is, though his basic method was realistic, he ordinarily did not describe things which he had observed recently and directly. It was not essential, he argued, to maintain daily contact with "life" in order to be a successful realistic writer. If the mind and the imagination of the writer seemingly lolling in a coffee house were in fact engaged, then he was quite as industrious as he might be expected to be. Jovkov claimed that all the material he required for his writing had been stored up thirty years before during his *Wanderjahre*. All he had to do in the 1930s was summon up the past in his evidently extraordinarily vivid memory to obtain sufficient impressions for his work. If memory failed him, dreams sometimes came to his aid. Though once or twice he thought of creating a historical novel, he never followed through on such a project because he could write well only about that which he had experienced. He was incapable of evoking the spirit of times beyond his direct knowledge.

Jovkov usually worked at a remove in space as well as time, as may be illustrated by his attitude toward Dobrudža. After the Second Balkan War Dobrudža was almost constantly in Rumanian hands, so that Jovkov felt like an exile in his native land. Jovkov apparently never returned to Dobrudža after the 1913 war. This was not because he could not — after all he spent several years as a diplomat in Rumania — but because he was afraid to. In the 1930s he feared that if he revisited the area and discovered that it had changed to a greater extent than his spirit could tolerate, the shock might be disastrous for his art. It would be like awakening from a dream: all his visions would vanish irretrievably. Under the circumstances, he thought, the safest thing to do was to avoid the actual reality of the moment and thus escape what could have been a psychologically crippling disillusionment. It was for similar reasons that once when working on a story in which the Czar of Bulgaria figured, Jovkov deliberately let slip an opportunity to speak to him lest the "whole illusion [created in his mind] be destroyed by the living man, by his voice, by his conversation". In like manner he did not care to meet famous writers. He had revered authors enormously in his earlier years and later complained whenever he was not accorded analogous honor. He is reported to have fallen into an ecstatic trance when once he saw Javorov at a distance in a Sofia park. Ivan Šišmanov tried but never

managed to introduce Jovkov to Vazov. This may have been partially because the younger man was painfully shy, but it was also probably because he feared being disillusioned by meeting in the unimpressive flesh the author whose works he had so long admired. Jovkov preferred to live with a reality from which the coarse and unlovely edges had been worn by the soothing action of time and distance. He was a realist who refused to gaze firmly and directly at reality.

Jovkov was also a very Bulgarian writer, little influenced by foreign models, nurtured almost entirely by the native literary tradition. Though he lived most of his adult life in cities such as Sofia and Bucharest, urban themes are noticeably absent from his novels and short stories, which are ordinarily set in the village and describe rural *mores*. His heroes are tied to Bulgarian soil except for occasional brief forays into a foreign country. In this connection it is interesting to note the prominence of the border (usually the Rumanian border) in Jovkov's work. The action of his major novel occurs on a farmstead located near the border, and the border figures in several short stories: Some of his war stories have to do with border guards, and the hero of "Mečtatel" (The Dreamer) is a minor official at a border post. Jovkov's affinity for the seashore derives from his "border complex", which evidently sprang from the conviction that one feels the keenest sense of national pride at the line separating one's native country from a foreign one.

Jovkov's calm, conciliatory approach pervades all his writing. Even his war stories, which treat the sharpest of human conflicts, exhibit an important component of inner peace. Indeed several of them bear little relation to the cruel realities of war. For example the hero of the story "Svetata nošt" (Holy Night, 1917) loses himself in memories of his childhood, recalling how once he attended church with his mother on Easter Eve and his soul was filled with faith and trust in God. This powerful memory sustains him in times of trial such as those he is then going through. On the other hand, Jovkov does not entirely gloss over the horrors of combat in his war stories. The description of the chaotic battlefield after the battle in "Pred Odrin" (Near Odrin) — the motionless corpses in varying postures, the streams of dried blood, the dark birds wheeling ominously in the sky — is very gripping. But its effect is diminished when the narrator compares the scene with a famous painting by the Russian painter Il'ja Repin and adds that he perceived it all as if anesthetized, trapped in a "heavy and sick dream". Other tableaux of terror, not necessarily connected with war, are drawn with a species of fascinated detachment. In "Šibil", from *Staroplaninski legendi*, the bandit hero

Šibil comes from the mountains into the village for love of a beautiful girl, Rada, the daughter of a local *čorbadžija* who is plotting to destroy him. The ambush is successful: when Šibil appears on the main street he is shot down. At the last moment Rada runs to protect him and perishes along with him in a climactic scene narrated very tersely and pervaded with an atmosphere of impending doom. Jovkov employs analogous techniques for the denouement of "Postolovi vodenici" (Postol's Mills). The heroine of the story resolves to abandon her incapacitated husband for a handsome gypsy who has lingered in the village long enough to turn her head. The avenger, Marin, meets them as they are departing and, hesitating not a moment, with his tremendous strength hurls the cart in which they are riding from a bridge into a stream. The reader is not told so specifically, but it is clear that the lovers perish, appropriately punished for their misdeeds. Marin then goes calmly about his business as if nothing had happened.

Peaceful scenes came more easily to Jovkov than violent ones, however. "Pesenta na koleletata" (The Song of the Wheels) presents a master cart-maker who has devised a method of arranging pieces of metal on the axles of the carts he manufactures so that they will produce a pleasant musical sound as they move. "Leten dəžd" (Spring Rain) is about a widower who rescues a woman from a summer flood. She turns out to be a widow herself, and when the widower takes her home to dry out her clothes she likes his family and decides to stay with him. The conflict between the generations, like most other clashes, is muted in Jovkov's fiction. In "Bašta i sin" (Father and Son) the father suspects that his son has been squandering his substance when the latter arrives home and claims to have been robbed of the money he was bringing from the market. One day shortly thereafter the father himself is returning home from the market. When he dozes off, the horses of their own accord pull up at a rural inn — plainly they know the way because the son has frequented the place. Upon entering the father discovers some old friends, particularly the beautiful female tavern keeper, upon whom even he is not averse to wasting money. When he returns home he lets his son know that he has been detected in his deception but does not punish him because he himself has enjoyed his escapade so much. Thus where other authors might have contrasted the older generation to the younger, Jovkov concludes that they are brothers under the skin. The instance of the greatest conflict suppressed in Jovkov is perhaps that central to *Žetvarjat.* The plot revolves about a quarrel over a piece of land between two prominent men of the village, one of whom will be ruined if he loses. Jovkov

settles the situation, not by the destruction of one of the rivals, but rather through a Christian reconciliation.

The most characteristic Jovkovian type is the daydreamer fit for little in the real world. The quintessential dreamer is Bojan Bojanov of the story "Mečtatel". A minor official, Bojanov still hopes for family happiness with a lovely wife even though he is by now an unattractive middle-aged man. For a time he considers cultivating a local Russian girl who visits the post to write and send letters, but all thought of her vanishes when he meets the Lozev family, who spend one night at his border post. Smitten by the daughter of the family, Vjara, Bojanov manages to convince himself that she is interested in him when in fact this is not the case. After she departs the next day, Bojanov concocts fantastic daydreams of how Vjara will someday return to marry him and he will become Minister of Post and Telegraph. Before long his daydreams run so rampant that he becomes positively ill because of them, and at the conclusion it appears they may bring him to his deathbed. Thus a psychological trait which in Jovkov's other characters may be appealing, in Bojanov develops into something pathological. In any case people like Bojanov cannot be activists or preachers of great social truths: they are too firmly swathed in their private worlds to come to grips with an unpleasant reality.

Besides Elin Pelin and Jordan Jovkov, Bulgaria produced several other authors who specialized in the short story and the novel. Georgi Rajčev (1882-1947), for instance, represented the psychological trend in Bulgarian prose. Born in a village near Stara Zagora, he attended the *gymnasium* in the latter city without graduating. His lack of formal education allied him to Elin Pelin and Jovkov. Again, like these colleagues of his and unlike the preceding generation, he had no European aspirations: he did not attempt to study abroad and remained rather circumscribed in his outlook. Indeed Rajčev was more provincial than even Vazov, who was well read in French literature and traveled abroad on several occasions. A significant portion of Rajčev's generation reverted to something like cultural isolationism after the decline of the internationalist Slavejkov-Krəstev camp.

Rajčev could not live solely as a writer: the total sum he received for his published work was reportedly quite small. He filled some very ordinary jobs in Stara Zagora for a time, and commenced his writing career with a short story in Strašimirov's *Naš život* in 1907. In 1908 he moved to the capital and obtained a position in the Sofia school system.

There he joined the group of young Sofia writers to which Jovkov also belonged. After the First World War he worked as a journalist and a civil servant, ending up as an inspector of reading rooms under the Minister of Education. He found intellectual stimulation in the *Zlatorog* group. Rajčev died in 1947 after what was, from the external point of view, an uneventful career.

Rajčev was more colorful as writer than as bureaucrat. Though he published individual stories in the years before the First World War and brought out a collection of them in 1918 under a pseudonym, he was not recognized as a writer of talent until the publication of his novelette *Məničək svjat* (A Small World, 1919). Another novelette, written in 1910, appeared in 1920 under the title *Carica Neranza* (Czarina Neranza). Rajčev is remembered, however, as a short story writer, and it was during the 1920s that he published most in this genre, with such collections as the *Razkazi* (Stories) of 1923, *Pesen na gorata* (Song of the Forest) of 1928, and *Legenda za parite* (Legend of Money) of 1931. The short story was always Rajčev's *forte*, for even separately printed works like *Məničək svjat* could be classified as long short stories as easily as novelettes.

Rajčev was not oriented exclusively toward the short story, however. Having had poetic ambitions in his youth, in 1929 he put out a drama in verse titled *Elenovo carstvo* (The Stag's Kingdom); in 1937 he printed something approaching a short novel, *Gospodinət s momičeto* (The Gentleman and the Girl). Among his last collections of short stories was a grouping of three under the title *Zlatnijat ključ* (The Golden Key, 1942). His selected works came out in three volumes between 1940 and 1943. In addition Rajčev published a quantity of children's books over the years from 1925 until his death.

According to those who knew him, Rajčev had an exaggerated notion of his own literary significance and could not comprehend why Goethe in Germany or Penčo Slavejkov in Bulgaria were considered great national poets. For some reason he felt that he was competing with Dostoevskij because he treated many of the same questions as the Russian writer, and would fly into a rage upon discovering that Dostoevskij had already worked out some problem which had just occurred to him. At such moments he would jokingly accuse the Russian novelist of having "stolen his ideas". Though Rajčev was among the most ambitious of writers, he was not among the most gifted even in the context of a minor literature. He may be paradoxically described as one who took a shallow view of the depths of the human psyche. His stories are intriguing on first reading, but as a rule they do not bear up beyond this.

Rajčev set his stories in both the village and the city because the social ambience in which his characters moved was not important. His gaze was fixed upon his heroes' inner world, and usually upon its more pathological aspects. Rajčev's is a universe of uncontrollable passions leading to the extremes of personal violence, such as rape and murder. Like Stamatov's, his descriptions tend to be hyperbolic and horrific. As one critic (Simeon Sultanov) has commented, his stories often describe a day or an instant in which a man's whole life is altered catastrophically. Rajčev, again like Stamatov, lacked any solid religious or philosophical foundation for his view of life and so floundered about in a sterile nihilism then to be found among a certain segment of the Bulgarian intelligentsia. There are no such things, Rajčev maintained, as honesty, goodness, self-sacrifice: there are only self-interest, the urge for material comfort, and crass sexual drives.

Rajčev was influenced by decadent modernists like the Russians Leonid Andreev and Mixail Arcybašev and the Pole Stanisław Przybyszewski. His concern with the night side of human nature is obvious from his short stories' very titles, which frequently consist of only one word: "Strax" (Fear), "Ləža" (Falsehood), "Smərt" (Death), "Bezumie" (Insanity), "Grjax" (Sin), "Sənovidenija" (Dreams), "Merzavec" (Scoundrel). His superficially diabolic short stories of the 1920s abound in murders, suicides, sick dreams, and other abnormal phenomena. The primary cause of all social and personal disorders is simple sex, an irresistible force which leads to tragedy. The power of woman over man derives both from her sexuality and her mystery. The hero of one of Rajčev's more diabolic stories ("Karnaval") remarks of a woman:

> She changed roles so rapidly and so expertly that, bemused as I was by her words and intoxicated by the caresses of her liberated flesh, it seemed to me that in those instants I could see with mystical perception the very essence of that mysterious creature woman, whom we love or hate, destroy her or perish at her hands, still without ever knowing or understanding her.

The story "Grjax" chronicles a tempestuous affair between a schoolteacher named Stan and the wife of his idiot brother. Stan realizes the danger of his situation but is unable to control himself, for the passion between him and his mistress borders on madness. "Reconciled to the thought of his grievous adultery, he no longer sought any connection between silly human concepts of good and evil." The whole relationship between them continues like an "enchantment" until finally the spell is

broken when the brother, furious at being cuckolded, murders Stan with his bare hands. Sexual passion at a remove lies behind a subtler murder in "Ləža", the chief personages of which are a couple named Najden and Nona. Nona had left her husband to live with her lover for a month but then returned and smoothed things over. When she bears a child a few months later, Najden is extremely happy until the suspicion is sown in his mind by others that the child is not his, but the lover's. His close attachment to it turns to bitter ashes, and one day he more or less allows it to fall to its death in a well which he had subconsciously willed to leave uncovered. After the deed is done he discovers that the child was in fact his. Nona sincerely repents of her adultery and the two are reconciled through their child's death. The source of the tragedy in such stories is the power of sex, which, though it may be strictly physiological in its origins, is still mysterious, an "enchantment" which entraps those subject to it.

Rajčev usually wrote of sex in the raw, but he occasionally treated love romantically. The long short story "Pesen na gorata" is a moving tale of the love of an older man for a younger girl whose days are numbered by illness. He takes her to the healing forest and their affection flowers in the midst of nature, but this is not sufficient to save her — indeed in a way their attachment even hastens the girl's demise. The novelette *Gospodinət s momičeto* also depicts a more idealized love affair than one might expect from Rajčev. Though still pessimistic, his approach in such stories is not so nihilistic as elsewhere.

Although Rajčev is mainly a psychological writer unconcerned with political questions, social currents occasionally intrude into his work. This is perceptible in embryo in a story like "Vragove" (Enemies), where the heroes, at odds for personal and political reasons, are reconciled after one risks his life to save the other. "Nakraj grada" (At the Edge of the City) is even more social in content, describing as it does an elderly man who is an outcast from society. Nevertheless, the author is more interested in his hero's psychology than in the social *milieu* in which he moves.

Another representative of the psychological current in Bulgarian prose of the interwar period was Dimitər Šišmanov (1889-1945). Since he was highly placed under the old regime, Šišmanov was executed after the communist takeover and has since become an 'unperson' in modern Bulgarian literature. He attracted public notice at the beginning of the 1920s with what remains his best novel, *Xaj-lajf* (Highlife). After writing other novels in the 1920s, in the 1930s he turned to the short story, a number of which he printed in *Zlatorog*. Being a diplomat, he wrote for

the most part about the social and political *élite* both in Bulgaria and abroad, as the titles of some of his stories indicate: "Edno zasedanie na Obštestvoto na narodite" (A Session of the League of Nations) or "Ku-Lin, Čembərlen i Erio" (Ku-Lin, Chamberlain and Herriot). Šišmanov, the son of Ivan Šišmanov, educated at the University of Geneva, man of international connections, occupies a unique niche in the history of Bulgarian literature.

For all that Šišmanov moved in the highest circles, at the beginning at least he was a writer of intellectual honesty, unsympathetic toward the artificial ways of his associates. This attitude is quite apparent in his novel *Xaj-lajf*. The good-hearted Jovkov is said to have upbraided Šišmanov for it on the grounds that an author should love his characters, which Šišmanov did not. This short novel is in large measure an attack on the Sofia *beaumonde* and all its empty occupations, superficial relationships and occasional viciousness. The hero, Stojan Tanev, is an honorable man in rebellion against his world. At the end, when he lies dying in the hospital after being wounded in battle because some of his associates saw to it that he was placed where the fighting was fiercest, he for a time thinks he has misjudged the humanity of his set when several of his friends, those "beautiful people" of the Bulgaria of the 1920s, come to visit him. However, he is soon deserted by all his erstwhile colleagues and realizes that he has viewed them correctly all along. But *Xaj-lajf* is also a psychological work because most of it is set in the form of a diary, kept by Tanev, recording his unrequited passion for Xristina, a genuine member of the highlife set who never does anything more than flirt seriously with him. The book is essentially an account of Tanev's agonized attempts to decide whether Xristina cares for him at all. After a side-romance which seemingly confirms his opinion about the rottenness of high society types, he follows Xristina to a fashionable resort where, much to his surprise, she welcomes him warmly and even gives herself to him. But when he speaks to her of love and eternal togetherness she becomes furious and leaves him: though willing to have a casual affair with him, she could not possibly be his wife. Instead she marries a Spanish diplomat and departs for Madrid. After Tanev's death the diary is sent to her there, only to be returned with the communication that she has left for India and the Philippines and it is uncertain when she will be in Madrid again. On this callous note ends an absorbing study of a man sincerely in love in a corrupt *milieu*. It is clear that, far from being an apologist for high society in a novel like *Xaj-lajf*, Šišmanov condemns it heartily, and with the knowledgeability of an insider.

Šišmanov and Rajčev were straightforward writers, offering little that was stylistically new. Nikolaj Rajnov (1889-1954) — a man of remarkable physical gauntness and intellectual adaptability — differed from them in this area, though he also investigated his characters' psychology and subconscious motives in some of his best works. In the 1920s he was one of the few representatives of symbolism in prose.

Rajnov was the son of a minor official in a village in the Tərnovo region. His mother died when he was young and he was left to shift for himself. After studying in a theological seminary he declined to be consecrated priest because he was repelled by the behavior and character of many churchmen whom he had observed, but in later life he was much interested in the esoteric and the occult. Rajnov studied philosophy at Sofia University for a year; after a time he took courses at the Art Academy.

Rajnov's first book, *Bogomilski legendi* (Bogomil Legends, 1912), brought him renown as a writer of symbolist prose. During the First World War he worked as a correspondent, but apparently he used his spare time during the conflict to advantage, since he published several books soon after the war's end, including *Videnija iz drevna Bəlgarija* (Visions from Ancient Bulgaria, 1918), *Kniga za carete* (Book of the Czars, 1918), and *Gradət* (The City, 1919). As may be surmised from the first two titles listed, Rajnov had a mystical perception of the glories of medieval Bulgaria. He loved to evoke the shades of ancient kings and queens while wandering in fancy among their graves. Indeed, he deliberately separated himself from the reality of his day to such an extent as to declare once that "contemporary life cannot yield any material for fictional prose or poetry".

A man of Rajnov's temperament would naturally be attracted to symbolism, and in 1925 he contributed to late symbolist verse with his *Korabət na bezsmərtnite* (Ship of the Immortals). At roughly the same time, however, new trends had appeared in his best collection of short stories, *Siromax Lazar* (Poor Lazarus, 1922). Ever the irrationalist, in these pieces Rajnov preached the supremacy of 'direct vision', or feeling, over reasoned analysis. He was especially fascinated by the mystery of death, which he discussed frequently and in detail. As Rajnov was a conscious stylist (in the 1920s he published theoretical articles on stylistic questions in *Zlatorog*) treating rather complex problems and situations, the reader may find it difficult to grasp the essence of his mystical outlook. At its core, however, it seems to be reducible, according to the critic Georgi Canev, to a philosophy of totally self-sacrificing love. Christ in

Rajnov's work tells his followers that they should not be content with merely giving the shirts off their backs to their brothers: they should be ready to yield up their very souls for them.

From the 1920s until his death the prolific Rajnov produced books of the most varied types at an astounding rate. He kept on writing fiction, such as the stories included in *Otdavna, mnogo otdavna* (Long, Long Ago, 1939), but he also produced many scholarly works. After being appointed head of the Plovdiv Public Library in 1922 he studied documents on Bulgarian folklore. In 1925 he traveled to Paris to work on classical art and culture, later returning to Bulgaria to accept a position as professor of the history of art at the Art Academy. In ensuing years he labored over his twelve-volume *Istorija na plastičnite izkustva* (History of the Plastic Arts) as well as his multi-volume *Večnoto v našata literatura* (The Eternal in Our Literature, 1941), an anthology of the best writing by Bulgarian authors. Thanks to his prodigious diligence, by 1939 he was the author of some sixty original and scholarly books and the compiler of roughly thirty anthologies. At the same time he was so out of favor with the regime that a jubilee celebration for him could not be held in that year, but by 1949, under quite different conditions, he had so managed to atone for his idealist and symbolist past as to be granted a gala anniversary celebration by the government. After 1944 Rajnov spent most of his time doing research in the history of art, preparing the initial volume of a *Vseobšta istorija na izkustvoto* (General History of Art) and a monograph on the first important Bulgarian painter of modern times, Nikolaj Pavlovič. He was writing a large book on wood carvings when he died in 1954, by which time his significant contributions to Bulgarian artistic literature were thirty years and more in the past.

Among the prose genres of the 1920s and 1930s, the historical novel reached a prominence which it has retained down to the present. One of the first major historical novels to appear after the First World War was *Xljab naš nasuštnij* (Our Daily Bread, 1926) by the prolific Stojan Čilingirov (1881-1962). But by far the most memorable body of historical fiction in the interwar period and after 1944 was produced by Stojan Zagorčinov (1889-). Born in Plovdiv, Zagorčinov graduated from Sofia University and settled in the capital, where he taught French at a military academy. He acquired a reputation in 1926 with the publication of his novelette *Legenda za Sveta Sofija* (Legend of St. Sofia), but the outstanding work in his canon is *Den posleden, den Gospoden* (The Last Day, Day of the

Lord), published in three parts from 1931 to 1934 (in 1949 it was issued in a second, revised edition with the title truncated to *Den posleden*, no doubt for ideological reasons). Both *Legenda za Sveta Sofija* and *Den posleden, den Gospoden* were set in the period of medieval Bulgaria's flowering, and since 1944 Zagorčinov has continued to concentrate upon this era with such books as *Praznik v Bojana* (Festival in Bojana, 1950) and especially *Ivajlo* (1962), which describes the great peasant revolt of the late 1270s. Zagorčinov has also written plays and sketches.

In his four principal historical novels Zagorčinov remains within the limits of approximately two centuries, from the time of the painting of the famous Bojana church near Sofia in the twelfth century (one critic has termed *Praznik v Bojana* a 'belletristic monograph' about the painter of the striking Bojana frescoes) through the upheavals of Ivajlo's uprising and down to the fall of the Second Bulgarian Empire in 1393. The tragic dramatism of this last, culminating moment fascinated the writer, just as it fascinates the reader of *Den posleden, den Gospoden*. In this novel Zagorčinov succeeded remarkably in recapturing the spirit of an epoch long past, largely by means of incarnating the intellectual currents of the time in individual characters and then causing them to interact with one another. The monk Teodosij adheres to the doctrines of the leading religious movement of the time, Hesychasm. Some critics have chided Zagorčinov for paying excessive attention to this mystical school, but it was surely worthy of note as the intellectual expression of a culture which had reached toppling height. The main active characters are the czar, Ivan Aleksandər, and the rebel Momčil, each of whom in his blindness hastens the downfall of the Bulgarian state. Momčil is so obsessed with the revolution as not to comprehend that the Turkish peril is an even greater evil than the existing Bulgarian order. For his part, Ivan Aleksandər deludes himself into thinking that the Turks will merely crush his enemies and then depart, as they have done before. He therefore refuses to join any anti-Turkish alliances and consequently goes down to defeat. Both Momčil and Ivan Aleksandər act intelligently and according to their best judgment, but each turns out to have been tragically unaware of the possible results of his policies. The reader can only watch helplessly as each makes decisions leading to catastrophe.

The trend in the 1920s and 1930s toward historical novels designed to glorify the Bulgarian past also caught up Fani Popova-Mutafova (1902-). Educated in Sofia, she studied music in Germany before turning to writing. In the 1920s she built up a modest but secure reputation for herself by means of short stories with delicate treatments of the feminine

psychology. Such works formed the backbone of the volumes *Ženata s nebesnata roklja* (The Woman in the Blue Dress, 1927) and *Ženata na prijatelja mi* (My Friend's Wife, 1929). The title story of the latter collection pictures an apparently mousy woman who is about to lose her husband's affection precisely because of her total devotion to him. It is only when she discards her self-abnegation and begins hewing out an artistic career for herself that she regains her husband's esteem, although once she has accomplished this she abandons her career for his sake. Popova-Mutafova is a feminist of a special stripe. She does not advocate separating women from home and family but instead demands respect for woman in her role as wife and mother.

Today Fani Popova-Mutafova is thought of as a writer of historical novels, although she kept publishing short stories all through the 1930s. Some of her chief historical works are *Solunskijat čudotvorec* (The Miracle-Worker of Salonika, 1929-1930), *Dəšterjata na Kalojana* (Kalojan's Daughter, 1936), *Joan Asen* (1937) and *Poslednijat Asenovec* (The Last of the Asens, 1939). These novels glorified the 'bourgeois' Bulgarian past. After 1944 the author repudiated this chauvinistic purpose, and when her works are republished now they are supplied with apologetic forewords. Still, Popova-Mutafova's reputation as a historical novelist is assured, although it is barely possible that eventually her literary fame may rest more heavily upon her short stories than it has up to now.

Another well known historical novelist of the 1920s and 1930s was Dobri Nemirov (1882-1945), the author of a trilogy (*Bratja* [The Brothers, 1927]; *Pərvi brazdi* [First Furrows, 1929]; and *Prez ogənja* [Through the Fire, 1931]) which set out to describe the Bulgarian society of Rakovski's day, then bring the story down first to the years around the liberation, and finally to the time of writing.

The communist authors of the interwar decades, like the symbolists, produced a body of literature based upon relatively well defined assumptions. Two of the most outstanding communist prosewriters were Ljudmil Stojanov and Georgi Karaslavov. To be sure, in 1920 Stojanov could still assert: "To be a realist, someone has said, means to be nothing", and he at first assisted Trajanov and Radoslavov in publishing *Xiperion*. He castigated Geo Milev when the latter began to slip from the symbolist orbit, and for a period continued writing verse which by and large ran on the symbolist tracks and was collected in such volumes as *Pramajka* (Urmother, 1925) and *Svetaja svetix* (Holy of Holies, 1926). But Stojanov

was clearly swayed by the events of 1923-1925, and even in his earlier short stories, for instance those written from 1918 to 1925 and gathered in *Bič Božij* (The Scourge of God, 1927), one discovers 'critical realist' strains interwoven with decadent ones. Among his better known tales of this period is the gruesome "Milosərdieto na Marsa" (The Mercy of Mars, 1923), supposedly based upon war experiences. The piece describes several individuals in occupied territory who are unfairly and summarily sentenced to death. The narrator realizes the complete injustice of the sentence but, bound by military discipline, cannot prevent its being carried out. Furthermore, as the soldiers are forbidden to use their rifles, the condemned must be executed with knives. This is a messy task which revolts and dehumanizes those who must see to it.

His critical articles show that by about 1926 Stojanov had transferred his allegiance to the radical camp. He continued to write absorbing short stories, for instance those collected in *Ženski duši* (Feminine Souls, 1929). If the content of these stories was not totally acceptable from the communist point of view, that fault was remedied in novels like *Xolera* (Cholera, 1935). In the 1930s Stojanov published quantities of criticism, novels, short stories, poetry, plays (many with classical titles), and biographies or fictional biographies of such figures as Vasil Levski (1930) and Georgi Benkovski, the revolutionary leader of 1876 (also 1930). Stojanov's conversion from symbolism to communism, though not abrupt, was thorough. Since 1944 he has received numerous honors, including the presidency of the Union of Bulgarian Writers, membership in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the national parliament. He is now the unofficial patriarch of Bulgarian letters, his distant symbolist past being recalled as infrequently as possible.

Georgi Karaslavov (1904-) was from the beginning a consistent communist writer. After a checkered early career which included participation in the September rebellion of 1923, he departed to study agronomy in Prague in 1929. While there he labored as a construction worker in a Prague suburb, putting his experiences to literary use in his proletarian novel *Sporžilov* (the name of the suburb; 1931). The critics paid much more attention to *Sporžilov* than they had to a few earlier collections of his short stories, but it took another novel, published in 1938, to establish him as an author of stature. Entitled *Tatul* (the name of a poisonous herb), the book chronicles the iniquities of bourgeois society as illustrated in a plot to commit a secret murder by poisoning. Since 1944 Karaslavov has been a literary wheelhorse of the regime, occupying positions as director of the National Theater, editor of the literary journal *Septemvri*

(September), member of the national parliament and of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. He has written literary studies, journalistic tracts, short stories and novels, of which the extensive *Obiknoveni xora* (Ordinary People: part one 1952; part two 1956; part three 1963; part four 1966) is the most important.

The best known humorous sketch writer in Bulgarian letters is Čudomir (pseudonym of Dimitər Čorbadžijski, 1890-1967). Čudomir spent the early years of his life studying art, thereafter becoming an art teacher and director of a museum in Kazanlək, where he lived most of his life. Early in the century he belonged to the younger set of writers and intellectuals in Sofia and began publishing political cartoons in 1910. Later he printed humorous verse under various *noms de plume*, including the one which he eventually adopted exclusively, Čudomir. Although he wrote one isolated prose *feuilleton* in 1911, it was not until years later, when searching for some employment other than teaching, that he by chance started seriously composing comic sketches for the daily newspaper *Zora.* In 1935 he published the first of several collections of his stories under the title *Ne səm ot tjax* (I'm Not One of Them). There followed: *Našenci* (Ours, 1936), *Alaminut* (Cooked to Order, 1939), *Koj kakto ja naredi* (Each Arranges It as Best He Can, 1940), *Konsul na Golo-bərdo* (The Consul of Golo-bərdo, 1947), and *Panair* (The Fair, 1957). Nearly all these collections have been republished. About 1940, though, Čudomir largely ceased writing after a spiritual crisis, so that the collections printed since then have drawn upon his earlier sketches.

Čudomir works in a comparatively rich native tradition, created by Aleko Konstantinov, Elin Pelin and Mixalaki Georgiev. His language is lively and replete with colloquialisms. He tends to avoid satire and concentrate upon humor, although he works within a framework of social criticism akin to satire. His heroes are frequently the downtrodden and frustrated of this world. His "Urok po istorija" (The History Lesson) describes a teacher who, while his world history pupils drone on about the history of Babylonia, is desperately calculating how to purchase the food his wife has asked him to buy with the money he has available. The high price of groceries drives him so wild that finally, to the astonishment of the class, he exclaims: "Beans are eight *leva* per kilo! It's scandalous!" and rushes from the room. Čudomir rather gently attacks the hypocrisy of bourgeois morality in "Dopustimo" (It's Possible). Here one couple discovers that another couple, whom they have always considered a model

pair, have been deceiving each other: the husband, a doctor, has arranged meetings with his mistress through telephone calls supposedly from patients, while the wife has had an affair with their boarder, an uninspiring type whose sole contribution to any conversation consists of the phrase "It's possible." Another species of Čudomir sketch is the humorous essay on small themes from everyday life. "Starijat vestnik" (The Old Newspaper) nearly reduces to a catalogue of the uses to which newspapers may be put after they have been read: "An old newspaper is a great necessity. For instance I always carry one in my pocket because I never know when and for what I may need it. Some peasants use it as a billfold, others as a handkerchief, fishermen dry fish in the sun on it." All through this and other sketches Čudomir exhibits an amused detachment which does not grant the possibility of anything much being substantially altered in this world. He is philosopher enough to accept things as they are, and humorist enough to find them funny.

Vladimir Poljanov (1899-: not to be confused with the proletarian poet Dimitər Poljanov) produced short stories which were anything but humorous in the 1920s. After obtaining a teutonic higher education in Graz, Vienna and Munich, he worked as a civil servant. He also was employed at the National Theater and since 1944 has continued active in the theatrical world. He first published as early as 1917, and later was one of the *Zlatorog* group. His early collections of short stories included *Momičeto i trimata* (The Girl and the Three Men, 1926), *Ricari* (Knights, 1927), and *Kradecət* (The Thief, 1927).

Poljanov was attracted by the bizarre and mysterious, and many of his stories from the 1920s grip the reader by virtue of their sensationalism. Thus in "Požar" (Fire), while bystanders despair of saving several persons trapped in a burning building, a mysterious stranger appears, has himself doused with water and plunges into the flames. The assembled onlookers anticipate a miraculous rescue, but instead the hero simply vanishes, and afterwards his charred corpse is found among the ashes. In another story the hero, having exhausted all his resources — his family is starving and he can find no employment — contrives a circus act to consist of his hanging himself and then reviving from the dead. Announcement of the forthcoming feat draws an immense but skeptical crowd. Dispatching his advance payment to his wife, the hero does indeed hang himself in public, but there is no question of his being revived, for he is quite dead ("Posledna komedija" [The Last Comedy]).

Later on Poljanov published one significant novel, *Černite ne stavat beli* (Black Do Not Become White, 1932), though at the same time he did not

abandon the short story. The several dramas he wrote in the 1930s left no special mark in the history of the Bulgarian theater.

Konstantin Konstantinov (1890-) has also contributed much to the Bulgarian short story. A native of Sliven, he studied law in order to enter the legal career which he pursued for much of his life. Literature was always his avocation, however, and he refined his literary tastes early by reading the work of such masters as Hugo, Maupassant, Čexov and Bunin. After settling in Sofia in 1908 he there joined the circle of young writers so often mentioned already, and later became its chief memoirist. He contributed to journals like *Bəlgaran* and *Bəlgarska sbirka* and assisted in managing *Zveno* in 1914. It was not until 1920, though, that he first gained literary repute through a collection of short stories entitled *Kəm blizkija* (To My Neighbor). His initial efforts were feeble, and even a later collection, *Ljubov* (Love, 1925), was criticized for the artificiality of its subject matter and style.

Perhaps because Konstantinov was among the more intellectual writers of modern Bulgaria, he reached maturity late. The novel *Krəv* (Blood) of 1933, which dealt with the revolutionary events of 1925 while arguing the uselessness of social conflict and preaching doctrines of nonviolent change and reconciliation through love, was still not entirely up to his best standard. Konstantinov genuinely made his mark as a short-story writer only in the 1930s, with the collections *Treta klasa* (Third Class, 1936), *Den po den* (Day by Day, 1938), and *Sedem časət zaranta* (Seven O'Clock in the Morning, 1940).

Despite this, Konstantinov is less renowned as a short-story writer than as a producer of memoirs and travel sketches. As early as 1930 he published travel sketches under the title *Po zemjata* (Over the World), and worked the same vein closer to home in *Našata zemja xubava* (Our Beautiful Land) of 1940. Konstantinov employed his talents as a memoirist to greatest effect in *Pət prez godinite* (Way Through the Years), an enthralling account of Bulgarian intellectual and cultural life at the beginning of the century.

Konstantinov's approach to fiction is exemplified by one of his best stories, "Prez stenata" (Through the Wall). The narrator arrives in a small town and secures a room at its only hotel. He keeps to himself but carefully observes the other people staying there, particularly a troupe of actors then giving performances in the town. A girl member of the troupe occupies the room next to his, and he can overhear almost everything that goes on there through a closed door. He is only idly curious about her until one morning he is awakened by her singing, followed by heart-

rending sobs which he realizes come from the "uttermost depths", when a person has reached the limits of his endurance. So near and yet so far from her, he decides there really is nothing he can do for her. A few hours later he learns that the actress has poisoned herself, but experiences only a vague regret over the situation as he leaves the town forever.

On occasion Konstantinov displays more humanity toward his characters than he does in "Prez stenata". In "Den po den" he pictures the dreary life of a small-town prostitute awaiting the return of a traveling salesman for whom, in her own dull way, she feels great affection (the first time he visited her he paid her but suddenly decided not to avail himself of her services after recalling his wife). Then her dreams of temporary happiness are destroyed when she learns that the salesman has been killed in a bus accident, but she must stifle her anguish and entertain a bunch of men who are swinishly calling for girls. Though Konstantinov does not make everything explicit, it is obvious where his sympathies lie.

As a short-story writer Konstantinov treats some of the great moments and passions of life, but in banal settings which diminish their significance. His skeptical detachment both prevents him from making esthetic gaffes and makes him sometimes appear unconscionably cold-blooded. But even if he declines involvement with others, neither is he so self-centered as to concentrate solely upon his own reactions. He is a highly intelligent, observant, independent reporter.

Konstantin Petkanov (1891-1952) was a prolific and pretentious novelist of the 1920s and 1930s. His books were widely read at that time and he even had a following among the critics, but a few years after his death his reputation is in almost inverse proportion to the number of pages he saw into print. He is nonetheless worth mentioning because of his quondam repute.

Born in a village in the vicinity of Lozengrad, Petkanov attended the *gymnasium* in Odrin, housed in a building with which Dr. Petər Beron had been connected several decades before. He studied Slavic philology at Sofia University before leaving to teach for several years in various small towns. Being temperamentally a regionalist, he became a devotee of Thrace, and his relationship to that area resembles Jovkov's link with Dobrudža. He participated in the First Balkan War and in 1916 was wounded slightly during the First World War. After the cessation of hostilities, opposing the widespread tendency among writers to migrate to the capital, he settled in the Black Sea port of Burgas, where he held such non-literary positions as librarian of the local library, assistant to the mayor, and official in charge of food supplies. This mundane employment

could not absorb his entire energies, however, so he taught the violin and generally promoted music in the city in addition to editing the newspaper *Strandža* in 1921. His editorial work was a harbinger of the more than twenty books he would write over the next two decades. During the 1930s he wrote in many areas of prose, including the short story, children's books, novelettes, but especially the novel, including the historical novel, and published at least one major work every year. A famous trilogy of his was *Staroto vreme* (The Old Days, 1930), *Xajduti* (Partisans, 1931), and *Vjatər eči* (The Wind Echoes, 1932); later more novels were added to the series. His other books include *Bez deca* (Without Children, 1927), *Vəlnolom* (Seawall, 1937), and *Kirpičenata kəšta* (The Brick House, 1939). After 1944 Petkanov worked for a while as an editor of the journal *Balkanski pregled* (Balkan Review) and as a cultural functionary until his death in 1952.

Petkanov thought of himself as a man with a mission. Not only did he write novels replete with national uplift, he also published articles analyzing the pressing problems of contemporary life. In some of these, such as "Xarakterni čerti na bəlgarina" (Characteristic Traits of the Bulgarian) and "Inteligencijata kato rožba i otricanie na bəlgarskoto selo" (The Intelligentsia as the Product and Negation of the Bulgarian Village) he discussed these questions directly; in others, for instance "Zadačite na bəlgarskija roman" (The Tasks of the Bulgarian Novel) and "Zemjata i čovekət v moite romani" (Earth and Man in My Novels) he attempted to define ground rules for the Bulgarian novel or explain his own writings. Petkanov was centrally concerned with the problem of the Bulgarian national spirit. In his view it was the novelists' task to delineate this unique spirit and present it to the outside world, for the latter's benefit. Petkanov wrote that the principal Bulgarian types were the "eternal type of freedom, the type of faith and love, the type of work and the family the type of mercy and the type of rebellion". The task of the Bulgarian novel, he thought, was "to expose all the depths of the Bulgarian soul, to penetrate to its roots, to link it with heaven and earth". The earth, incidentally, was something of a fetish with Petkanov, who was oriented toward rural Bulgaria. In "Zemjata i čovekət v moite romani" he replied to critics who accused him of promoting a "cult of the earth". He did no such thing, Petkanov argued: his only cult was one of man, for the earth without man was nothing. His trilogy *Staroto vreme*, *Xajduti* and *Vjatər eči*, he continued, was intended to demonstrate the following: "The earth is bought with money, labor is a gift of God, freedom is attained with bloody sacrifice, and enlightenment — with money and labor, with

God's aid and with bloody sacrifice." As may be seen from even such brief citations, Petkanov's philosophy, rooted in a vague religiosity and a drive to discover the characteristics of the "Bulgarian soul", was cloudy, but it was also sufficiently idealistic and overblown to gain considerable currency. His pretentiousness is evident in a novel like *Vəlnolom*. The seawall of the title is evidently supposed to symbolize something, though just what is unclear; the characters deal with great philosophical problems in lengthy discussions intended to be profound; and the author employs many unconvincing or inappropriate similes. The novel leaves an impression of clutter designed as complexity. All in all, Petkanov now reposes in appropriate obscurity even though some of his novels have recently been republished.

Bulgaria boasted several respectable prose writers in the interwar period, but poetry, and especially lyric poetry, was generally superior to prose over these years. To be sure, the most comprehensive poetic school of the prewar years, symbolism, fell apart in the 1920s. In particular, several former symbolists made an intellectual pilgrimage from symbolism to communism, as we have already seen in the cases of Xristo Jasenov and Ljudmil Stojanov. The motives behind this evolution are not always clear, but both intellectual fashion and the need for a framework for one's beliefs were probably most significant among them. Some had obviously joined the dominant symbolist movement before the war out of conformism, because it was 'modern' to write symbolist verse. Thus when symbolism passed out of fashion it was promptly deserted by its adherents. On a more serious level, symbolism did supply poets a theoretical underpinning for their writing. But after a time symbolist theory lost its attraction for the practical Bulgarian intellect, and many writers concluded that they could discover a better intellectual anchor for themselves in communist doctrine, which gained renewed currency after the October Revolution.

Symbolism did not wither away immediately. Paradoxically, it was just at the stage when the movement had lost its influence that there appeared the longest-lived and most unabashedly symbolist journal in the history of Bulgarian letters, *Xiperion* (1922-1931). From its inception *Xiperion* was managed by Teodor Trajanov and Ivan Radoslavov, as well as Ljudmil Stojanov until his defection. But even such an unrepentant symbolist as Radoslavov soon recognized that he and his few allies were fighting a rear-guard action. Thus in an article on Bulgarian symbolism published in *Xiperion* in 1925 Radoslavov admitted that the

movement had passed its peak and was now on the decline, so that the faithful had no recourse but to reconcile themselves to its eventual dissolution.

Even Teodor Trajanov's poetic outlook was radically modified during the First World War. If before the war he was a gloomy mystic composing in a minor key, during and after the war, though still a mystic and still inclined to melancholy, he wrote in a major key befitting this martial period. The poetic fruit of the First World War were the *Bəlgarski baladi* (Bulgarian Ballads), frequently seized upon by hostile critics as proof that the Bulgarian symbolists were fundamentally chauvinists. In fact the *Bəlgarski baladi* illustrate only Trajanov's personal tendency toward chauvinism, in which connection we should recall that the non-symbolist Vazov also produced very patriotic poetry at that time. The series of military disasters suffered by his fatherland moved Trajanov to hark back to other calamities of Bulgarian history, summarized in the following striking sequence of dates: 1018: fall of the First Bulgarian Empire; 1393: fall of the Second Bulgarian Empire; 1913: end of the Second Balkan War; 1918: conclusion of the First World War, with all its evil consequences for Bulgaria. Hoping to brace the buckling Bulgarian morale, in a poem like "Pesen na trite moreta" (Song of the Three Seas) the poet proudly recalled the time when the Bulgarian empire had extended to all three seas bounding the Balkan peninsula. The author of *Bəlgarski baladi* then described scenes of destruction and defeat, only to emerge confident that the day of Bulgarian triumph would dawn once again. He voiced this conviction in such pieces as "Starobəlgarski psalom" (Old Bulgarian Psalm) or "Pobednijat marš na bəlgarite" (The Triumphant March of the Bulgarians), which ends: "Rejoice, oh Bulgarian people, / the Bulgarian days are numberless! / Fate roams above the Bosphorus, / the bells of Ohrid sound! / The Aegean roars at the great day, / gleams, reflects thy countenance, / the five sacred rivers sing to it / in the marvellous Bulgarian tongue!"

The overwrought tone of *Bəlgarski baladi* remained characteristic of Trajanov in the poems comprising his most interesting collection, *Panteon* (Pantheon, 1934). In a brief afterword to *Panteon* the poet explained that his aim in writing these pieces had been the "seeking of a universal synthetic personality" to combine the "triumphant thought" of the western mind, with its skeptical hue, and the Slavs' "elemental striving", which was "free, credulous and foreign to any dogmas or systems". In short, Trajanov hoped the Slavs would in future contribute to the creation of a magnificent European culture.

After a dedication, *Panteon* proper begins with an invocation to "the poet", who can be promptly recognized by his "regal brow", his "firm gaze, permeated by ire and pity", by his "countenance, burned about by Hell". The poet is the bearer of the new word which will bring the new world into being. After further invocations (to Beauty, to the Sword-bearer, to the Crownbearer, to the Apostle), the author offers poems dedicated to great poets of world literature, including Villon, Rimbaud, Rilke, Dehmel, Poe, Whitman, Shelley, Debeljanov, Botev and Javorov. The poet's role in creating the new earth is described in "Sərce na səvestta" (Heart of Conscience), honoring the memory of the Russian poet Nikolaj Nekrasov, seen as a forerunner of the 1917 revolution. Curiously, Trajanov interprets the October Revolution as God's handiwork: He it was who uncrowned the Kremlin, and the star which now gleams over the heart of Russia is the star of Bethlehem! In general the *Panteon* poems are written in the exalted tone of invocations to the Almighty and to the spirit of man at his greatest, as poet. The book was quite out of tune with the intellectual atmosphere of the 1930s and remained an isolated literary phenomenon, though Trajanov considered adding further poems to it, thinking it analogous to Vazov's *Epopeja na zabravenite*. After *Panteon*'s appearance Trajanov published little for what remained of his life.

The Bulgarian symbolist considered a poet's poet was Nikolaj Liliev (pseudonym of Nikolaj Mixajlov, 1885-1960). A native of Stara Zagora, Liliev began his career in a most mundane way by studying in a commercial high school in Svištov and working as a bank clerk in Stara Zagora. The publication of his first verses in 1905 brought him enough largesse from the Minister of Education, Ivan Šišmanov, to enable him to study in Lausanne from 1905 to 1907; in 1909 he spent some time in Paris. Despite all this he did not yet abandon the workaday world, for he graduated from a commercial academy in 1912 and was subsequently employed as a teacher in Plovdiv and Svištov. During the wars he was a correspondent; thereafter he took different positions in government and the publishing business before discovering his true calling in the theater. He held the post of *dramaturg* (artistic director) of the National Theater from 1924 to 1928 and again from 1934 to the end of his life.

Liliev (he adopted the pseudonym in 1908) was extraordinarily unprolific. He published a small collection of verse, *Ptici v noštta* (Birds in the Night) in 1918, following that in 1922 with his only other original collection, *Lunni petna* (Moonspots). A third volume, *Stixotvorenija* (Verse, 1932), was made up largely of poems from his previous collections.

After 1944 Liliev produced next to no original verse, instead devoting his energies to translations from such European authors as Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rilke, Stefan George and Verhaeren. He also translated several classic plays from the world repertoire (*King Lear*, *The Cid*, *Hernani*, *Electra*) for the National Theater.

Liliev's reputation as a poet's poet is based not upon the universality of his themes — he was always an isolated man — but upon the formal perfection he achieved. Liliev was a lyric poet who rarely attempted anything extending beyond a few stanzas, but he would not release a song until it had been exquisitely polished (very little idea can be given in English of the complex interplay of rhyme and assonance of which Liliev was such a master). His formal achievements were probably made the easier by his narrow thematic diapason, however. His poetry revolves in the same unextensive circle of subjects and attitudes, and the number of words he utilizes in his poetry is so small that the reader can frequently predict, say, what adjective will be attached to a given noun. In a word, Liliev took the symbolist penchant for a limited lexicon to an extreme. Consequently those who do not care for Liliev and think him "bloodless" — they are many — may still be captivated by his formal expertise, while those who like him cannot read much of him at one sitting. Liliev has many admirers but few imitators.

Liliev's poetry is characteristically symbolist in that it is pervaded by a pensive melancholy, frequently seems otherworldly, and is very literary. On the other hand, his writing is usually clear, and it is partly for this reason that he could influence poets who were not symbolists and is still read in Bulgaria today. The poet as it were stands off from himself and observes his own thoughts and emotions: more precisely, he follows the tremblings of his soul, which either is poetic harmony or else emits poetic harmony in the form of songs. Liliev's songs are endowed with independent life, as in the title poem of *Ptici v noštta*: "My memories, / birds in the night, / wander homelessly, / wander in reverie / beyond the world. / My songs, / shadows without direction, / flare up unheard / in the melancholy autumn — and / fall silent once more." The poet compares his soul to a bird wheeling freely in the skies in the first stanza of "Nebeto e bezumno sin'o": "The heavens are insanely blue, / the fields are ringing joyously, / and my soul will pass there / into the unknown distance."

Almost all the themes a lyric poet ordinarily treats are absorbed in Liliev into a generalized preoccupation with the self. For instance the final stanza of "Kəm slənceto" (To the Sun), like the rest of the poem, stresses the sun's effect upon the beholder: "Your glitter burns us, / your

power inebriates us, / strikes up a hymn in our souls / to dreamed-of sunrises." Again, when the poet speaks of love he treats it fundamentally in terms of his suffering soul. The persona of a poem always strives to retreat from an unbearable reality and wander in melancholy freedom about the world. This tendency toward withdrawal is clearly connected with the *leitmotif* of Liliev's verse: loneliness. The poet spoke of himself as "drunken on the wine of loneliness" and portrayed himself as "lying in the unpeopled wildernesses / of my own cold frozen loneliness"; he wrote such poems as "Kəm samotata" (To Loneliness), where the solitude which on the one hand weighs upon his soul is in another sense his only salvation: "Dark, repentant, I return to you, / oh distant mother, sacred solitude! / I embrace your mystery humbly, / your mystery is my dream. / ... I am rejected, forgotten, neglected, / with calm enjoyment I noiselessly destroy / the drowsy structures of past glory / which once warmed an insane soul." It is understandable that Liliev, being of such an outlook, preferred the night season to all others. The night theme appears in numerous individual poems as well as the titles of his two collections, *Lunni petna* and *Ptici v noštta.* A religious element is joined to it in the poem beginning "Oh Lord, bless Thou the night / of Thy son without a name or native land." The motif of death also appears frequently in Liliev. One of his few longer poems, "Axasfer", treats the Christian legend of the man who cannot die until Christ's second coming because he did not assist Him in His hour of need. Written in a shifting combination of meters, "Axasfer" poignantly depicts the despair of a man doomed to wander indefinitely over the face of the earth, eagerly awaiting news of the Lord's descent. But the word never comes, and Axasfer can only endure and pray for a death which will not be vouchsafed him.

The world of Nikolaj Liliev, with its passive suffering, melancholy visions, vague poetic malaises, and sense of solitude, lacks broad appeal. The man who created it shrank from everyday reality but still discovered within himself the capacity to fashion miniature poetic masterpieces.

Geo Milev (1895-1925) was the most intriguing of the symbolist converts to communism. To the eye of the external beholder his career seems muddled indeed, although a closer investigation might well reveal that he followed certain firm principles all his life. Born in a small village in the vicinity of Stara Zagora to M. G. Kasabov, an intelligent man interested in book-selling and publishing, the future poet attended the *gymnasium* in Stara Zagora from 1907 to 1911. During this period he wrote verse for manuscript journals, evidently considering Javorov and especially Penčo Slavejkov his poetic mentors. Since he was always quick to follow

the latest intellectual fashions, he was also influenced by foreign and native symbolism, particularly around 1910-1912.

In 1911 Milev enrolled at Sofia University to study philosophy and literature. The following year he departed for Leipzig, where he remained until 1914, eagerly keeping up with the latest cultural developments. During his Leipzig period (it should be recalled that by 1914 he was still under twenty) the main outlines of Milev's literary enthusiasms emerged. He was engrossed by Nietzsche's philosophy, considered modernism the only acceptable literary approach, and disapproved of naturalism and to a considerable extent even realism in literature. He began a dissertation on the German symbolist poet Richard Dehmel and proclaimed his approval of modernist trends in an article entitled "Moderna poezija" (Modern Poetry), published in *Zveno*. In 1915 he put out five pamphlets with five translations from foreign decadent poets dedicated to five of his symbolist colleagues: Liliev, Trajanov, Debeljanov, Stojanov and Rajnov.

Despite all this, Milev's later conversion to communism was not incompatible with his character in the prewar period. As early as 1914-1915 he displayed an ability to commit himself deeply to a cause in which he believed — he could be strongly committed to symbolist disengagement — as well as a spirit of political rebellion (cf. an antimonarchist poem of 1914 which was not printed for many years). The chaotic rebelliousness of his soul was the chief link between the Milev of 1914 and of 1925, although the forms assumed by that rebellion varied over time.

In 1915, having returned to Bulgaria from abroad, Milev was drafted into the army. During the hostilities he was severely wounded and lost his right eye; it is therefore no chance matter that his most famous portrait shows him in a turbulently romantic pose with the entire right side of his face in deep shadow. In February of 1918 he traveled to Berlin for a series of operations on his eye, remaining in Germany for more than a year. During this time he participated actively in German literary life, contributing to the Expressionist journal *Aktion*, and observed the contemporary political upheavals in Germany. His war experiences failed to alter Milev's ideological orientation immediately, however, and upon returning to Bulgaria in March of 1919 he propagandized symbolism and modernism. This he did in several ways. To begin with, he himself wrote symbolist poetry, much of which was brought together in the volumes *Žestokijat prəsten* (The Cruel Ring, 1920) and *Ikonite spjat* (The Icons Are Sleeping, 1922). Amid their symbolist vagueness, these poems

contain some comprehensible and striking lines, for instance the stanza: "Oh rain, oh rain abundant and melancholy / — water dancing along the sidewalks! — / Drunken, bare, free, bacchanalian — / but with a black mask — you dance the senseless dance of grief." In addition to writing symbolist poetry, Milev transformed himself into a tribune for the movement, visiting Sofia and provincial cities to deliver lectures so effective that one impressed the ageing Vazov, who was reported to have exclaimed once after reading some symbolist works: "These people must be insane, but what perfection of form!" But the chief instrument through which Milev disseminated his views was the journal *Vezni* (The Scales, a title borrowed from a well-known Russian modernist periodical of the beginning of the century). While preparing to launch *Vezni*, in August of 1919 Milev wrote to his father that he had in mind "something between *Misəl* and *Xudožnik* [the modernist journal of the years 1906-1907], but most of all like certain modern European journals: internally simple but still beautiful".

Milev was surprisingly successful in carrying out his program for *Vezni*, which first appeared on 15 September, 1919. Each slender issue was attractive in format and printed on good paper. *Vezni* published poetry, articles and reviews by its guiding spirit as well as by other symbolists, particularly Ljudmil Stojanov. In addition it offered reproductions of modernistic art, for example paintings by Edvard Munch, and translations from such modernist theoreticians as Oscar Wilde. Milev never did things by halves, and his allegiance to modernism at this time was so thorough that he published an article under the title "Protiv realizma" (Against Realism) stating the case for modern estheticism. Certainly his esthetic bent emerged plainly in the attention he paid to art in general, to the layout of *Vezni*, and to the format of several books published by *Vezni* in the series "Books for Bibliophiles" (*Žestokijat prəsten*, printed in this series, is externally quite attractive). Milev's esthetic sensibility was another constant in his life.

In the early 1920s Milev modified his basic intellectual and political assumptions. He knew personally some of the symbolists who had become communists, and in late 1920 he contemplated attempting to increase *Vezni*'s circulation by distributing it through communist outlets. By the time *Vezni* started its third year it was obvious that its orientation was shifting. An article of Milev's of October 1921 had hinted at change, and a month later he indicated that he was searching for an art less alienated from life than symbolist art. It should be noted that Milev had not been completely apolitical even when most committed to modernism:

in his own peculiar way he had accepted the October Revolution and had published a calendar for 1921 containing prose poems of a decidedly political character. But as the 1920s wore on Milev became ever more involved in current events.

His ideological shift led Milev to close *Vezni* down in March of 1922; in the same year he came out with poems like *Ad* (Hell, designed as the first part of a *Divine Comedy* more earthbound than the original) and "Den na gneva" (Day of Wrath), both of which dealt with social topics. In 1923 Milev applied unsuccessfully for admission to the Bulgarian Communist Party. In spite of his rebuff by the communists, other events of 1923 accelerated his leftward evolution. On 15 January, 1924 he brought out the first issue of the journal *Plamək* (Flame), which promoted the communist line. It was in *Plamək* that he printed the beginning of *Ad*, *Grozni prozi* (Ugly Prose Pieces), and *Septemvri* (September). *Grozni prozi* consisted of prose sketches treating mostly revolutionary subjects such as the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, or occurrences witnessed by the author in Berlin in 1918-1919. In style these pieces are completely expressionistic: the sentences are elliptical and designed to create an emotional atmosphere. The brief "Pogrebenie" (Burial) may be taken as typical:

> Victims of the revolution. Fourteen hearses, covered with wreaths. A procession of a million with red banners. A throng along the sidewalks; indifferent faces, nestled in warm sable collars. An important gentleman turns in confusion: 'Hats off! — a funeral is passing,' a worker's coarse voice is saying to him.

Here in a few lines the author evokes the vast gulf between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the triumphant class of the future.

The poem *Septemvri* is Milev's masterpiece. Dedicated to the September uprising, it showed that Milev's heart, if not his head, was in the right place from the communist point of view. *Septemvri* was strongly influenced by the work of the Soviet poet Vladimir Majakovskij in style, tone and content. Many of its lines consist of a single word, placed in a lengthy series of similar words. The author experiments with typography, using spacing, capitals and the stepped lines reminiscent of Majakovskij. The poem is a disjointed tribute to a disjointed event: the people, as the protagonist of the poem, simply become disgusted with things as they are and irrationally, like a flood or a wild animal, set out to destroy the old order. Directed by no guiding thought, the rebellion is an elemental revolt of the masses. The sole individual revolutionary hero is a priest named Andrej who wheels his cannon around to fire his last shot at the

church which he had theretofore served. He is seized by the victorious bourgeoisie and hanged summarily. But he is prepared to give his life, as the death of one individual is relatively unimportant, and can only be of some significance if it aids the flow of history. Quite aside from the fact that the poem's only individual hero is a priest, there is a significant religious element in it. Initially the people march with God's name on their lips, certain that their cause has the Divine blessing. Even Andrej is but half liberated from his shackles: though he rejects the visible church, he dies with the cross of Christ upon his breast. At the end, however, the people's emancipation from religious deception is complete. They storm the heavens crying "Down with God!", and He is slain and cast down from the heights, after which the celestial paradise is transformed into an earthly one. The poet concludes *Septemvri* with a passionate confession of secular faith: "Everything written by philosophers, poets — / will come true! / — Without God! without master! / September will be May. / The life of man / will be an endless ascent / — upwards! upwards! / Earth will be a Paradise — / it will!" In such fashion Milev, even as he preached a rationalist ideology, remained true to his old irrational self, for *Septemvri* speaks of emotion and faith rather than reason.

Milev never did free himself totally from his old intellectual trappings, for as late as 1923 he put out collections heavily tinted with symbolism, and his letters to his father dating from 1923 and 1924 show that he was still much concerned with problems of modernist esthetics at that time. But for Milev, as for many other intellectuals at that time, the communists furnished the most consistent opposition to what appeared to them an inhuman social order. Had he lived longer, however, he would probably have recognized communism's neo-orthodoxy and parted company with it as an organized movement, for his attraction to it derived largely from his romantic temperament.

The publication of *Septemvri*, however, ensured that Milev would never face such a crisis. *Plamək* was closed down by the government in January of 1925 and Milev himself was haled into court to answer for his poem. He defended himself on esthetic rather than political grounds, maintaining that his only 'purpose' in writing had been to depict "events, actions, feelings, thoughts ... without concern for the way in which this depiction would be interpreted by different readers". This argument was at the least disingenuous, for the author of *Septemvri* promoted certain conclusions which his readers could hardly have missed. No doubt realizing this, Milev ended his appeal to his judges with a plea for artistic freedom: "Art can blossom only on the soil of freedom. Do not persecute

the writer so as not to kill art!" Milev's judges were little concerned with the sanctity of art under the circumstances, and so on 14 May, 1925 sentenced him to a year's imprisonment, fined him 20,000 *leva* and deprived him of his civil and political rights for two years. He was arrested before he could appeal the sentence and vanished forever during the wave of governmental repression in mid-1925. It was learned later that he had been murdered and buried in an unmarked, collective grave. This was the worst instance of outright repression of a writer to occur in Bulgaria between the wars.

The hard-core communists among Bulgarian poets were a different breed from the mercurial Milev. Marxist doctrine had begun to attract substantial numbers of adherents in the 1890s, especially after the founding of Dimitər Blagoev's *Novo vreme* in 1897 and other shorter-lived but more literary publications. Many Bulgarian writers temporarily adopted socialist notions in that decade, though most largely discarded them within a few years. In the first ten or fifteen years of the twentieth century the communists were unable to win and hold any writer of talent.

There were, though, untalented writers who served socialism in that era. Among them was Dimitər Poljanov (Dimitər Popov, 1876-1953), now regarded as the fountainhead of socialist poetry in Bulgaria. Poljanov conceived an interest in socialism in his student days in Sliven and in 1892 participated in a socialist study group. He commenced his career in 1894 by publishing a poem in the socialist journal *Den* (Day). In 1895 he printed his first verse using the pseudonym Poljanov. Supporting himself by working as a teacher, a civil servant and later as editor and contributor to various communist publications, he continued to write verse and some prose, collected in volumes like *Morski kapki* (Sea Drops, 1907) and *Železni stixove* (Iron Verses, 1921). His literary output was appropriately orthodox, denouncing bourgeois oppression and abounding with joyous predictions of the day when the victorious proletariat would sunder its chains and create a terrestrial paradise. Poljanov's literary gift was of such an inferior order, however, that communist critics of today claim no more than historical significance for him as the leading communist poet of the early part of the century. His poems were esthetically weak, being essentially political tracts with meter and rhyme added.

In the years after the October Revolution the communists could boast of some better writers. Perhaps the best of these was Xristo Smirnenski (1898-1923). Born Xristo Izmirliev in the Macedonian town of Kukuš, he received the rudiments of an education in his native town and continued his studies in Sofia until family difficulties forced him to return to Kukuš

in 1910. When much of Macedonia was wrested from Bulgarian control during the Second Balkan War, the Izmirlievs took refuge in Sofia, where Xristo resumed his studies, first in a technical school and then, in 1917, in a military academy. But he had no interest whatever in either a technical or a military career — his calling was literature. In the precocious Bulgarian tradition, he had begun publishing as early as 1915 under such whimsical pseudonyms as Vedbal, Xrizantema and Lord Džems Šoking (Lord James Shocking). In 1916 he joined the staff of the established humor magazine *Bəlgaran* and later the newly founded *Smjax i səlzi* (Laughter and Tears). It was here that he first employed the pen-name Smirnenski.

Smirnenski published his initial collection of verse in 1918 under the pseudonym Vedbal and the title *Raznokalibreni vəzdiški v stixove i proza* (Varicalibre Sighs in Verse and Prose). The title was doubtless inspired by the military *milieu* in which the author found himself at the time. After he left the military academy in November of 1918 he supported himself by writing journalistic articles and quantities of lyric verse, usually with a social purpose. In 1919 he contributed to the communist journal *Červen smjax*, founded by his friends Krum Kjuljavkov and Xristo Jasenov. From 1920 on he wrote for communist organs, including *Červen smjax*, *Rabotničeski vestnik* (Workers' Gazette), and *Mladež* (Youth), participated in political demonstrations organized by the party in Sofia, and traveled about the country appearing before youth groups, whose members were often astonished to discover that such a prominent poet was so young. Indeed Smirnenski somehow always embodied the essence of youth and vigor. Photographs of him show a handsome man of piercing eyes burning with an inner fire. Although here external appearance probably corresponded to internal essence, any impression of physical well-being was deceptive, for Smirnenski was constantly in poor health. His final illness — tuberculosis — took his life before his twenty-fifth birthday. Toward the end Smirnenski was aware of the seriousness of his situation, but could always joke about it. For instance, a little more than a month before his death, he ended a personal letter with the litany: "Long live the Third Communist International! Long live the government of workers and peasants! Down with the bourgeoisie! Down with the temperature!" Simple cheerfulness could not avert the inevitable, however, and he died on 18 June, 1923.

Despite his poor health, Smirnenski's last years were busy and productive ones. In October of 1921 he returned to *Bəlgaran*; from November 1922 to May of 1923 he ran almost single-handed the newly founded

journal *Maskarad* (Masquerade), which ceased appearing when he was no longer able to write for it. His most important publication of the time was the collection *Da bəde den!* (Let the Day Dawn!) of 1922, which sold out rapidly and was issued in a second edition the same year. Smirnenski's death deprived the communist movement in Bulgaria of one of its most luminous personalities and unique literary influences, one whose talent was recognized even by those completely opposed to his beliefs.

Though primarily a poet, Smirnenski did write prose *feuilletons* for the journals to which he contributed, but these were ordinarily so topical as now to be largely incomprehensible to anyone except specialists in the period. Of course the large fraction of his verse which treated topics of the day is now also of only minimal interest to the average reader.

The rest of Smirnenski's poetry, which still retains its appeal, is marked by both his publicistic bent and his orientation toward the humor magazines. There was a prominent satirical strain in his verse, and he composed some sharp epigrams: one describes a man at the Last Judgment who tries to deceive and flatter his judge, his excuse being that on earth he was a journalist. As a socialist Smirnenski always sought out the hideous essence of bourgeois society for satirical attack. The political tenor of this satire may be illustrated by "Pro Patria", which describes a Bulgarian patriot who gives money to support the anti-communist Russian refugees in Bulgaria but is too impoverished to help a Bulgarian war veteran. Smirnenski's scorn was also directed against the hypocrisy of personal relationships in the bourgeois world, especially those between the sexes. In "Amor omnia" he offers a humorous picture of a husband who, upon returning home unexpectedly, discovers his "faithful wife" dallying with another man. Instead of blaming his spouse, he upbraids himself for having appeared without warning, since otherwise he would not have discovered his wife's infidelity. The poet concludes that "love is a very tragic joke, gentlemen". Smirnenski placed a high valuation on feminine purity: one of his female characters remarks that "when a woman falls a love dies" ("Margaritki za Žaneta" [Daisies for Janet]). The realization that women often failed to live up to his ideal caused him to criticize them sharply, as in the last stanza of "Na zlatnite kədri" (To Golden Locks): "Why am I not ivy, to entwine / that marvellous, marble figure, / just as once she entwined / and sucked dry my purse!" Smirnenski did occasionally write straightforward love lyrics, though.

A favorite device of Smirnenski's was the snapper at the conclusion of a poem. A poignant instance of this is to be found in the short "Sədba" (Fate). The poet notes a recent obituary on a fence (in Bulgaria it is still

the custom to post obituary notices all over town) and reflects sadly on another soul's departure from this vale of suffering. Unlike the poet, however, other passers-by are indifferent to the fate of this individual, and the wind finally blows the obituary onto the pavement, where it suffers a final, cruel indignity: "And the obituary stayed there for long / unnoted, seen by none, / but here a scraggy cur approaches calmly, / sniffs at it and lifts his leg." Such was the tragedy of the individual in bourgeois society, as Smirnenski saw it. It had nothing to do, he would have maintained, with any universal human condition.

Smirnenski was a lyric poet who made himself over into a political poet. Therefore even a poem with a lyrical title such as "Night" or "Autumn" frequently turns out to have a strong social component: for instance the night will envelop a mother grieving for her offspring who have fallen in the class struggle. The poet criticized contemporary society, not as a nihilist like Stojan Mixajlovski or Georgi Stamatov, but as an advocate of a communist society based on reason and justice. It was from this viewpoint that he composed such pieces as "Pərvi maj" (May-day), a lyrical prophecy of the world of the future, or "Utrešnija den" (Tomorrow). Characteristically, in such poems Smirnenski does not describe the future paradise in its being. He can visualize it only in its becoming, in the pangs of birth: "and there along the stony road / of the struggle of many centuries, / smothering its powerful fate / against its granite breast, / humankind approaches / the doors of a new life". What lay beyond those doors Smirnenski could not say, but he was persuaded that it was splendid. And through the power of his poetic talent he helped convince others that this undefined future was eminently worth fighting and dying for.

If Smirnenski was a martyr for communism in intent only (he died of natural causes and was not especially persecuted by the regime), Nikola Vapcarov (1909-1942) was a martyr both in intent and in deed. Born in a village in the Pirin mountains, Vapcarov in 1924 entered the *gymnasium* in Razlog, where he engaged in such extracurricular activities as organizing a temperance society. Two years later he began training at an institute for naval mechanics in Varna. The communist propaganda to which he was exposed while there made him consider emigrating to the Soviet Union. Unlike Smirnenski, Vapcarov worked as a common laborer, devoting his spare time to organizing his fellows. In 1936 he was dismissed because of his political activities and moved to Sofia, where he was employed as a locomotive fireman, a fireman in a mill, a slaughterhouse technician.

Although Vapcarov's employment was not conducive to literary endeavor, he could associate with other communist writers in the capital, for instance Georgi Karaslavov and Xristo Radevski. And then he did do some literary work, such as editing newspapers. In 1940 he published the one collection of verse printed during his lifetime, under the title *Motorni pesni* (Motor Songs) and the pseudonym Nikola Jankov. But Vapcarov was too much of an activist to content himself only with writing. In 1940, after the outbreak of the Second World War, the Soviet Union offered the Bulgarian government a treaty of peace and friendship. When Bulgaria declined the proposal the Bulgarian Communist Party undertook to mobilize public opinion in support of the treaty. Vapcarov headed the campaign and was briefly arrested as a result. Following his release he was given the important assignment of organizing communist guerrilla activity in the country. Subsequently he was taken into custody on 4 March, 1942 and executed on 23 July. On the eve of his death he wrote two brief poems, which furnish proof of both the staunchness of his faith and the power which the clichés of communist rhetoric exerted over him at the most critical point of his life: "A deadly shot — and worms — forever after! / That's simple, logical, what can we do! / Yet in the storm again we'll be together, / Because, my people dear, I loved you so!"

Vapcarov's poetic talent, though genuine, was of a lower order than Smirnenski's, but Vapcarov was ideologically more orthodox than his predecessor. He was a proletarian poet who wrote of socialist construction before the fact. He is always deadly serious, unlike Smirnenski, and occasionally displays a crudity of mind and deficiency of tact repellent to fastidious readers. Of course the fact that he was a common laborer enhances the value of his work in the eyes of contemporary Marxist critics.

Vapcarov's verse is imbued with an intense belief in the communist cause, wrath against oppressors, sympathy for the downtrodden, and an unmistakable death-wish which links him to Xristo Botev. The proletarian poet expressed his admiration for his radical forerunner in the poem "Botev", where he decided that Botev was as inexplicable as life itself. The two men were similar in several important ways. Like Botev, Vapcarov faced the problem of love for a wife in conflict with his larger social duty; like Botev, he left his wife unhesitatingly when duty demanded it. The lyric tendency in his soul led him to compose love poems on a few occasions, but he always remembered where his primary obligation lay. As Botev had done, he treated nature lyrically, but at the same time in a politically appropriate way. Thus in "Spomen" (Memory) he gives a

moving description of a fellow worker who died because of foul working conditions, without seeing the spring he longed for. Lyric and social strands are intertwined in the brief "Prolet" (Spring): "Oh spring of mine so white! / Oh once again but let me see you soaring / and giving life to squares so desolate, / oh once again but let me see your sunlight, / and let me die then on your barricades!" Vapcarov likewise presses the traditional theme of patriotism into the service of social justice. The poet loves his fatherland, but with a passion which is agonizing because of the suffering visited upon the common people: "My land! Oh my own, my beautiful land! / Steeped in blood and rocked by insurrections!" ("Zemja" [Land]). In short, as the poet says at one point, love — whether love of woman, love of nature, or love of fatherland — is perverted into its antithesis, hatred, by the injustice of the social order: "You teach me with parables, mother, / to love everyone as I do you. / I would love them, mother, I would, / but I must have freedom and bread" ("Imam si rodina" [I Have a Fatherland]).

Vapcarov was a communist poet who thirsted to live in a proletarian state but never saw the dawn. He would have been a pillar of socialist realism under the new regime, for while living in bourgeois society he wrote poems like "Šte stroim zavod" (We Shall Build a Factory), which is at least partly in the tradition of the literature of socialist construction, and "Kino" (Movie), where the poet angrily denounces an American movie for picturing life in completely rosy — and therefore false — colors. Such poems as these were composed quite along the lines which the post-1944 regime wished to see followed, and it is logical that Vapcarov has now been enshrined along with Smirnenski as an immortal representative of communist poetry and true proletarian dedication in the arts.

Of the important communist poets of the 1920s and 1930s, the only one who lived to see the new order was Xristo Radevski (1903-). Radevski studied romance philology at Sofia University and first published in 1924 in a humor magazine. Thereafter he contributed to several journals, wrote children's books, and continued to turn out lyric and satirical poetry gathered in the volumes *Kəm partijata* (To the Party, 1932), *Nie sme pravova strana* (We Are a Country of Law and Order, 1933), and *Puls* (Pulse, 1936). After 1944 Radevski was rewarded for his unwavering loyalty with important positions. In particular, he was responsible for keeping the Union of Bulgarian Writers in line as its secretary from1949 to 1958, only to be ousted when its structure was liberalized. He was for some time editor-in-chief of the journal *Septemvri.*

During the 1920s and 1930s Radevski's poetic achievements gained

him some admiration. He was renowned for his mordant satires on the political regimes of the 1930s and for his devotion to the communist ideal. His stance required a certain amount of courage at a time when the Bulgarian Communist Party was suppressed. His loyalty to the party was so intense as to bestow some esthetic value to his poems on party subjects. Traditional religious attitudes — only reversed — are still alive in Radevski: he is ready to rip down the old icons and replace them with pictures of communist saints. For him Lenin is almost divine: see the concluding lines from "Malkijat bezbožnik" (The Little Atheist): "In the little portrait on the farther wall / Lenin smiles contentedly. / He smiles, and a wondrous light / illuminates his smiling eyes". Other prominent communist figures emerge as prophets or martyrs. Beyond this, Radevski attempted imagining how the communist paradise of the twenty-second century would look in "Mečta" (Dream, 1940). But even here his imagination soon failed him, and he was reduced to generalities. As long as Radevski and his party were out of power, his poetry had some merit. His work of the communist period, however, is strikingly inferior to his pre-1944 poetry. It is the writing of a literary bureaucrat, with no spark left in it.

Not all the leading communist writers of the 1920s remained in the movement. The most spectacular collective defection occurred in 1925 when several writers formerly associated with the communist periodical *Nov pət* (New Way) publicly left it, announcing their intention to seek greater freedom in art. The group consisted of the critic Georgi Canev, the poets Nikola Furnadžiev and Asen Razcvetnikov, and the prose-writer Angel Karalijčev. All four of them were alive in 1944 and all were to a greater or lesser degree eventually forgiven their apostasy of 1925.

Asen Razcvetnikov (1897-1951) was born in the vicinity of Gorna Orjaxovica and received his elementary education in his native village and his secondary education in nearby Tərnovo. He graduated in law from Sofia University in 1925, studied in Vienna and Frankfurt and then returned to Bulgaria to teach in Gabrovo and Sofia for a time. He became known in the first years of the 1920s as a contributor to the communist periodicals *Rabotničeski vestnik*, *Červen smjax* and especially *Nov pət*. His initial verse collection, *Žertveni kladi* (Sacrificial Pyres, 1924), was welcomed by the radical press, but things changed when he deserted the leftist camp for *Zlatorog* and proclaimed his poetic emancipation in the short narrative poem *Dvojnik* (The Double, 1926). Razcvetnikov thereafter attempted to blaze his own philosophical path, but he lacked inner resources and retreated into the pessimism which colored his entire collection *Planinski večeri* (Mountain Evenings, 1934). During

the 1930s he occupied himself with the production of children's books, especially pieces based on riddles and folk tales, as well as translation work. After 1944 he partially conformed to the new situation and died in Moscow, where he had been sent for his health. At bottom, however, his literary approach was certainly incompatible with communist doctrine.

To be sure, some social protest could be found in Razcvetnikov's poetry of both the earlier and the later periods. In "Molitva" (Prayer), inspired by Xristo Botev's piece, the poet implores the evening to cradle those who have been mortally wounded "in the struggle for truth and for freedom", to close their eyes and wipe away their last tears. Some time later, in 1933, Razcvetnikov grieved over the violence which was then engulfing his country and expressed the helpless feeling of one in a doomed vessel "which is racing along into the unknown / across the fatal, endless depths" ("Sofija — 1933"). The appearance of such a strain in a poem of protest supports the critic Malčo Nikolov's characterization of Razcvetnikov as a "skeptical, Hamlet-like spirit, disillusioned with the world, with the triumph of evil, because he has believed very deeply in the good". Razcvetnikov's notion that man is morally obligated to fight for justice even though he cannot prevail is important in *Dvojnik*. The author's double here is the naive Don Quixote, who is eternally prepared to join the unequal struggle for the right despite the fact that he is always beaten. The author can offer his valiant double only dispirited solace and admiration for his valor: "Don Quixote, Don Quixote, my double, cruelly mocked and crushed, / let me kiss the blood on your broken helmet and iron mail." The poet's double ends a suicide.

In other instances Razcvetnikov, yielding to the philosophical nihilism typical of his predecessors such as Javorov, describes the horror of utter loneliness. He can detect no meaning in life and thinks it pointless to ponder the question of life's significance. In "Step" (Steppe) the poet lies in a dull torpor amid a great plain while the wind plays over him: "I have not a live spark nor a drop of faith in my breast, / I have nowhere in the world a brother nor a beloved ... / I lie in silence, I do not think, and want nothing." Occasionally he rouses himself from despondency to seek an answer to the mystery of existence, but discovers none. In the poem "Na straža" (On Guard), written on the occasion of his standing watch at Jordan Jovkov's bier in 1937, he asks the Divinity in desperation "why He sends us hungry to the earth / and then cuts us down in midpath?" But there is no one to reply to his question, and the poet reverts to metaphysical despair: "And I am silent and wait. And tremble. / In vain. A dream. A lie. Eternity. Nothingness."

Even Razcvetnikov's love poetry is mired in depression. The end of a love affair is the subject of "Tova e kraj na taja stranna povest" (This Is the End of the Strange Tale). The persona, once again abandoned to his solitude after a period of companionship, exhorts himself to bear up under this trial and consoles himself with the thought that "everything in this world is merely smoke", that the only joy in life is "silent, endless peace". From time to time Razcvetnikov looked beyond himself to the verities of religion or the beauties of nature, as in his poem describing Vitoša, the majestic mountain near Sofia, but he could never persuade himself that life was anything more than a senseless tragedy. Human suffering might be alleviated, but never eliminated.

The career and literary viewpoint of Nikola Furnadžiev (1903-1968) parallel Razcvetnikov's to an astounding degree. Like Razcvetnikov, Furnadžiev was slow to complete his formal education. He studied medicine for a time, then transferred to philology, but finished a course in philosophy and pedagogy only in 1930. He had published for the first time long before that, at the age of sixteen in 1919. In the early 1920s he worked for *Nov pət*; in 1924 he composed the radical verses of *Proleten vjatər* (Spring Wind, 1925), the analogue of Razcvetnikov's *Žertveni kladi*. Furnadžiev's poems of the period immediately following his break with communism were gathered in *Dəga* (Rainbow, 1929); finally, his verse of the 1930s was brought together in the volume *Stixotvorenija* (Verse, 1938). In the post-1925 era he was a prominent contributor to *Zlatorog* and later to Canev's *Izkustvo i kritika* (Art and Criticism). Again like Razcvetnikov, Furnadžiev wrote for children, especially after 1944. In his last years Furnadžiev was a faithful supporter of the regime and occupied a number of important posts in the literary bureaucracy.

A reading of Furnadžiev's poetry of the 1920s and 1930s reveals significant affinities between him and Razcvetnikov. Both men incline toward nihilism, though Furnadžiev does not go so far as Razcvetnikov. In his youth Furnadžiev could be markedly pessimistic, but at the same time he had at least a vague faith in the future: "How gloomy my soul is, / with what pain do I repay, / but then spring is sending to the earth / cranes and the warm wind" ("Səvest" [Conscience]). Later he continued the quest for faith, but without finding anything very substantial in which to believe: "Oh I believe in the world, I believe in the bright torture of blows, / I believe in thee, love, I believe in the pure morning hour!" ("Utro" [Morning]). An optimistic strain occasionally relieves the gloom of his verse, as in the poem of 1938 "Svetlini" (Lights): "And I set out, my heart beats freely, / beneath me is the soil, above me the heavens" (this

last image, symbolizing the poet's communion with the universe, occurs more than once in his poetry).

Despite all this, the prevailing tone of Furnadžiev's verse is dark: he often uses words like gloom, darkness, winter. A poem like "Balada" (Ballad), written in January of 1940, illustrates his depression over current happenings. Even in these contexts, though, his pessimism was personal, as witness his Lilievian lines of 1941: "I would storm again / not fortresses — what good is it to struggle with iron? / — but my own solitude and my own darkness" ("Pred neizvestnostta" [Before the Unknown]). The influence of symbolist melancholy is discernible in poems like "Nokti" (Claws), which describes the poet's unenviable lot: "I went along and was oppressed by dread grief, / because I was now alone and homeless, / because that yellow, swollen disc [the moon] / in the heavens was as if an invalid's face." Depressed though he may be, Furnadžiev somehow keeps moving, in the hope that eventually he will emerge from the gloom of his situation, whereas Razcvetnikov in a similar position would have been transfixedly immobile in his depression.

The prose-writer among the *Nov pət* defectors, Angel Karalijčev (1902-), has had a checkered literary and political career. He began to publish at seventeen and moved in communist circles in the early 1920s. In the latter part of the 1920s and all through the 1930s he wrote numerous books, including children's books. He worked mainly in the brief prose sketch or short story. Karalijčev's interests in Bulgarian history and travel meshed very neatly in a travel sketch of his on Macedonia — published at the beginning of the Second World War, when Macedonia had just been retaken by Bulgaria — where he gave his readers a sensitive description of the contemporary state of that land, taking into account the history of its various regions. The titles of his collections give indications of his major themes: *Car Ivan Šišman* (Czar Ivan Šišman, 1928), *Smərtta na xan Kruma* (The Death of Khan Krum, 1929), *Ləžoven svjat* (Deceptive World, 1932), *Srebərna rəkojka* (Silver Shock, 1935, characteristically subtitled "Travel notes, moods, short stories"), his travel notes of 1939 entitled *Zemjata na bəlgarite* (Land of the Bulgarians).

In his writings of the 1920s and 1930s Karalijčev combines elements reminiscent of his predecessors and contemporaries in the native literary tradition: a concern with style and folk motifs which hark back to Petko Todorov; a patriotism and sensitivity to the beauties and history of his native land which recall Ivan Vazov; a tendency toward social reconciliation which links him with Jordan Jovkov. For example, the short "Otče naš" (Our Father, 1926) describes a partisan who has come down from

the mountains to tell with horror of the cruelty inflicted upon the Turks and has to be reminded that his own family is subjected to reprisals from them when he is gone. The title story of one collection, "Rosenskija kamen most" (The Stone Bridge on the Rosica, 1925), utilizes the folk tradition of walling up a human sacrifice in a structure in order to ensure its stability which we have already encountered in Todorov's *Zidari*. The tale has many supernatural elements — for instance, it is indicated supernaturally to the builder that he must sacrifice his beloved for the sake of the bridge, to serve all the people. He makes the sacrifice, but only at the price of assuming a heavy burden of guilt. The murdered woman appears to him in spirit and tries to suffocate him with her hair, after which he falls ill and can think only of gaining her forgiveness. Karalijčev's tendency to minimize social conflicts is evident in "Zagubenata rodina" (Lost Homeland), a prose-poem written in 1926, the fiftieth anniversary of Botev's death. "Zagubenata rodina" celebrates the heroism of the Bulgarian people, the beauties of the Bulgarian land, and especially the feats of Xristo Botev, who, the author feels, could not really have been so full of hatred for oppressors as he appeared to be.

After 1944 Karalijčev, making amends for his error of 1925, adjusted rapidly to changed conditions, writing both adult and juvenile literature. He has been employed in various literary and editorial capacities.

Emanuil Popdimitrov (1887-1943), though a partial symbolist poet with communist links, avoided becoming excessively involved in literary disputes or succumbing too enthusiastically to literary fashions. The future poet was born into an established ecclesiastical family (the *pop* in his surname signifies that his father was a priest) and was raised in a religious household. He was by nature inclined toward the contemplative, scholarly life. While at school in the provinces he read writers like Puškin, Lermontov, Dostoevskij and Nietzsche. After a teaching stint he enrolled at Sofia University as a philosophy student while simultaneously attending the Art Academy. After the university crisis of early 1907 he departed first for the University of Belgrade and then to France in 1907-1908 and Switzerland in 1909. While living abroad he took up symbolism in literature and idealism in philosophy. In 1912 he issued his first volume of verse, entitled *Sənjat na ljubovta* (Dream of Love). His early poems, influenced by Kiril Xristov and Penčo Slavejkov, often dealt with the theme of chaste love in a mystical spirit. In the early 1920s Popdimitrov was appointed instructor (*časten docent*) in comparative literature at Sofia University, where he remained for the rest of his life.

Popdimitrov was not wholly an unobtrusive scholar and poet who

remained enclosed in his own private world. Swayed by the revolutionary fervor of the early 1920s, he injected enough social criticism into his verse collections *Korabi* (Ships, 1923) and *Vselena* (Universe, 1924) to cause them to be welcomed by the radical press, something which would never have happened with his self-centered earlier collections such as *Dnevnikət na samotnija* (Diary of a Lonely One, 1913). In the 1930s, however, he treated social themes more infrequently. In the inter-war decades he periodically put out small volumes of verse, for instance *Zlatna žetva* (Golden Harvest, 1928) and especially *Esenni plamәci* (Autumn Flames, 1935), marking the thirtieth anniversary of his literary activity. Popdimitrov also tried his hand at narrative poetry with *Zlatni nivi i bojni poleta* (Golden Fields and Battle Grounds, 1928), an unsuccessful treatment of the Balkan War. A more readable effort was the satirical narrative poem *V stranata na rozite* (In the Country of Roses, first published in 1939, substantially revised in 1943). An entertaining though disjointed 'rogue poem' chronicling the career of an opportunistic social climber, *V stranata na rozite* displays a lightly sardonic touch vaguely reminiscent of Puškin's *Evgenij Onegin*. Aside from these items, Popdimitrov authored dramatic poems, prose works and several scholarly books on literature. In general, though, he remained an intimate poet, the sort whom present-day Bulgarian critics would largely ignore if he had not cooperated with the Bulgarian Communist Party during the Second World War until his death in 1943.

But then again Popdimitrov might be studied today for the social elements in such poems of the 1920s as "Narod" (The People) — where he proclaimed that he drew his strength from the masses and was prepared to sacrifice himself for them — or "Sədba" (Fate), in which he announced his readiness to mount the barricades: "I go with the people / even where they are killing — / to be killed", where he could pour out "the life-giving potion, / the sacred liquor — / blood!" Still, though radical social motifs were certainly in evidence during portions of his career, the main tenor of his poetry was personal and even metaphysical, quite foreign to the violence of the class struggle. His intellectual processes utilize religious imagery to such an extent that even when he is describing the beauties of nature or the delights of love his thoughts automatically run in religious channels. In "Ikonostas" (Iconostasis) he marvels at a sunset, kneeling before the wonders of nature and invoking the Virgin. In the brief "Šatər" (Tent) he writes of a meal for two consisting of bread and wine, the elements of communion. The poet's religious sense informs his approach to the deepest attachments and tragedies of life, as in "Zimna panixida" (Winter

Requiem), written at the death of his small granddaughter. He celebrates the mysteries of family love and the interlinking of generations in a 'triptych' of poems dedicated to the three most important women in his life: his wife (addressed consistently as "Madonna"), his mother and his daughter. In "Pradedi" (Ancestors) the poet speaks of the endless series of generations from which he has sprung. He also recognized his own responsibility for the continuation of the race: in the unusual poem "Začatie" (Conception) he chastely evokes the sexual act, including the arousal to climax, the return to innocence and — most important — conception: "And a new human being has now set out toward earth / from the other shore of eternity" (in a poem to his daughter he refers to her as having arrived "from the other shore" and terms her his "hope for eternal life"). Human love was a major theme of Popdimitrov's lyrics, for instance in a series of romantic evocations of individual women, each bearing a feminine name as title: Laura, Lisxen, Ema, Efrosina, Iren. Even when he verged on raw sensualism, as in "V kəpalnjata" (At the Bath), his approach was still elevated. For the most part his poetry of the 1920s and 1930s was clear, comprehensible, and little contaminated by symbolism, although a portion of his work (e.g. "Bezumen pastir" [The Insane Shepherd]) ran along symbolist lines. Popdimitrov always remained faithful to his search for answers to the deeper questions of existence, though he was on occasion forced to use mystical language to express his insights.

Nikola Rakitin (1885-1934), a lyric poet of quiet charm, is almost unknown outside Bulgaria and enjoys little renown even in his native country. Ejected from the University of Sofia upon its closing in 1907, he visited Switzerland before returning to Bulgaria in 1908 to complete his formal education. He was then given a teaching assignment at a *gymnasium* in Pleven, a sizable provincial city in northwestern Bulgaria. He ended by living the rest of his life in Pleven, remaining on the sidelines of literary life and consciously passing up opportunities to move to the capital.

Rakitin first began publishing poetry in the landmark year of 1905 and put together his initial verse collection in 1909 under the title *Pod cəfnalite višni* (Beneath the Blossoming Cherry Trees). In the First World War Rakitin fought on the Rumanian front and later printed collections of war poetry. In the course of his life he published more than twenty-five thin volumes of verse bearing such titles as *Predi da səmne* (Before the Dawn, 1920), *V tišinata na dalečnija grad* (In the Silence of the Distant City, 1921), and *Prolet pri Vit* (Spring by the Vit [a river near Pleven], 1929). Most of them were no more than booklets; many were printed in Pleven.

Being a lyric poet, Rakitin was out of his depth when he attempted longer poems, such as *Štərčeto gnezdo* (The Stork's Nest, 1924), or prose, for example the stories gathered in *Rusalska poljana* (The Waternymph's Meadow, published posthumously in 1938). He was happiest in the bosom of his family, busy with his teaching duties, writing brief lyrics. In 1933 he was given a jubilee celebration and appointed director of a museum in Pleven. But this relative success proved his downfall, for later he was dismissed from his position for no good reason and had difficulty in finding another. Ultimately he decided that things were too much for him and committed suicide on 2 May, 1934 by jumping from a train as it passed through a tunnel. He left his poetic epitaph in "Kovarstvo s podlost me srazixa" (Guile and Baseness Have Struck Me Down), the last stanza of which reads: "Farewell, thou my native land, / farewell, oh golden autumn expanse. / With a free soul, oh Lord, / I come before Thee proud and pure."

The poet who faced his own dissolution with equanimity described his life and work with sensitivity. In "Žitie" (Saint's Life) he says of his poems that "I picked them from my soul, / quiet as the autumn skies, / responsive as a forest echo, / pure as the first winter snow, — / quiet songs, filled with the scent / of the flowers that grow in our native land." A simple faith in God, a calm attachment to everything Bulgarian, a deep love of nature and the countryside imbue Rakitin's verse. Taught by the ancient Balkan mountains, as he phrased it, Rakitin was devoted to his country, especially the fertile plains around Pleven. He never tired of describing in straightforward but eloquent verse the changes of the seasons or the play of light upon a sea of ripening grain. Even his religious consciousness was nourished by the countryside: in the poem "Xristos" (Christ) he writes that a Christ returned to earth would be "barefoot, with a face deeply tanned by the sun", His eyes reflecting the "expanse of the fields with their eternal hopes".

Rakitin was a contemplative poet, and the theme of silence often occurs in his writing (cf. the title *In the Silence of the Distant City*). Rakitin's silence is not absolute, for through it he can detect the city's distant murmur or the sound of a bell drifting through the air, reminding him that life is near at hand though not insistent. "My world", he wrote, "is the wondrous silence of a house closed and shuttered", a house which reminds the poet of life just as do sounds in the distance. Rakitin seeks silence at night. In the poem "Noštta e moja den" (The Night Is My Day) he dwells lovingly on the night, when he is able, "locked in my room, a pale hermit", to write, create and think. He is still enveloped by the

world, but now it is in a state of suspended animation. But then the night holds terrors as well, especially when the writer's mood changes from one of pensive cheerfulness to one of gloom and despair. Thus he remarks that he fears the bustle of the world but is even more frightened by the "silence of his lonely room" which "oppresses his soul" and compels him to recognize his own "aimlessness in the world and all the insignificance of life". At such times he felt that something within him was warped so that even in solitude he could not liberate himself from a generalized distrust. Such notes as these in his work help explain how a poet who on the surface seemed so balanced and life-affirming could finally end his own existence.

An extraordinarily unprolific poet of the interwar years whose poetic achievement has been fully recognized only recently but who has greatly influenced the younger Bulgarian poets of the 1960s is Atanas Dalčev (1904-). A native of Macedonia, Dalčev studied at Sofia University and later lived for a time in France and Italy. On the whole his life has been an uneventful one, punctuated by the appearance of thin collections of his verse entitled *Prozorec* (Window, 1926), *Stixotvorenija* (Verse, 1928), *Pariž* (Paris, 1930), and *Angelət ot Šartər* (The Angel of Chartres, 1943). His entire original poetic production can easily be fitted into a volume of under 150 pages.

In much of his work Dalčev is very prosaic, which is perhaps an advantage for a poet writing in a little-known language, since his lines can be more adequately translated. His verse has a colloquial quality and is deceptively simple; in fact some of his poems seem almost banal, and their deeper significance becomes apparent only after repeated readings. Dalčev is a bookish poet in the sense that his books and scholarly pursuits are at least as important to him as 'real life'. As he wrote in a four-line poem on Paris, "Na zaminavane" (Leaving): "What is there to regret? I had / neither mistress nor friend; / I walked along and tipped my hat / to the winds alone in this city." The image of the window occurs time and again in Dalčev's poetry, so it is fitting that his first entire collection should have been titled *Prozorec*. He withdraws from the world, but not wholly, for he loves to stand at the window where he can himself be seen but still be sheltered from the elements and human passions while he observes the life going on outside. Windows are given especial prominence in the Parisian cycle of poems, written during a period when he was particularly separated from his fellow men. Through his window he can witness the bright and the everyday — for instance a young woman washing windows as the sunlight reflecting from them sends lightning flashes into

his dark room ("Pladnja" [Noon]) — or else the corrupt and perverted, as an "old debauchee with a semi-child" who enters the hotel opposite ("Nošt" [Night]). The window sometimes enters into a symbiosis with the poet, as when he views the gloomy night through his own reflection in the glass ("Nošt"), or threatens to "stick his tongue out at the world, / hanged above the black window" ("Djavolsko" [Diabolic]).

In certain ways the poet's ideal is the stone, which never changes and is holy because it cannot sin: "only the dead is eternal and sainted, / the living lives in sin" ("Kamək" [Stone]). Dalčev is incapable of transforming himself into an inanimate object, so he decides to vegetate in solitude and live in his dreams and memories, while time passes monotonously until he fades out of existence: "We die constantly and slowly vanish / now from this place, then from that, / until at last we disappear completely" ("Večer" [Evening]). The end of time is death, and no rooms or doors, however solid, can protect one from "Her — the eternal bandit" ("Vratite" [Doors]).

Although Dalčev's verse is overwhelmingly personal and almost otherworldly, some topical elements creep in occasionally, particularly in the Paris cycle. In one poem, "Rabotnik" (Worker), the poet watches through a window a Parisian worker eating his supper at night accompanied by his family, with the "lighted lamp shining above his head like a halo". A sterner note is sounded in a piece describing those unfortunates who earn a few pennies by carrying advertisements around. The poet is repelled by the callousness of the arrangement: "Man is not a brother for us, but a wall / upon which are pasted advertisements" ("Nosači na reklama" [Carriers of Advertisements]). But such thoughts as these distract Dalčev only momentarily from his absorption with the overarching questions of time, memory, life and death.

One Bulgarian poetess deserving of mention at this point is Dora Gabe (1886-), the widow of the literary historian Bojan Penev. Born in Dobrudža, she became almost as enthusiastic a celebrator of her native region in verse as Jordan Jovkov in prose, writing a number of poems on Dobrudža between 1916 and 1940. A cultured woman, she studied in Varna and later in places like Geneva and Grenoble. Though she first attracted notice in 1908 with a volume entitled *Temenugi* (Violets), her more mature work appeared in such collections as *Zemen pət* (Earthly Way, 1928) and the longer poem *Lunatička* (The Sleepwalker, 1932). A member of the *Zlatorog* circle, Miss Gabe was also a prolific writer of children's books. Since 1944 she has continued to produce children's books and is now an orthodox supporter of the official literary line.

Dora Gabe's verse, though not especially profound, is sufficiently good to mark her as an important minor poet. She has a feminine liking for common household objects as aids to contemplation: in "Starinen portret" (Old Portrait) the poetess, inspired by a portrait, falls to musing on the question of existence, convinced that she can derive strength for her present life from the purity of those who have gone before her. The notion of physical isolation is central to the poem "V stajata" (In the Room), where the persona huddles in the middle of a room as if the walls could protect her from death itself, while simultaneously she wishes to be joined with life, whose muffled echoes she can hear. In the poem *Lunatička* the speaker wanders through the nocturnal city in a somnambulent state, observing all manner of unhappiness and woe but excusing herself from trying to assist by arguing that she is merely a disembodied spirit, a sleepwalker. The poetess is both bound to the world by a feminine fondness for material things and desirous of escaping from it physically or psychologically.

The best woman poet Bulgarian literature has yet produced is undoubtedly Elisaveta Bagrjana. Born in 1893 in Sofia, she is still active in literature. After completing a *gymnasium* course in the capital, she taught for a year before enrolling at the University of Sofia to study Slavic philology under Bojan Penev. Being a trifle younger than the group of writers who began publishing in the years 1905-1907, as well as a slow developer, she had written verse for some time before her friend Jordan Jovkov divined that she was a poet, insisted upon reading her work, and placed her first poems in the journal *Səvremenna misəl* (Contemporary Thought) in 1915.

After the First World War Bagrjana taught and contributed to different journals, in time becoming a leading member of the *Zlatorog* group. Collections of her verse appeared periodically and always went through several editions. These included *Večnata i svjatata* (The Eternal and the Sacred, 1927); *Zvezda na morjaka* (The Sailor's Star, 1932); and *Sərce čoveško* (The Heart of Man, 1936). Further, like many of her colleagues she wrote juvenile books. Since 1944 she has continued to write, modifying her poetry to suit current conditions if compelled to. In 1953, during the Stalin era, she published *Pet zvezdi* (Five Stars), a collection of poems dealing with such subjects as the new Soviet woman. *Pet zvezdi* turned out to be something of an anomaly in her development, however, for her most recent collection, *Ot brjag do brjag* (From Shore to Shore, 1963), is comprised of pieces which for the most part recall her more personal poetry of the pre-1944 period. At present Bagrjana serves as poetry editor

of the literary journal *Septemvri.* Single-volume selected editions of her work have been put out in recent years, and she ranks as one of the best living Bulgarian poets.

Bagrjana's world is at once modern and traditional, and in any case feminine. She views reality through a woman's eyes and has thought much about woman's place in the scheme of things. In this regard she may be associated with the Russian poetesses Anna Axmatova and Marina Cvetaeva, some of whose work she has translated. Bagrjana has no significant feminine predecessors in Bulgarian poetry, but certain facets of her character (e.g. her love for the sea, her wish to travel to exotic places, her hedonism) bring her close to Kiril Xristov, though her hedonism is modified by a religious sense of the tragic quality of life, foreign to him.

A major component of Bagrjana's outlook is a cult of youth, although one not taken to ridiculous extremes. For her, youth is a golden time of life, for then a person is least burdened with family and social responsibilities, least afflicted by physical or spiritual malaises, most free. It was the urge for freedom which impelled Bagrjana to write lyric 'songs' celebrating youth and beauty, especially her own.

The poet's obsession with freedom appears in several forms. It emerges in its most elemental shape in the poem "Stixii" (The Elements, 1925). Can one block the wind, she asks rhetorically, as it races across the squares and fences of her native town, can one stop rivers as they gather in the spring freshets, can one retard the fermentation of native wine? Of course not. In like manner, then, she, "the free one, the wanderer, the unbowed — / the sister of the wind, the water and the wine" cannot be kept from visiting distant places. A more metaphysical concept of human freedom is expressed in her later poem "Penelopa na XX vek" (Penelope of the Twentieth Century), where she speaks of the way in which every human being is embedded in history, inextricably linked both to those endless generations from which he has sprung and to the descendants to follow him. Yet unlike Emanuil Popdimitrov when he wrote of similar things, Bagrjana rebels against this bondage. She wants to see herself just once in her metaphysical nudity, stripped of her historical trappings: "I would like with one insane leap into infinity / to sunder all knots — and to see — / myself, freed — my very self — my own countenance / without the past, without a pedigree, without an age or name!"

Realizing full well that the totally liberated personality is an unattainable ideal, Bagrjana seeks an approximation to it in the spirit of the wanderer. The most poignant symbol of the free spirit for her is the sea,

whose "light and free" horizon summons young people from the stifling cities like a "hidden passion" ("Zovət na moreto" [The Call of the Sea]). In another poem she asserts that one who has never felt the "temptation of the distance, / the ecstasy of motion, / the shudders of danger, / the drunkenness of open space / and the fatigue of wandering" cannot genuinely comprehend the depths of existence or even properly appreciate the joys of home ("Pticata s motornoto sərce" [The Bird with the Motor Heart]). Bagrjana did not restrict herself to dreaming about travel: she visited a number of European cities, dedicating to Paris and Venice cycles of poems in which she emphasizes the works of men's hands and the history these cities have witnessed. She gives another motive for her traveling in a poem from the "Zovət na moreto" cycle: in a foreign land she can come closest to divesting herself of all life's encumbrances. If only she were a man, she writes, she would take ship as a sailor, journey from harbor to harbor without sinking any roots, wander about streets "without friends, without acquaintances, without comrades, / ... among strangers — a stranger and unknown". When she leaves each port it would become, as she says in "Posleden den" (Last Day, 1926), "merely a dream that has been dreamt".

The impulse toward freedom is only one thematic strand, albeit a very important one, in Bagrjana's verse. When she is at home she is tied to those about her by invisible but powerful threads which are sources of bittersweet emotions. One of her principal shackles is love, a force which on occasion well-nigh enslaved her. In "Intérieur" (1923) the poetess contemplates small objects in the room which remaind her of her beloved and muses upon her involuntary servitude to him. She has repeatedly told herself that she would not keep an appointment with him but each time "I go to him obedient, / as if enchanted in some mysterious hypnosis. / And I return broken and weary, / humiliated and bitterly repentant." On occasion she thinks to save herself through separation from her lover, but this seldom proves wholly effective: "How peaceful it is here without you, / how peaceful and — empty, alas!" ("Na dača" [The Summer Place]). Even when separation seems to have worked, just one chance meeting and "again I am wholly, wholly yours" ("Ti" [You]). Bagrjana describes the bondage of love eloquently in the last stanza of "Sədba" (Fate, 1925): "Invisible threads entangle / and tug my will, my hands and feet and eyes. / I no longer think, and start off, and do not ask / in what house I will awake, and where it is and whose." Love can thoroughly subject the free-thinking and freely moving young woman of "Pticata s motornoto sərce" to another's will.

Sexual love is not the only constraint upon Bagrjana's freedom. The state of motherhood, for instance, also restricts her severely. Yet she comprehends that only through such restraints can she be truly human. Woman is the source and keeper of life, Bagrjana writes in "Ženata" (Woman); she is the wellspring of all that is good in an existence which begins and ends with the word "mother". The poetess is conscious of her universal femininity, as is clear from the final lines of "Penelopa na XX vek": "Look at me — / pure in the pure light, / look at me — the first and last — me, / your wife and eternal woman!" The notion of woman as the "first and last" may be connected with birth and death. Although at times Bagrjana rebels against death — "I do not want any earthly doubts: / there is no death, parting and grief, / there is no past nor even any future" ("Requiem") — and at other times treats it with fitting melancholy — as when she comments that she has watched so many people dear to her die that she is almost persuaded of her own immortality, or asks in agony whether a person's ability to reconcile himself to another's death is not "the most terrible human despair" ("Smərt" [Death]) — in still other instances she grasps at a possible explanation for death while recognizing that nothing can be done about it, it can only be accepted. In "Žertvata" (The Sacrifice, 1925) she describes a miracle of healing effected through a mother's profound understanding. With her child dreadfully ill, the first day she prays that health may be restored to him; the second day she requests that her own life be taken and given to him; but on the third day, in the wisdom of resignation, she asks for death to end her child's sufferings, at which point he is miraculously restored to life. Bagrjana's religious consciousness and breadth of spirit enable her to see the tragedies of life, but her vitality causes her eternally to struggle against them and seek to circumvent them.

Another characteristic of Bagrjana is her simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from many aspects of modernity, coupled with a deep sense of history and eternal human values. She composed poems or cycles with quite modern titles, such as "Pticata s motornoto sərce" or "Seizmograf na sərceto" (Seismograph of the Heart). But the impersonality of these images conflicts with the humanity of her general approach: as she wrote with distaste in 1940, we must "live like concrete in the age of concrete" ("Dnes" [Today]). In short, she takes cognizance of the achievements of a technological society and welcomes some of them, but she wishes to alleviate as far as possible the dehumanizing effects of industrialism. To the extent that this is a central problem of the contemporary world Bagrjana is among the most modern of Bulgarian poets.

By contrast with prose and especially poetry, Bulgarian drama subsisted on a low level between the wars. Many plays were written then, but few now retain much interest. Still, the only noteworthy author of the modern period who gained prominence solely as a playwright, Stefan L. Kostov (1879-1939), did his primary work in the inter-war period. Kostov was born and educated in Sofia. After teaching for a time he continued his studies in 1907 in Vienna and later in Germany, his fields of interest being philology and ethnography. He wrote several ethnographical studies and was made an official of the Ethnographical Museum in Sofia in 1909 and its director in 1923.

Kostov is of concern here, however, not as a scholar but as a playwright, and more specifically as a writer of comedies. He began publishing humorous stories and sketches as early as 1903, but he made a reputation only at the start of the First World War, with the appearance of his *Məžemrazka* (Manhater, written in 1914). The heroine of *Məžemrazka*, appropriately named Androfoba, incites her female associates against men. At the same time, hypocrite that she is, she is herself involved with a man, and the exposure of this fact leads to her humiliation.

Məžemrazka was a reasonably successful first effort, but then the war so disrupted the theater that Kostov did not come into his own until the 1920s. His play *Pred izgrev slənce* (Before Sunrise), premiered in 1921, has a hero known only as "The Teacher". He has attracted a circle of believers in his powers as a medium, connoisseur of the occult, and preacher of progressive social doctrines, including free love. His adherence to the latter creed nearly proves his undoing, for when he attempts to persuade a married female follower of his to yield to his desires for its sake, she recognizes him as a fraud and denounces him. The Teacher's other disciples, however, are too gullible to lose their faith in him. In such plays as *Pred izgrev slənce* Kostov so to speak investigated the 'ethnography' of the Bulgarian upper classes, who could be nearly as primitive in their credulity as the veriest savages. On the other hand, though Kostov attacked the foibles of contemporary society, he was also dependent upon that society for his audiences. Therefore he either had to choose more or less exotic subjects or else attach a properly inspirational ending to his plays, which sometimes violated their artistic integrity.

These approaches are illustrated in two of Kostov's best-known comedies of the 1920s: *Golemanov* (written in 1920, first performed in 1927) and *Zlatnata mina* (The Gold Mine, premiered in 1926). The personages in *Golemanov* (a name derived from the adjective *goljam* 'big') are depictions of certain types who may certainly have existed in Bul-

garian society but whom no contemporary audience would have regarded as anything but caricatures. The action occurs at a remove in time, during the Balkan Wars, and the plot is rather aimless. The hero, Golemanov, a man greedy for political power, is prepared to marry his daughter off to an elderly suitor in order to advance his career. At various times he thinks he will be appointed Minister of Education, of Trade and of Agriculture, and he is ready to employ the same vacuous clichés in any of these posts, as he is equally unqualified for all of them. One exchange in the play goes: "What does Golemanov know about agriculture?" "It doesn't matter ... He is the minister." Eventually Golemanov is informed that the government has abandoned the attempt to form the cabinet in which he would have been included and he is left with nothing. But he refuses to accept this outcome and insists upon being addressed as "Mister Minister", ringing down the curtain with the tirade: "Here I am a minister ... I am the chief ... I am the Czar! ... Period!" This final outburst makes it obvious that Golemanov has almost lost his mental equilibrium and therefore is not to be taken seriously. *Golemanov*, incidentally, is a variation on Vazov's *Službogonci*, though in the latter play the hero is actually a minister and is happy to leave office.

Kostov's best comedy was *Zlatnata mina*. The characters are not only more credible than those in *Golemanov*, the plot is also clearer and more entertaining. The central character, Xadžiev, hopes to enrich himself speedily by investing in a gold mine, a project being run by others as an outright swindle. Certain that he will soon be wealthy, he pressures his daughter not to rush when she becomes engaged to the teacher Ljubenov, the play's positive hero, arguing that she can find a much better husband before long. In the end Xadžiev discovers that not only will he not become rich from the mine, he has been ruined by it. He is promptly deserted by the "friends" who had been extraordinarily attentive to him when they thought he was on the upward trail, only to be unexpectedly rescued by Ljubenov, who appears to announce that he has set things right if Xadžiev will but abandon all his fantastic schemes. Xadžiev rather improbably accedes to this demand, declaring that "wisdom is more valuable than any earthly riches", and is saved. If Xadžiev's conversion to righteousness at the conclusion seems forced, Ljubenov as positive hero is also a weak element in the play. In the first act he is all but tongue-tied until he gathers the courage to tender his marriage proposal; immediately thereafter he is called away to his dying father's bedside and thus is absent during most of the play until he reappears at the end. However, despite its flaws *Zlatnata mina* remains an excellent psychological study of the social climber.

In the later 1920s and all through the 1930s Kostov turned out an average of one play per year. These included *Člen 223* (Article 223, 1931) and *Komedija bez ime* (Comedy Without a Name, 1938). None of the later plays now enjoys the status of his earlier ones.

Aside from Kostov few playwrights worth detailed mention were active during the interwar period. One dramatist who emerged briefly but dazzlingly during this time was Račo Stojanov (1883-1951). In 1927 he published a first-rate play, *Majstori* (Master Craftsmen), a well-constructed drama of personal and professional rivalry between two ambitious men; he then was scarcely heard of again. Another prominent playwright of the day was Jordan Jovkov, even though the drama was only a secondary interest, one to which he came late in his career. His first play, *Albena*, was published in 1930, to be followed in the same year by the comedy *Milionerət* (The Millionaire), in 1932 by another drama, *Borjana*, and finally in 1936 by a second comedy, *Obiknoven čovek* (An Ordinary Person). The first three plays are of the greatest literary interest.

Jovkov's literary approach previously had not been especially dramatic, for he made relatively little use of dialogue, preferring to write lengthy descriptions and analyses. He nevertheless made the transition to the stage with minimal difficulty, having acquired a few tricks of the trade which make his plays theatrical enough in a quiet way. Like his short stories, the plays exhibit Jovkov's tendency to look unblinkingly into the depths of human depravity but then to resolve the sharpest of conflicts in a spirit of Christian reconciliation.

The central theme in *Albena* is that of the damage which physical beauty can wreak. The heroine Albena, the most beautiful woman in the village, wife of the crude and unattractive Kucar, is carrying on an affair with the miller Njagul while simultaneously fending off the attentions of the besotted Senebirski. Though not an evil woman, Albena is as it were cursed by her beauty, which attracts men quite independently of her wishes. Njagul is willing to go to any lengths, including murder, to free himself from his wife and Albena from Kucar. When Kucar dies suddenly and mysteriously, Albena and Senebirski come under suspicion and are taken into custody. Albena wears her finest apparel as she is escorted away, and her loveliness causes many bystanders to demand her immediate release. The situation is resolved dramatically when Njagul appears upon the scene to confess that he alone was responsible for Kucar's death. Albena wordlessly confirms his guilt as the curtain falls. *Albena*'s plot line thus moves cleanly to the end, at least if one ignores Senebirski's unjustified arrest, which is necessary in order to set up the denouement. The

dialogue is lively, and the entire play makes an absorbing rural drama.

Jovkov's second drama, *Borjana*, treats a theme of family intrigue: the sons know that their father, Zlatil, is hoarding a great amount of wealth which he will not admit to having and are determined to obtain it for themselves. In outline the plot is reminiscent of that of *Geracite*. But even if Jovkov did obtain his initial inspiration from *Geracite* — Elin Pelin thought he had done more than this — he developed his subject differently, especially at the end. In Jovkov's play the situation is made more complicated by the fact that Zlatil has himself gotten his wealth unethically from his own father. When one of the sons succeeds in making off with the money the others, enraged, seek to wreak violent vengeance upon him. At that point Borjana, the beloved of one of the sons, comes on the scene and through the healing influence of her beauty and honesty persuades Zlatil to agree to an equal division of his estate among his sons, and the brothers to forgive one another. Zlatil feels that he has atoned somewhat for his crime against his own father, the brothers purge themselves of their greed and hatred, and the play concludes with a general spiritual renovation brought about by Borjana, whose beauty, unlike Albena's, works for the good.

In his comedy *Milionerət* Jovkov mocks the shortcomings of established society even as he refuses to condemn them entirely. The hero, Dr. Kondov, is a veterinarian of no position whom society is not at all eager to receive until the word spreads that he has inherited a fortune. The rumor is the result of an error, but no matter how vigorously Kondov protests that he is no millionaire, he is not believed: instead he becomes the most desirable of matches in homes which would hardly have admitted him before. Consequently, it is possible for him to marry the girl he loves, who comes of an exclusive family, and it is only after the marriage that his calculating father-in-law is persuaded that the doctor had indeed been telling the truth about his finances. *Milionerət* was designed as a light comedy. Kondov as the positive hero is an attractive person, but even those with whom he must contend and who turn out to be such hypocrites where money is involved are not evil but simply ridiculous in their transparent maneuverings.

During the decades between the First and Second World Wars Bulgarian literary scholarship and literary criticism both attained maturity. Where Dr. Krəstev had been nearly alone as a critic before the First World War, after it there appeared many of them, and in addition the demarcation

line between writer and critic became sharper than before. The greatest literary historian before the war was Ivan Šišmanov (1862-1923), but after it his work was continued by several successors who have greatly expanded our knowledge of Bulgarian literary and intellectual history.

One of Šišmanov's chief followers as a literary historian (though he did not survive him by much) was Bojan Penev (1882-1927), whose productive life ended abruptly after an operation. A member of the *Misəl* and *Zlatorog* groups, Penev studied Slavic philology at Sofia University. In 1909 he was engaged as a *docent* in Bulgarian and Slavic literatures at Sofia University, rising to full professor at that institution two years before his death. Penev's erudition and industry were enormous. Although he also investigated Polish culture and authored a Polish grammar, he worked mainly on the history of Bulgarian literature, especially the Renaissance period. He did separate studies of Paisij Xilendarski, Rakovski, Botev and other important literary figures, but his most lasting monument was the posthumously published *Istorija na novata bəlgarska literatura* (History of Modern Bulgarian Literature, 4 vols., 1930-1936), which for all its bulk makes its way only partially through the Bulgarian Renaissance. Unique in its scope and depth, Penev's history will long be consulted by scholars writing on the period which it covers. Penev also went beyond the Renaissance, writing a monograph on Aleko Konstantinov as well as some general theoretical articles on the state of contemporary Bulgarian letters. One of his *fortes* was the composition of essays analyzing the links between literature and the social and intellectual forces of a given epoch: he never tried to divorce literature from the era in which it was written. In addition he had a keen esthetic sense, though much of the literature he discussed was worth relatively little as art.

The current dean of Bulgarian literary and intellectual historians is Mixail Arnaudov (1878-). Arnaudov, who first began publishing in 1895, is an extraordinarily productive scholar. After graduating in Slavic philology from Sofia University, he continued his literary studies in Germany and later in Prague. In 1908 he joined the faculty of Sofia University as a comparative literature specialist, holding the post of professor from 1919 to 1944. In addition, for many years he edited the scholarly and intellectual journal *Bəlgarska misəl* (Bulgarian Thought, 1924-1943). Because he served as Minister of Education for a time during the Second World War, he narrowly escaped execution after 1944. Since 1944, and especially in more recent years, he has published many scholarly works even though he has refused to give his work a Marxist slant and

has insisted upon adhering to the highest standards of objective scholarship as he understands them.

The areas of Prof. Arnaudov's competence are numerous. He has contributed extensively to the study of the intellectual history of the Renaissance with books, usually quite bulky, on such figures as Rakovski, Neofit Bozveli, Aprilov, Sofronij Vračanski, and the brothers Miladinov. He has done yeoman service in the investigation of Bulgarian folklore with works like *Očerki po bəlgarskija folklor* (Sketches on Bulgarian Folklore, 1934). He has written of authors to whom he was a contemporary and sometimes friend, notably Vazov and Javorov. His intimate association with Javorov, incidentally, stimulated his interest in the question of the psychology of the writer and led to the production of his classic *Psixologija na literaturnoto tvorčestvo* (Psychology of Literary Creativity, 1931), based upon materials drawn from the experience of the greatest representatives of European and Bulgarian letters.

Several perceptive literary critics wrote during the interwar years. One of the most original was Vladimir Vasilev (1883-1963). Vasilev unfortunately never collected his critical articles, which must therefore be ferreted out in periodicals. It is to be hoped that some of them will eventually be brought together and made more accessible to the general reader. Vasilev contributed to *Misəl* in its last years and later maintained its traditions in *Zlatorog*, of which he was editor and guiding spirit. *Zlatorog* was the leading intellectual and literary periodical of the interwar period, printing verse, short stories, reviews, critical articles and essays on subjects of general interest. Vasilev himself was the journal's head critic, penning gentle impressionistic studies in which he sought to guide contemporary authors along those lines which seemed most suitable to each. Vasilev's criticism was elegant, stimulating and undogmatic. But as he uncompromisingly defended the artist's autonomy, particularly against the Marxist critics, and after 1944 would not repudiate all he had stood for for so many years, he fell into disfavor and could publish only very occasionally. *Zlatorog* is now ordinarily condemned as an organ of "bourgeois reaction" and its services to Bulgarian literature minimized,but in time its importance surely will be recognized.

Aside from Vasilev, two other critics of the *Zlatorog* group were Georgi Canev (1895-) and Malčo Nikolov (1883-1965). Canev migrated to *Zlatorog* after defecting from *Nov pət* along with Razcvetnikov, Furnadžiev and Karalijčev in 1925; in 1938 he in turn left *Zlatorog* to found the journal *Izkustvo i kritika* (Art and Criticism), which supplied worthy competition for *Zlatorog* until both ceased publication in 1943.

In the 1930s Canev tended to produce reviews, studies of individual authors, and occasionally investigations of literary movements. Most of his books are collections of critical articles rather than book-length studies. Unable to support himself solely as a critic and journalist, Canev also taught literature in Sofia *gymnasiums* for a number of years. Following 1944 he was appointed professor of Bulgarian literature at Sofia University and director of the Institute of Bulgarian Literature of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, thus ending as a power in the Bulgarian literary and scholarly establishment.

The critic Malčo Nikolov always emphasized the works themselves in his approach to literature. He has written appreciations of such figures as Jovkov, Vazov, Botev, Penčo Slavejkov and Javorov, as well as one of the best single-volume histories of modern Bulgarian literature, *Istorija na novata bəlgarska literatura* (History of Modern Bulgarian Literature, 1941 and later editions), which treats the period from Petko Slavejkov through the First World War.

Symbolist criticism in Bulgaria was represented principally by Ivan Radoslavov (1880-). In such writings as his book *Bəlgarska literatura (1880-1930)* (Bulgarian Literature [1880-1930], 1935), Radoslavov interpreted the entire history of his native literature as a process culminating in the phenomenon of Bulgarian symbolism, of which Trajanov was the High Priest. Radoslavov's interpretations are now of little interest to any but students of symbolism.

Finally, the chief communist critics of the interwar period were Georgi Bakalov (1873-1939) and Todor Pavlov (1890-). Bakalov was the wheelhorse of communist literary journalism in Bulgaria, the day-to-day critic and literary historian. He began editing communist organs as early as 1893 and translated the classic works of Marx, Engels and Plexanov. He also managed a series of communist periodicals later on, including *Nov pət* in the middle 1920s. Following a period of exile in the Soviet Union he returned to Bulgaria in 1932 to resume his journalistic activities. By the time of his demise he was the author of orthodox Marxist studies of Vazov, Smirnenski, Botev, Aleko Konstantinov and others, as well as more general works including polemical articles defending Marxist literary theory. By contrast to Bakalov, Todor Pavlov is a more abstract, though still quite orthodox, Marxist philosopher and esthetician. The author of an incredible number of books and pamphlets on questions of Marxist philosophy and esthetics, he suffered imprisonment and torture as a communist activist during the 1920s and again during the Second World War. Since 1944 he has been the fountainhead of Marxist philos-

ophy in his homeland, editing the journal *Filosofska misəl* (Philosophical Thought) and serving as president of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (he has also been active in general political life). He has continued to deal prominently with esthetic problems in his writing.