

**Dimitar Mitrev<sup>1</sup>**

## Racin: A Part of the Development of the Macedonian National Culture

Even if the coinciding of the two anniversaries – the sixtieth anniversary of his birth and the twenty-fifth anniversary of his death – were not upon us, Racin's name would still awake in us a sense of profound reverence. Racin and his work have already taken their deserved place amidst our frequent and principal memories. In our literary science he has been also examined through a rich and varied Racin-esque type of a legacy. Future researchers would most likely be left with very little, if

any, opportunities to uncover something substantially new about Racin's tragically severed personal history, or about his character as an author who represents the introductory chapter in the development of the Macedonian national culture. However, this does not mean that 'the Racin topic' should not be the subject of any new research investigations. Firstly, along the lines of an associative approach, it will continue to undergo its transformations. If, on the other hand, Racin's life and his cre-

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<sup>1</sup> Dimitar Mitrev (1919 - 1976) is a Macedonian literary critic and essayist, scholar, professor at the Philosophy Faculty. Back in 1938, he was one of the founders of Macedonian Literary Circle in Sofia, along with Nikola Vaptsarov, Kole Nedelkovski George Abadjiev Anton Popov and other progressive Macedonian writers who worked for the affirmation of the Macedonian national culture. In the period 1974-1976 he was rector of Skopje University. One of the biggest figures in Macedonian culture and literature

ative undertakings are understood and thus accepted as both symptom and symbol of the key phase in the evolution of our national awakening, then the revolutionary act will attain permanent dimensions. Henceforth: that which had been created by the person himself becomes the impetus needed to delve deep into the essence of fate, and the essence of our national being. And this is exactly what comes out as the most inspirational in any reminiscing about Racin, namely in those reminiscences which year in and year out are renewed as precious culturally-national traditions.

Racin is that person from our recent history who most suggestively serves to have us express the continuity of the spirit of renewal and contemporary inquest. On his own, but also through the work he produced, Racin is a living and life-affirming bond connecting us to our ancestors. He allows us to engage in the most astute type of a dialogue with their [the ancestors'] deep historical meanings. Through him, we recognize ourselves both as contemporary creators, and as the followers of our centuries-old creative spirit.

Racin begins his Macedonian creative work with the cry to continue the unfinished work of our 19<sup>th</sup> century-reformers – creators of the spirit. “The work which was started by Pejchinovikj (Пејчиновиќ), the Brothers

Miladinov (Миладиновци), and Zhinzifov (Жинзифов), and which was rendered incomplete by the provenance of history, now for the second time will return to its matrix and will find its disciples”. This is how Racin’s words echo the principal attitude that stands as the pre-determinant of his first entry into the narrative of our national culture. In the name of its new battles, so as not to forget what had been accomplished by the ones who came first in the pronouncement of the people’s self-awakening! In order to have us know why the efforts to mobilize and speed-up the progress were thwarted, and why they could not become the kind of creators their followers would later become! The dawns of his time announce the act of outgrowing; yet, the voice which calls back from the past cannot be denied. Listening closely to this voice is neither a way out of the present nor a distancing from the future. And as something perfectly natural and providential, Racin possesses a pronounced kinship with the generation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century-reformers. Is it mere luck of the draw that he does not remain a simple poet, but also becomes a freedom fighter for his own people? Is it a simple twist of fate that his poetry bears the same fighting spirit present in the verses of the Brothers Miladinov, Plichev, and in the verses of his fellow Veles-born Zhinzifov? If their quills

were able to create the kind of poetry which finds the people's sufferings as its singular motif, to create the kind of non-fiction which amounts in orality and the feeling of debt towards people, then it too is not only natural, but also certain of Racin's quill, capable of such inspired strokes. Even the versatility of his intellectual investment, identical to the one by our wordsmiths of the past, is not just another piece of data pointing towards the autodidactic attempt of the worker who became an intellectual. The intensive listening, to the people and their pulse, begs an intensive and varied improvement of one's own cultural blossoming. Only he who has no ounce of a collective sensibility can remain stuck in the dimension of a singular, and once and for all, pronounced statement. But why not speak of that which in our relationship towards Racin, under the influence of the problematic justification, we abscond to forgetfulness! He, like his predecessors, experienced being attacked by his own people, oftentimes even feeling like a stranger among them. I am emphasizing this equally biographical and creative bond Racin shares with the 19<sup>th</sup> century-reformers, since it served as the initial impetus in his patriotic work.

Racin's awareness of the past was quite strong. He saw the modern times as a turning point in the fight of his people; as a matter

of fact, he was also a part of this fight, joining the ranks of the fighters, while a vision for the future guided him onwards and onwards, in poetry and in life. However, his pronounced dialectic reflex allowed him to possess a keen understanding of the past. Since even from a rather turbulent past, such as the Macedonian one, there is plenty which can be taken as a creative impetus, as insight. Numerous were the factors that had hindered the evolutionary process of the Macedonian national sovereignty. Nonetheless, despite it all, the creative spirit had not ceased, either in the individual self or in the masses. In the darkness of the centuries the indestructible call of the people, to sing, to self-actualize through song, beckons. "All which could not be spoken of, freely, in life, all that had to be withheld, all that had to be suffered in silence, deep within oneself – had found its place inside a song." These people had created their greatest spiritual wealth – the poetry of folklore. This is whence Miladinov found his inspiration. Thanks to a motif from a folk song Prlichev was awarded a laurel wreath. Finally, we encounter folklore also in the dramatic texts stemming from the different time periods. And in this time of ours, Racin renews the example set by Miladinov, who bases the expressiveness of his poetry on the immediacy and originality of the poetry of folklore.

Again, like Miladinov, Racin, as the new founder of artistic poetry, nurtures inside himself a studious approach towards folklore, which he also studies theoretically. Based on the power and influence of the songs created by the masses, Racin would most intensively feel the living bond between the past and the present. And up until present day: we have not heard a more subtle apotheosis of folk poetry as the centuries-old creative perseverance from the one pronounced by Racin.

The past, present as such in Racin's patriotic stance, comes across as the harbinger on the road towards an even greater rekindling of the people's awareness. His dialectical sentiment taught him to realize that a national self-awareness may be vitalized through the process of becoming exhilarated by the great works of one's own past. And, in terms of their position when the future is concerned, these works and those similar to them could forcefully strengthen the feeling of national unity. This, however, to some, stands as mere romanticism at play, oftentimes stated quite humbly and shyly. To the masses, nonetheless, it stands as a needed encouragement for their noble pride and self-awareness, namely that they had not trodden in the darkness of the past's travails; rather, that they are moving forward, developing new directions, for the roots of their heroic

and creative presence run deep in the tempests of adversity. For that alone, Racin set his sights on another magnanimous act from our historical existence, namely, Bogomilism.

His essay "The Bogomils of Dragoviti" is for our culture the first historiographic attempt of its kind. The author's ideological motifs and themes are apparent, but what remains dominant is the desire to explain a key historical phenomenon that sprung up right here in Macedonia. This is the country where it [the movement] started its quest as a socially-reformatory movement, which then found a wider and larger epochal appeal. In the foothills of Mount Babuna, this "heretic" sermon was born, a forerunner for the subsequent socially-centered and humanistic movements and ideas. Through Bogomilism our people made a significant contribution to the shared human and humanist development. Racin focuses exactly on this facet in his reading of Bogomilism, stressing the importance of awakening our own national dignity. Parallel to this, he also focuses on the discovery and showcasing of Bogomilism's legacy in our own beings. "Only they could have worked on the true folk culture," writes Racin, "since their ideal too was deeply rooted in folklore, and since only the people could embrace this culture, for it was theirs alone to embrace." He continues: "Bogomilism

was of the people, and the people nurtured and supported it, whereas Orthodox Christianity was perceived as foreign, and as such only upheld by the high priests and feudal lords.” He concludes: “That is why the cultural traditions established by the Bogomils are also our most cherished traditions. Can we trace in our past a more esteemed occurrence, a higher ideal, or a more profound cause than Bogomilism?” In the originality of the Bogomils’ tradition Racin was able to trace one more proof about the originality of our most enduring tradition – our folklore. The awoken national pride of our people was also traced by Racin through the remnants of our nationally-revolutionary past. He looked for it during the days of the already started new revolution. Racin knew that it was a kind of a revolution which had to be victorious, and his contemporaries would also attest to this optimism of his usual cry – “We shall prevail”. Yet, he was also aware of the following – that its victory was contingent on the revolutionary essence of the undertaking as a whole, as well as the influence of the past revolutionary movements and struggles. This continuity of ours needs to be marked as a respectable tradition. It is exactly what Racin had done with the poem “Sandanski” (“Сандански”), and with the unfinished poem about Goce Delchev (Гоце Делчев).

No matter how strong, an awareness of the past is not entirely so the only agent behind Racin’s creative output. Another kind of awareness makes out of Racin a phenomenon in and of itself, one which comes the closest to our contemporary cultural stance. Through a determination to dedicate his poetic talent to his mother tongue, Racin is characterized by two prevailing drives: one, to part take on our folklore’s linguistic repository, and two, to serve the new revolutionary ideas. The former asks for a carefully rendered study, the latter – a determination for self-sacrifice. “We must withstand the hundred times multiplied weight when resurrecting a new and forward-thinking literature,” writes Racin, adding on: “The most forth-coming, and for that matter singular way of having the contemporary literature in the Povardarje region grow and prosper is to firmly base its growth and prosperity on the inexhaustible linguistic wealth of Macedonian folklore, and the help and assistance of the forward-thinking social elements. This must be remembered well, since this path stands as the internal law guiding the development of this new literature.” With such imperatively drawn prerequisites, Racin writes on, surpassing the work created by the writers from the period of the Macedonian Reformation [early to mid 19<sup>th</sup> century].

We've already established the following: similar to Miladinov from the past [19<sup>th</sup>] century, Racin also bases his poetic output on the richness and specificity of the folkloristic expression. Unlike Miladinov and the other poets-reformers, Racin's relationship to the literary functionality of folklore was, and remains, a much more complex and complete one. By relying on the expressiveness of folk poetry, Racin manifests his exceptionally creative side, without any sign of overt imitation and/or borrowing, and with clearly articulated personal markings. Apart from the dominant usage of his native speech stemming from the Veles region, Racin would also question and accept the traits belonging to other Macedonian dialects. All with the effort to widen his own lexicon. By thoroughly studying the observations made by Krste P. Misirkov (Крсте П. Мисирков), he managed to avoid getting sidetracked while searching for the one and true path, the kind of path which would – from a scientific point of view – lead to a legal regulation of the Macedonian literary language. Surpassing the use of the language employed by the reformers is particularly visible in the language used in the collection *White Dawns*. And in this act of surpassing, the resonance of the clarity otherwise tied to folklore is not only an insurmountable act, but also a rather rewarding one. Since the

poets- reformers were nowhere near such a folk-induced clarity. Their respective yet over-emphasized Slavic consciousness and their Slavic-centered infatuation found an expression in their linguistic heterogeneity. For example, the case of Zhinzifov, without a doubt an exceptional poetic talent, who failed to locate his true style due to the heterogeneity of the Slavic linguistic fragments found inside the language of his poetry. Prlichev's glory, laurel-marked, would stand as an unrepeatable act due to the author's own, as well as society's own, at the time, fruitless Pan-Slavic linguistic inclinations. Perhaps it is not that far-fetched to say that Racin's determination to write in the language of the people, so as to come closer to its purity and originality, is realized as a significant poetic occurrence. Because if he had only produced those texts written in Serbo-Croatian, he would have remained far, far removed from any semblance of brilliance.

The other imperative of Racin's – the unconditional surrender to a progressive outlook on the world, determined by a strict kind of idealism – would establish the content-aspect and conceptual framework of Racin's varied creative output. Both as a journalist, and as an essayist, but most of all as a poet, writing about the toil and struggle of his own nationally and socially marginalized people, Racin quite

openly and rather suggestively would fight for there to be a victory of truths, which would in turn lead towards a revolutionary change in the world. His part in the development of the Marxist line of thinking is not without merit, also from a contemporary standpoint, particularly when viewed from the perspective of the field of aesthetics, where he, through his polemicist articles, would fight against vulgarization and simplification. Racin's internationalism, although exultant, would not fall prey to a ridiculous abstraction, neither in his poetry nor in his prose work. And this, truth be told, was not apparent of the other Marxists then, who were mostly plagued by a Proletariat-ism. Thus, Racin's idea-world would not succumb to the coarse socializing tendencies. Two essences: the national and the international one intertwine in Racin's idea-world, strengthening its unity. With these two essences, in fact, with this unity that they help create, Racin would become a complete and stoic patriot, one who manages to discover inside the motif repository of our poetry a nation-loving perseverance, a feistiness which signals a complete surpassing of the former poetic patriotic fixations. Henceforth, the phenomenon of another kind of a Racin attachment. It is the creation of a bond with the future goals of our later generations of poets. Through Racin's character, the

communist-man would enrich his own sense of patriotism!

Historically speaking, Racin's poetry written in the Macedonian language, much like the poetry produced by some of our other poets who were his contemporaries, did not enact through the power of its essence simply a kind of continuation of the forcefully cut-off nationally-cultural development. The subjugation of our people had taken place also at a historical moment which may be characterized by new and more determinant culturally-national activities in Macedonia. However, at that time, the resistance was also strong, directed both towards the nationally as well as the socially-charged subjugation. Strong – both in its activist bases and in its idealist direction. It became already apparent that the subjugation of people along national lines cannot find a better opponent or for that matter ally in the working classes. Contrary to the regime limitations, the attacks on these classes and their avant-garde created an atmosphere which ushered in, though partially, the national awareness of the Macedonian patriots. Due to this, the Macedonian poetic renewal was then a symptom, an exceptionally suggestive fact speaking for the new, highly developed level of the Macedonian culturally-national evolution. A symptom and a fact of the rekindling of the definite

struggle which would lead towards a victory of one formally denied nationhood. At the time, through the sheer nature of the brutality they were known for, the same became true of the de-nationalizing forces. They got hold of the little and somewhat obscure, but from a Macedonian nationalist perspective, exceptionally effective collection *White Dawns*. They feared also its language and the metaphorical projection of its title. However, the Macedonian patriots then, as well as now, knew what they may be getting from poetry created in the Macedonian language. They would get one more, now already indestructible weapon in the fight for the national rights of their people. This is why I wish to revisit the myth of the then patriotic sentiment also through some personal reminiscing.

For us, the members of the illegal Macedonian literary circle in Sofia, the news of Racin's collection came as a new kind of encouragement in the efforts to forge a Macedonian literary culture. Our friends, who were already writing in Macedonian, were liberated from their loneliness when creating boldly and bravely in the patriotic poetic vein. At the time, it was dangerous to write in Macedonian, therefore there was no fear among us of a possible mutual envy, otherwise typical of poets. What we saw as essential and fundamental was the act

of publication of one more Macedonian poetry collection. We'd received it towards the end of 1939, and already at the onset of the following year were discussing it in a special meeting. Anton Popov gave a critical reading, which already in the first few lines stated that *White Dawns* were a crucial culturally-national event: "To withhold a discussion on the appearance of the collection *White Dawns* is to err against the suffering homeland of the poet, who uses his poems to speak with his language. The truth that the Macedonian people speak through their poets, those who create in their mother tongue language, can no longer be denied. It is a new signpost on the road towards the strengthening of our national-liberation fight. At last, it needs to be recognized that the Macedonian language has proven itself capable of expressing also the most exultant of feelings and tempers." It's been twenty-eight years since that meeting, which was a rare kind of a patriotic moment, coupled by the reading which was in fact a subtle patriotic confession. I believe, however, that what had been said in the synthesized introduction of the reading should not come under the blow of scrutiny, at least not as an authentic judgment on the collection, which at the time stood as an exceptional act in the forward-moving evolution of our culturally-national maturation.

Literary history has already inaugurated Racin as the founder of the contemporary Macedonian poetry. Even so, this did not come to pass through the power of a chronologically rendered piece of data. To the contemporary historian, the one who marks literary history due to the inertia of factographic statistics, the fact that even in 1936 the Zagreb-based “Književnik” had published Racin’s poem “To a Worker” (“До еден работник”) would suffice. Those, however, who even in literary history attempt to examine the order of the functional creative manifestations find the fact that Racin had come to the world of Macedonian poetry after a longer standstill in its development crucial, for he had come to this world speaking in Macedonian – speaking with words artistic, words of a born lyricist. Thus, this richness and historical width of Racin’s publication does not lie in the chronological, rather in the undoubtedly creative. Yet, the wealth we are referring to here must be enriched also by the fact that Racin’s versatility and manner play a key role, a fact which in fact tells us that had it not been for this aspect of his persona, there would not have been the kind of lucid poetic verse, both content-wise and structurally speaking, in each of the poems found in the collection *White Dawns*. Along those lines, equally functional, appear Racin’s quite solid aesthetically-theo-

retical findings. On this topic we can find further evidence in the anthology with the other Macedonian poets of the day. For them, particularly when examining their debut collections, the emulation of folk poetry resembles a duplicate. This, on the other hand, is not the case with Racin’s poems. He respected folklore the most, studied it in detail, but despite all of this, none of his poems come as imitation of a folk song. A strong personal lyricism is also felt in the structure of the poem, in its concise nature. Thus, the best of Racin’s poems, rightfully so, can be seen as a model of that folkloristic stylization which is a key trait for many of our contemporary poets. Also, in terms of a kind of enrichment, there is the socially-engaged component of Racin’s poetry. With most of our poets from that period social sentimentalism or social verbalism took over. Racin found, organically speaking, both of these quite foreign. This was no accident at all: his social awareness was the result of his close kinship to the proletariat. He does not come to the socially-engaged poetry from without, but from the very heart of the proletarian life-style and the proletarian sensibility. The other poets tried to acclimate themselves to the proletariat-socialist motifs, some had even flirted with the notion, so that what they had created under the umbrella terms ‘social literature’ stands

more as a pose, and less as a kind of result of a personal conviction. For Racine, expressing his revolutionary idealism was an act of personal self-expression. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Racine the poet entered a polemicist duel with the proletariat-style phrases employed by the intellectuals who painstakingly worked at proving that they were greater and purer members of the proletariat than the workers themselves. Thus, it is not really a matter of any deflection or sidetracking if we speak the truth about how the founder of contemporary Macedonian literature was a complete individual, who both privately and professionally, in his cultural efforts, remained one such individual. Some of his contemporaries, precisely due to their insignificance as individuals, came to renounce their own poetry; on the contrary, Racine was a proud, self-conscious individual with a sovereign attitude and line of reasoning. He was a unique creative subject, full of dignity and self-criticism. And only such an individual could withstand the blows that came lashing from the direction of the enemy, while never once betraying his own creed.

Starting with Racine, and coming full circle till our present time, our national culture finds itself continuously moving forward. Without any interruptions, numbering off many and

new names, consisting of talented cultural authors. The man who had surpassed his predecessors has also been surpassed. He too, exhilarated, with great speed and dedication came to acknowledge and internalize the contemporary spiritual values. One thing of his still remains unsurpassed – his versatile daring pursuit of humanity, of the fraternity of men and people, of the solidarity between the Macedonian workers with the working masses of the world. Ennobled by such a passion, Racine's poetry remains unsurpassed. And not just that, for it even today, through its indestructible suggestiveness, affects the most exultant desires of our common people and our humanist intelligentsia. For them, even without Racine, even after his physical demise, the fight carries on, aimed as always towards man's humanization, the fight that will prevent man from becoming enslaved by his peers, and the vulgarizing material interest factor, the fight which, based on the new humanist combat, would grow into the battle mission of our young people – enthusiasts who are inspired by the high social ideals and undertakings enacted by the fighters working on accomplishing the noble goals of communism, a fight Racine had dedicated his poetic passion and his warrior-like life history to. Racine's name will forever remain the

wide canvas over all the fearless spirits of the humanist mission, which cannot be stripped of their right to be people in an indestructible Gorky-esque kind of a meaning. The realized revolutionary victories in the poet's homeland echo as a kind of a memento for the tired he-

roes, as a kind of a warning for all of us – to come face to face with the de-personalization of the revolutionary and humanist parts of our own selves.

(изворен научен труд)