

Dragutin J. Ilić

A MILLION YEARS AFTER



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Dragutin J. Ilić

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Dragutin J. Ilić's SF drama of (mis)understanding

Dragutin J. Ilić's play *A Million Years After* offers a rare opportunity to observe the emergence of a new genre, not only in Serbian but also in world literature. With the appearance of this work (1889), science fiction made a grand entrance into the Serbian cultural milieu at a time when SF had not yet come to self-determination even on the international scene. Additionally, according to current knowledge, Ilić's play is the first known science fiction drama in the world, thereby contributing to the development of this genre by expanding its range of expressive means, thus offering a new literary form.¹

A literary and historical moment: An encounter of traditions

The period in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century in which Dragutin J. Ilić joined the creative flow that led to the establishment of science fiction as a distinct literary genre was marked by the encounter of several traditions that had been active within the framework of European culture since Antiquity. The first was the legacy of utopian thought and an uninterrupted succession of fantastic (cosmic) travels; the second was consideration and concern about the uncontrolled development of science and technology; the third was the issue of encounters of the human civilization with beings / societies based on psychosocial and biological assumptions remote from human experience or even in contradiction with it; and the final one,

¹ Dragutin J. Ilić (Belgrade, 14/05/1858 - Belgrade, 05/01/1926), son of poet Jova Ilić, and the older brother of poet Vojislav Ilić, was a prolific writer. In addition to poems, short stories, travelogues and critiques, he wrote *A Million Years After* and twelve other plays (predominantly serious dramas and tragedies, as well as several comedies). However, D.J. Ilić, at the very least, as an innovator of the SF genre in the national literature did not meet with the favor of critics and, above all, literary historians; he died forgotten. Ilić's literary destiny reflects in the indicative way the fate of Serbian writers related to science fiction – almost total disregard and omission from relevant / official literary and historical syntheses.

the vision of the end of the world and the catastrophic collapse of humanity. All these issues arose in ancient times and have since then been sporadically actualized in various forms.

Considering the framework of numerous traditions, it can be said that the Serbian writer Dragutin J. Ilić's play, *A Million Years After* (1889), which fits seamlessly into the current debate about the role of utopian science and technology in the progress of community and their direct impact on human life, is the first work originating from the Balkan and Central European literary space that thematised the self-alien relationship in the unambiguous and pure tenor of science-fiction. It is also (apparently) the first sci-fi drama in world literature, as well as one of the first truly dystopian creations.

Dystopian framework and the first SF drama: time, space, (super)humans

The plot of *A Million Years After* takes place in a future depicted in an extremely unfavorable light, primarily in terms of the fate of mankind. In a distant, post-cataclysmic moment, only traces of the former metropolises and a total of no more than two humans (Nathan and his son, Daniel) are to be found on Earth (the reasons for the demise of the "old" mankind had not been elaborated on in detail). The true master of the planet and the known universe is a race of humanoid, but ultimately still inhuman, "new" people (people of "the Spirit-world"). Mars and Mercury are inhabited as well, by different, but also superior, races. Ilić's projection of the future is broadly conceived – among other things, *A Million Years After* thematises the encounters with extraterrestrial civilizations, space travel and planetary colonisation.

A few places are devoted to discussions about the nature and origin of the protagonists. Ilić's new people do not speak the same language as the old human race, they are distinguished by longevity, and their society is organized in a radically different manner (marital bonds are contracted for a definite, although still very long time – 500 years – after which the spouses can then be changed). Scientific and technical knowledge and possibilities are incomparably more advanced than anything known in ancient civilization (short-range space travel is common, followed by colonisation of planets with Earth's excess population. Astronomical science is able to predict the emergence and disappearance of celestial bodies, which will help the entire

civilization of the Spirit-world relocate to another part of the universe when the time comes for the definite cooling of the Earth). Also, the new masters of the planet are totally exempt from any kind of emotion whatsoever.

Ideological and philosophical assumptions: the impact of scientific and technological development

Drama thematises certain issues that are seen as crucial in the current civilizational moment. First of all, there is the problem of the uncontrolled development of science and technology along with a complete neglect of the religious, philosophical and social aspects of this development, as well as the devastating consequences that a radically implemented principle of efficiency has on the structure and fate of society. At the individual level these imbalances correspond to a decisive predominance of the (rational) mind over emotion, in addition to the important role of the character of the scientist. Inhabitants of the Spirit-world are primarily characterized by a rational and systematic relationship to (a studied) reality, and have no purpose other than the cognitive one, which is to describe and understand what is described. Again, one gets the impression that a lack of empathy has deprived them of the essential capabilities of a non-discursive experience of reality, thus rendering their goal unattainable, their knowledge incomplete, and their superior position and attitude problematic, inauthentic and somewhat comical.

However, Ilić does not show lack of reason in a favorable light, just as, on the other hand, emotionality does not automatically equate with positive values – feelings are seen as an essential component of the human soul, without which it is not complete. Again, if they are not balanced and brought into line with other mental forces, emotions as a rule become a demolishing force. According to information from the detailed description of the characteristics that distinguish humans from animals, Man's irrational nature has led to a kind of self-destruction and has almost made humankind worse than them. Daniel's blind and unconditional passion for Svetlana compels him to commit suicide, and when Nathan follows him, it actually means the ultimate disappearance of the human race. The Mercurians' irresistible collector's urge leads to

their violation of legal norms and resorting to crime / murder in order to gain possession of the specimens they require.

The literary tradition: Serio-comic genres

By dramatically shaping the future of mankind, Ilić uses this opportunity to reflect critically on the assumptions of the current civilization and, above all, the fundamental characteristics of mankind's psycho-social organization, which contain the seeds of its inevitable (self)destruction. Consideration of the current social order in the light of a potential social model is accompanied by an imaginative plot rich in exceptional situations, in which events continually evoke contemplations of crucial philosophical problems. Topics such as the consequences of planetary disaster; practical, application-based scientific discoveries; misuse of technology; the utter incompetence of different races to find common ground and achieve coexistence for the sake of mutual survival – all of this urges characters in the drama towards an open mindset. When it is expanded to include the fate of the world, the issues that are uncovered cease to be important only to the individual(s) and become virtually universal and existential. Furthermore, despite the extremely serious problems and events that are dealt with, Ilić's play is explicitly marked as comical: a "tragi-comedy in three acts with a prologue."

It is therefore not surprising that *A Million Years After* evokes the heritage of Menippean satire, i.e. of the Lucian-Rabelaisian-Swiftian-Joycean line of the of serio-comic genres. By seizing onto the distant past and the future, Menippean literature aims to show exceptional situations, not only for their own sake but also in order to create a suitable environment for a search for, a provocation of and testing of the truth, thereby introducing fundamental philosophical problems (the genre of "ultimate questions").

Menippean satire, in the spirit of the Bakhtinian vision, is characterized primarily by six elements. The first is an organic amalgam of free fantasy, symbolism, and sometimes a mystical-religious element with the extreme and harsh naturalism of the social underworld. The second is experimental fiction combined with unusual points of view. The third is a display of man's excessive, abnormal moral-psychological state (e.g. madness, split personality, unrestrained

imagination, unusual dreams, uncontrollable passions, suicide, etc). The fourth is a disruption of social and speech conventions through scenes involving scandal, eccentric behavior, unseemly speeches and outbursts. The fifth includes sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations, abrupt transitions and changes – the alternation of sublime and profane, ups and downs, the unexpected rapprochement between the remote and the separated. The final one involves elements of social utopia, often associated with the current journalistic, nonfiction or feuilleton tone, which makes the Menippean satire a sort of "writer's diary", a reaction to the general spirit and trends of the writer's times. Also, Menippea is characterized by an even stronger presence (albeit unevenly represented) of comic elements, ranging from pure comedy to parody and self-parody and satirically directed laughter.

Described thus, the motives of the Menippean satire found a natural environment in the science fiction genre, primarily in its dramatic debut. The focus of Ilić's interests are precisely the most critical of all the events – the apprehension of the last humans, a kind of triple bet / pledge for the characters, the final extinction of the human race through the suicides of the last two members, the prospect of the Earth's thermal death and the need for cosmic relocation.

These moments are accompanied by "philosophical" discussions relating to the topics relevant to the plot's development and the questions whereby raised. However, because of the specific characteristics of the plot as well as the literary tradition / genre in which they are formed, they seem neither artificially inserted, nor dull and didactic, but instead form a part of an organic and living artistic whole.

Memory of the future

By directly participating in the creation of a new literary phenomenon, the SF drama, Dragutin J. Ilić tries to propose a form of a possible convergence of the art, philosophy and science of the new times.² In fact, in a paradoxical way, he provides an example of how writers who want to write about the future, and that by thematising ongoing scientific, social and philosophical issues, can actually turn to the past, to the memory of literary genres, to find and actualize the appropriate forms. In this endeavor, (philosophical) dialogue and drama from the tradition of serio-comic genres have imposed themselves as the most suitable form of expressing highly abstract and seemingly radically new content, thus reminding readers that numerous thematic ingredients of what would take the shape of modern science fiction were already alive in the old tradition of European culture, and that this qualitatively new phenomenon was actually caused by their special blend at a certain civilizational moment.

By merging into a convincing artistic whole various topics of dystopia, self-alien rapport, (uncontrolled) development of science and technology, the end of the world and the demise of mankind shaped in a dialogical exchange of concepts and action that includes the tragi-comic relationships between characters, this science fiction drama represents Ilić's real and incontestable contribution to the emergence of the science fiction genre in both Serbian and world literature.

Bojan Jović

² However, it should be noted that there exists a handwritten text of the second version of the drama kept at the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences that was created a quarter of a century after the publication of the first. A review of the manuscript shows a number of corrections of various degrees and scope, ranging from the most common, language changes (grammar, spelling and style), to dialogue and honing the scenes (shortening / extending / omission of text) or changes in the portrayal of the characters and their relationships, to radical ejection, processing or re-writing whole scenes. Regarding the composition / meaning, the fact that Ilić, a quarter of a century after the original publication of his play, devotedly worked on the manuscript, tells us how much he cared about the final form of this creation. Obviously, what had been published in *Javor* magazine satisfied his ambition at the time, but it was not his final word. Almost all levels of the structure of his play included changes, reflecting somewhat on certain aspects of the meaning, especially in the field of motivation and the relationships between the characters.

EDITOR'S NOTE

This translation is the result of a workshop organized in 2014. The participants were eight students attending my MA course Utopia in English Literature at the Department of English Studies, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. The idea for the workshop came from Bojan Jović, director of the Institute for Literature and Arts, Belgrade and head of the project *Serbian literature in the European cultural space*, of which I am one of the participants. Dragutin J. Ilić's play *Posle milijon godina*, originally published in the literary magazine *Javor* in 1889, is one of the earliest Science Fiction plays, which is a fact little known in Serbia, let alone abroad. Its facsimile edition, edited by Sava Damjanov, was published in 1988 (Dragutin Ilić, *Posle milijon godina; Sekund večnosti*. Edited by Sava Damjanov. Beograd and Gornji Milanovac: Narodna biblioteka Srbije and Dečje novine, 1988). The electronic copy of the facsimile edition available at Projekat Rastko [Project Rastko] (www.rastko.rs) was used as the source-language text.

Dragutin J. Ilić

A MILLION YEARS AFTER

A MILLION YEARS AFTER
tragicomedy in III acts with a prologue
by DRAGUTIN J. ILIĆ

Characters:

<i>Nathan the Wise</i>	the last two Men on Earth
<i>Daniel</i> , his son	
<i>Zoran</i>	
<i>Svetlana</i> , his wife	citizens of Earth, the new race of the Spirit-world
<i>Sanko</i> , her future husband	
<i>Biljan</i> , an emissary from Mercury	
<i>Zora</i> , his wife	
<i>Lagan</i> , their companion	
More of those from Mercury and Earth	

The action of the play takes place a million years after. Scenes: The Prologue takes place on the site where the city of Paris stood a million years ago, Act I in Zoran's office, Acts II and III in his garden.

PROLOGUE

A THICKLY FORESTED VALLEY STRETCHES ACROSS WHERE THE CITY OF PARIS ONCE STOOD A MILLION YEARS AGO. THERE IS A DEEP CAVE AMONG THE BUSHES AND SHRUBBERY, COVERED WITH WILD VINES AND FERNS.

SCENE I

Nathan is sitting in front of the cave. He has long gray hair and a beard. He is naked. A large book lies open on his lap.

NATHAN: I have opened the book of the past! Mankind has written down in it all its aspirations and paths. All its glory has now faded like the last dying flame of a burned out torch. Darkness, eternal darkness, will consume everything! The last trace of whilom Man will be lost, for a new, unknown race has spread across the Universe: it lives and shall not die! Oh, victory of Mankind! You, who have fancied yourself as the most perfect of nature's creatures, whose imagination has soared to heavenly heights, dove into the depths of seas, plunged into the Earth's womb, today you must hide in caves, and, naked and bare, fight against beasts for each bloody morsel of food like Adam once did! Your end lies in your beginning. And the period in between? It is gone. It was plain fancy; a word without a concept, a concept without a fact, an object of infatuation for vain, hollow-minded heads. Behold, here on the "Book of Genesis" it is inscribed "*Moses, Darwin!*" Ha, ha, ha! Haze, nothing but haze! Worthless Man dreamt of creating eternal truths; and what did he create? Nothing! At this wild place there once rose a nest of human wisdom, Paris; its shining torchlight illuminated the eternal truths of the great minds of Mankind. And where is that glorious city now? Where have the eternal truths gone? Dust, and nothing but dust! Man wanted to fathom the Universe but he could not fathom his own self. Oh, woeful ignorance, hidden behind the glory of Moses and Darwin, Spinoza and Kant! (*bitterly*) Such capacity! Such greatness of mind! Human wisdom has been vanquished by worms, which have sucked all the life juices from it. And yet, the worm that sucks on Darwin's brain and feasts on Kant's philosophy has found no difference between the brain of Socrates and that of Aesop's ass, who

left it to the future to decipher the “sublime notions” of spirit and matter, while satisfying itself with a thistle. Man, who in his hubris, likened himself to the image of the highest being, has succumbed to the worthless worm just like the lightest breeze fells an ancient oak, which, attacked by this tiny creature, falls into the dust, never to rise again. (*He leafs through the book and becomes immersed in reading. From afar, a song is heard getting closer and closer.*)

THE SONG:

Through eternity, across the river blue,
Quick waves softly float;
Oh, my life’s little boat,
Where do you sail, whereto?
Watching through eternal gloom
Why I cannot see your pier?
Is it there, beyond the tomb,
That my hope will reappear?
The breath of Life that in my soul,
Ignites a spark divine,
Will it vanish just the same,
Like this song of mine?
Or in the space of the Universe
Does it soar in eternal flight
Outside its mortal body
Swift and bold, in sweet delight?
Through eternity, across the river blue,
eternal waves softly float;
Oh, my life’s little boat,
Where do you sail, whereto?

(*Nathan despondently listens to the melody, with his head bowed.*)

NATHAN: Poor dreamer! You cry for eternity in vain; your mortal cries fall to deaf ears!

THE VOICE OF DANIEL (*offstage*): Father! Father!

NATHAN: Over here, son; I am over here!

SCENE II

Daniel arrives; he is, like Nathan, naked, nude. He is armed with a bow and arrow. He is carrying a deer that he has killed.

DANIEL: You still do not sleep, and the night has already spread its wings upon us. Look father, luck has served me well this night. Apart from this deer, a boar with enormous teeth is lying dead over there. I stumbled upon its lair by accident, and when it lunged at me with its sharp teeth I beat it senseless. *(He puts the deer down and approaches his father to kiss him.)* Father! You are despondent again? What is the matter with you? Oh, leave that wretched book! What good is it, if it only brings us torment? You yourself advised me not to study it much, for it will, as you say, dim my bright soul and fill my life with misery. Come, father! I find you awake when you should be fast asleep.

NATHAN: No, my son! I was sleeping when the somber melody of your song awoke me. It is gone, but even now it echoes in my soul, waking the memory of broken dreams of old Mankind.

DANIEL: The old “golden age”, when Mankind poured its most cherished emotions into divine melodies. Love and peace, pleasure and joy had warmed their hearts.

NATHAN: And yet, Man who had compared himself to the Supreme Being, who had imagined himself to be almighty, was severely punished. His life was but a dead end, an attempt at raising the Tower of Babel, resulting in the confusion of tongues. He strove for something better only to end up worse off.

DANIEL: But, yet, he was more content and blissful than the two of us, the last of his descendants. Have you not told me of that magnificent spirit of Man that strove toward inventions and perfection? At least they lacked nothing, for they solved all hardships and quandaries together. And we? Who will help us get through adversity in this wretched life of ours? Who will bring cheer in the days of misery and despair? And who will take pity once we are gone? No one! Black ravens will caw over our dead corpses, and our bodies will be torn by wild wolves and hyenas. Life was easier and happier for people, for they lived in Paradise which our forefather Moses had dreamt of once. Had they not enjoyed themselves when science, philosophy and inventions made their life so much more comfortable?

NATHAN: That is true! Man did aspire to that, but is that what he achieved? Education and science, philosophy and inventions, which were meant to provide him with comfort, only racked his mind and body. He murdered millions of his brothers, or left them to die of severe famine just so that he could enjoy himself more. Well, did he at least succeed in that? Look to his past. He did not achieve even the perfection of a pig that lies still in the mud and lives in contentment, never wondering why the apple had fallen upon its snout and why it had not flown upwards instead of falling from its branch. Why would the laws of gravity and eternal circulation concern it, when it chews its apple so contentedly? And can there even be a difference between Man and this despised animal? They both were powerless to do away with the monster that had condemned them to the grave the moment they were born. So, when they are both no more, are they not one and the same? What difference is there between the spirit of a dead Man and an animal? They both return to dust, and who could say: this is a Man and this a beast?

DANIEL: But that is why Man has been given the power of reasoning.

NATHAN: And that is the very cause of his inability to relish the joys of life. But let us not debate further. It pulls me into a vortex of pain, and for one of my age it is exhausting to endure this sea of despair whose waves threaten to swallow me whole. Have you gathered any dry firewood?

DANIEL: I shall do it right away, father.

NATHAN: You seem very upset tonight. What is the matter?

DANIEL: I myself do not know what is the matter. It all seems but a dream.

NATHAN: Have you seen something?

DANIEL: I have, but it must have been a dream.

NATHAN: Speak! What is it? Are we being pursued perchance?

DANIEL: There, beyond that hill, where begins the valley stretching in front of our cave, intersected by rivers and streams, and covered with flowers and greenery, I saw something peculiar. Had I fallen asleep then and dreamt it all, I do not know. As I reached the top of the hill and began to admire the ruddy evening light spreading across the mountain tops, I suddenly heard the sound of a divine melody. The song gently evolved into the sweetest melody spilling across the whole valley like a steady murmur of a stream. A miraculous joy filled my soul and I, enthralled by the pleasant sounds of the song, began to creep closer to its source. I reached a

shrub and stopped for a moment. I tried to remove the branches with my hands and ... no, no! Alas, that was only imagination, a dream! But father, I would give half my life if only I could have that dream again.

NATHAN: Go on, son! Go on!

DANIEL: Before my very eyes there appeared a marvelous being, a beautiful creature. She emerged from the river in which she was bathing, and paused before a cluster of red roses. Oh, father! Father! You know that roses are the most admirable of all flowers that I have ever known, but what are all the May roses compared to her beauty, to the ruddy evening light caressing her svelte body. It must have been either a fairy that I had read so much about, or a dream. Having bathed herself, she let the ruddy light of the setting sun pour down on her body, and she picked a rose, tearing away petal after petal, letting the breeze blow them from her hand. What came over me, I do not know. I wished I could jump from the bush and grab her with my hands, but I felt the earth move beneath my feet. My head and ears were filled with horrible humming and rumbling, and eyes were shrouded by a thick darkness. I wanted to call out, but could not! And when the darkness dispersed, my fairy was no more. In vain did I run, in vain did I call her. She was gone!

NATHAN: Without a doubt, it was only your imagination.

DANIEL: Perhaps. Though, I do regret then that the dream had not lasted longer.

NATHAN: Be cautious, my son! We may not be safely hidden here. Before going to bed, inspect our surroundings once more to see if there is anything suspicious.

DANIEL: I shall father! Come, let me take you back to our lodgings.

(Nathan leans on him and enters the cave holding on to him.)

SCENE III

DANIEL *(alone)*: He can barely walk, poor man! We have been hunted like frightened animals for thirty days. Will this prove to be the truly peaceful lodging we have been dreaming of? Alas, who knows? Perhaps we are not meant to find a place of rest until we die? Oh, Ahasuerus, Ahasuerus! Has your spirit not found its abode in your last descendant? In one who has never

tasted the joys and delights of Mankind, but instead your miseries and misfortunes plague him like the fire of Sodom.

(Exit. The stage is empty. After a short pause, an indeterminate rustle is heard that slowly turns into an amazing, melodic hum.)

DANIEL's voice *(offstage)*: Father! Father!

SCENE IV

Agitated, Daniel rushes in looking about.

NATHAN *(from the cave)*: Daniel!

SCENE V

Nathan appears at the entrance to the cave.

NATHAN: Are we in danger?

DANIEL: Listen, listen! The air is filled with the strange hum and rustle again.

NATHAN: Go see what it is, but carefully! It is us they are looking for. The Spirit-world has caught the scent of human tracks.

DANIEL: Right away, father! *(He runs away.)*

SCENE VI

NATHAN *(alone)*: This is the third time they have traced us. Even these impenetrable forests cannot shield us from the eyes of these new creatures of the Spirit-world. It is futile to hide, oh, Man. Only Earth's womb can be your salvation.

(The melodic rustle grows louder.)

SCENE VII

Daniel runs in.

DANIEL: They have seen me! We are doomed unless we leave this place at once! A few of those monsters are circling the air looking for us.

NATHAN: Let us run. Let us flee from this place! Oh, foul agedness! Under these rocks I intended to end my troublesome days, and alas, now I have to leave this place as well. Nowhere is there refuge, nowhere peace! Oh, who will endure these torments? – Heavens! What other woes have you in store for me?

DANIEL (*Puts his arms around him and helps him walk.*): My poor father! How happy would I be if only I could find you a corner of this Earth, somewhere you could find peace.

NATHAN: In the Earth, son, in it! What you seek on the Earth is inside it.

DANIEL: Heavens will take pity. Hurry, father!

NATHAN (*after a few paces*): Save yourself, my son! I can go no further! (*He collapses. A muffled thunderclap is heard.*)

DANIEL: No, no! Without you, I shall not move! I do not even know the monsters that pursue us! But whatever they are, I shall stand by you. What is the purpose of my life? Should I prolong another lifetime of suffering? Should I inherit your miseries and despairs, and drown the Universe in them? (*He tries to lift him gently.*) Father, just try!

NATHAN (*standing up*): My poor child! Oh, if only you had never been born! (*He attempts to walk, but falls.*) Run! Run! They will catch us if you do not leave me here!

DANIEL: I am not leaving without you! (*A clap of thunder is heard, and he puts his arms around him to lift him up. The curtain falls.*)

ACT I

ZORAN'S OFFICE. THE WALLS ARE COVERED WITH FANCIFUL PAINTINGS AND SIGNS. IN ONE CORNER A CONTRAPTION IS PLACED, WITH SEVERAL LARGER AND SMALLER CYLINDERS SIMULTANEOUSLY TURNING AROUND THEIR AXES. A TELESCOPE IS FIXED IN FRONT OF THE WINDOW.

SCENE I

Zoran and Sanko arrive. They are both dressed in long, albescent robes, similar to chitons.

ZORAN: That is right, Sanko. It is one hundred and fifty years today since I married Svetlana. On this day, I wish to show her my affection and to give her a gift that no one will have in the Spirit-world.

SANKO: Honestly, up to how many years have you agreed on for your matrimony?

ZORAN: Up to five hundred. It was the shortest term that she demanded, and I myself did not wish for anything shorter, for I hope that in such a short time we shall not lose our affection for one another. You, Sanko, must wait another three hundred and fifty years before she can become yours.

SANKO: That too will pass quickly. I shall wait. So, where is she? It has been five years since I saw her.

ZORAN: She has been travelling to Jupiter and Mars. She is to return today, and after a few days, she is to journey to Saturn or some other planet to find a home for those superfluous millions that have been born on Earth over the past hundred years.

SANKO: Very well, at least we shall journey there together. (*Looking around the room, he approaches the contraption.*) Oho! Another new invention. I am familiar with it. These things, these are the air currents that flow around their corresponding planets. This should be the new planet, "Glory", that was still in chaos two million years ago. And these misty dots, what do they represent?

ZORAN: Those are the new worlds that I spoke about on Astraea the other day. They are located in the fiftieth region of the Universe, and are only now being formed. I have replicated

the very moment of their chaotic creation. According to my calculations, our Earth will run cold in a million years, and we shall have to resettle there. This cylinder here, that is moving towards the state of chaos, this is the air current which gravitates toward it due to the strong, attractive force of magnetism accumulated there, and the decrease of Earth's magnetism caused by its cooling. Thus, the air will disappear from the cooled Earth, and we shall leave for new worlds in the direction of this current.

SANKO: With this invention you have triumphed over all the scholars from Mercury who claim that in a million years we shall freeze together with the Earth.

ZORAN: Well, those Mercurians constantly pester us. They are jealous because there are more specimens of ancient creatures on Earth than on their planet. They do nothing but fly about the Universe and steal whatever they can get their hands on.

SANKO: Such is their planet! And we cannot break that habit of theirs.

ZORAN: It has been two hundred years since I imprisoned that infamous elephant-thief, Zvezdan. I must release him in fifty years. And you know what! He stole my elephant collection, and when I visited him the other day to see if he had learned his lesson, he looked at me as if to say: 'I shall steal that northern bear from you, too! And I shall steal that polar bear from you, too!'

SANKO: That is why you must guard your possessions better. You yourself know that the Mercurians are obsessed with scientific demonstrations and any man thirsty for science has the right to steal here and there.

ZORAN: Alas, it is true! I have already prepared myself for that.

SANKO (*While saying this, he points the telescope upwards and observes.*): Can you see that mass, descending from above like a cloud?

ZORAN: That is Svetlana with her companions.

(The clouds ring with sounds, and then a song is heard, getting closer and closer.)

THE SONG:

Across the sky, patterns of eternal infinity
On the windflaws of the world's connectivity,
Into the skies we flow.
Into the depths we go,

We fly with might;
The clouds we retrace,
Swift lightning we outpace
In our eternal flight!
What is the Universe? We take its force,
And in its lap we rule its course!
Omnipotent, we can do anything,
And our minds are all-knowing.
Even the most secret signs:
Hidden, they are no longer.
Our eyes go yonder
Through dark confines.
ZORAN: They are already here.

SCENE II

Enter Svetlana, Biljan, Zora, Lagan, and the others.

ZORAN: Welcome, guests, to my dwelling place.

SVETLANA: We have finished our task. I went from Jupiter to Uranus, where I took a group of settlers. And look! Here is my future husband, Sanko. I thought I would find you on Uranus, but you were not there.

SANKO: I have been expecting you; but since your husband Zoran did not know whether you would visit me or not, I came here to greet you on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of your wedding day.

SVETLANA: Thank you! Come, Zoran, let me introduce you to our guests from Mercury. This is Biljan, an emissary from Mercury. This is Zora, his current wife, and this is Lagan, their companion.

ZORAN (*Bows to everybody.*): Thank you, thank you for celebrating our anniversary with us.

SVETLANA: They have heard that you have been preparing a present for me which no one in the Spirit world has seen yet. I wonder what it might be. I have been turning it over and over in my mind for a year.

ZORAN: Guess what I have prepared for you! A proto-class of an extinct animal from which there are only two specimens left in the whole world. For three long years I have been flying around to track them down; but they kept hiding in bushes and hidden burrows. I caught them in front of an old cave, just when they were preparing to flee again. Now I keep them locked up because they are still a bit wild, and I fear that they will run away. Over the past year I have managed to teach them to speak our language; so, you will have the chance to talk to the animals that can think, to some extent.

SVETLANA: Well, that is, if I am not mistaken, an ape?

ZORAN: You are right! But the most perfect type of ape which has been extinct for a long time, since time immemorial, and which in zoology is called – “man”.

BILJAN: Man? Man? Oh, please, what sort of an animal is a “man”?

ZORAN: They are very similar to us in physical appearance. But they do possess neither our spirit nor our powers. One could say that Men, even though they have not yet been studied enough, belong to the species from which we originate.

BILJAN: Hmm! That is a rare animal indeed, and it was worth going down to Earth to fetch it.

ZORAN: Just wait; I have ordered that they be brought here.

BILJAN: It would be wise to put them in chains; if these animals are wild, as the rest of them are, then they will escape from us.

ZORAN: Worry not; I have already half-tamed them. And Svetlana is good at taming wild beasts; she will find a way to win them over.

SANKO: That is, indeed, very strange! Animals which resemble us, but do not possess our powers!

LAGAN: And how do they walk? Like four-legged animals?

ZORAN: No; just like we do! But they are very slow and the distance we cross in one second they cannot cross in a whole day. Hah, here they bring one! (*Pulls back the entrance curtains.*)

SCENE III

A few Spirit-people come in, dragging an iron cage in which Nathan and Daniel are imprisoned.

SVETLANA: Wonderful! Wonderful! This is a magnificent present!

(All gather around the cage and observe.)

DANIEL *(desperately)*: Father! Father, what humiliation this is for Man!

NATHAN *(stately)*: Calm down, Daniel! Such is the destiny of the last Man. It is the law of eternity being applied to us.

ZORA: Biljan! Biljan! Look what a magnificent creature this smaller animal is. It looks just like us; it is not hairy like the other one.

BILJAN: I like the other one better; it looks wilder.

ZORAN: So, hear now my classification of this zoological phenomenon based on my very own research and what they themselves have told me.

These animals are called “homo sapiens” in science; they belong to a species of apes, which are, as you can see, very similar to the Spirit-people. “Men”, unlike other animals, have attained a sort of perfection. They were able to make a kind of iron vehicles, which crawled and could barely cross one *krock* of distance in a day, which was called “one thousand kilometres” in their language. They even tried to fly using some sort of machines; but they dared not even go to the Moon’s sphere, because they would suffocate up on it.

“Man’s” characteristics are a combination of all animals’ characteristics, which proves that they were once related. Their diet was similar to the diet of hyenas, because they too fed on the carcasses of slaughtered animals; but apart from that, they shared some characteristics with oxen or other herbivores.

At a certain age, Man’s head becomes covered in long hairs like, for example, those of a bear. Look at the smaller one, he has not yet got hairs, so he is more similar to us than the bigger one. These animals communicate by some kind of mumble, which they call “speech” and which is similar to the screeching of modern day parrots.

And as for the minds of men, even though they differ greatly from other animals’, they are not very far from theirs. Moreover, I can honestly say that “men” are somewhat more wild and bloodthirsty than other animals, because not only did they kill animals for food but they also

killed each other from time to time, thus shortening their already short lives. If they had not done so, we might have had a larger number of specimens.

Right now you will be able to see for yourselves their ability to learn our Spirit-language.

NATHAN: O, wretched Mankind! You are the exemplar of proud perfection! You who were created in the likeness of the Almighty, why cannot you hear the judgement of the Spirit-world, the judgement of the future?

LAGAN: I wonder what he is mumbling about.

BILJAN: That sounds interesting, but in my opinion these animals cannot be our ancestors.

ZORAN: What do you mean?

BILJAN: Well, they are more similar to apes than to us. And besides, there is not even a trace of our powers in them. We are, for example, able to cross a distance in an instant for which it would take them ten days. We have it in our power to fly and thus travel from planet to planet within a day or two; their physical strength is so weak that they can barely walk the Earth. Their minds, just like those of the apes, are unable to see a thing, while ours can see through everything.

ZORAN: But other animals have not the ability to learn our Spirit-language, and these have.

BILJAN: Have you already forgotten about the parrots? There, they can learn it, too. You are not going to claim that we have descended from parrots, are you? Moreover, based on your research, I can prove that parrots are closer to us by origin than “Man” because they can fly to some extent.

SVETLANA: Interesting animals.

ZORAN: Here, Svetlana, I give you both animals. The hairy one is called “Nathan” and the other one is “Daniel”. Ask them what you wish, and they will answer you appropriately.

SVETLANA: Open the cage so that they can come out.

(The cage opens, they both come out.)

DANIEL *(Seeing Svetlana startles him. To himself.):* Is it possible? Why, this is she, she; my dream?

SVETLANA: Nathan, Daniel! So far, you have been kept in the cage. I will give you freedom if you promise not to flee.

NATHAN: And where would we go to? The Spirit-world is everywhere. Let me die peacefully, for only death will save the essence of Mankind in me that you treat like a debased animal.

DANIEL: Svetlana, you are wonderful! I shall be your devoted slave; just do not let them degrade us like animals. Why, our fathers are your forefathers as well. Respect in us the seed of your perfection, because if it were not for us, you, the joyful perfect creatures of eternal breath, would not exist either.

SVETLANA: I understand. I shall make sure nobody takes you away. Where I go, you will go. We shall travel to Astraea within the next few days.

DANIEL: That, for us mortals, would be impossible. We would suffocate during the flight.

SVETLANA: How so?

ZORAN: They would stop being alive, like the other animals we transport from Earth.

SVETLANA: I see! Then I shall not move you from Earth. But when I am not present, you will be under the care of my men.

NATHAN: Do as you will. Man was once a wise counsellor to emperors. Ah, where are those glorious emperors now, so that they could see human wisdom encaged like a beast?

SVETLANA: Did you say *emperor*? What is that?

NATHAN: You lucky creatures who have no idea of Mankind's pitiful past. An emperor was the ruler of all men. Everyone had to be at his beck and call. If he wanted his people to surrender their lives, they would do so. He looked after his people, protected them from danger; and if someone disobeyed him, the emperor could sentence him to death as well.

SVETLANA: So, an emperor was a more perfect, more powerful animal than all of you?

NATHAN: No, not at all! He was a Man, just like us. He was born like us; he lived and died the same way. But people needed to have someone to command them, to prevent them from slaughtering each other until no one remained.

SVETLANA: Pathetic animals! Nature has sentenced them to death at birth, and even such a short life was still too long for them, they would rather end it prematurely. No matter how hard I try I cannot grasp why you would kill each other!?

NATHAN: Because every Man believed that he should have everything, so he took from others. Those who had everything taken from them were hungry and thirsty: they lived in need and misery. But, whenever the hungry, thirsty, miserable and needy would become tired of suffering, they would attempt to steal from those who relished in abundance, and so they often massacred one another.

SVETLANA: I do not understand a thing!

NATHAN: How could you understand? You, upon whom the Universe has bestowed its power, cannot understand any of the things mortals knew and felt.

BILJAN: That is true! Often have I watched various animals slaughter one another; but I have never seen two animals of the same species do so. Man must have been the most dangerous beast of all.

ZORAN: So, you have heard all about these animals. Had specimens of this race not decimated themselves to the extent they did, perhaps they would not be such a rarity today.

SVETLANA (*approaching Daniel*): His shape is so similar to ours. He has none of that bear-like fur that Nathan has.

DANIEL (*to himself*): So this is the woman described in the poems of the famed Mankind that I have dreamt of. Is she the fairy that I saw bathing in the river? Why am I so drawn to her?

BILJAN: Svetlana, will you give me this Daniel to take him with me?

DANIEL: No, no, Svetlana! I would rather you killed me on this very spot! You are my dream come true that has haunted me for so long. I was afraid of the Spirit-world and I wanted to flee from it. But now? Now I renounce my freedom, I renounce death that I have so longingly desired to save myself from such humiliation. Just one look from you kindles new life in me; it opens my eyes to the more beautiful world of my dearest hopes. Oh, do not give me to anyone, do not give me to anyone! Let me die here, at your feet, listening to the soothing sound of your words, looking into the beautiful eyes that have intoxicated me!

SVETLANA: Biljan, you have heard him. Even if I gave him to you, you could not bring him to the Moon's sphere without him suffocating.

BILJAN: I know, but I know a way to transport him.

SVETLANA: What way is that?

BILJAN: I shall have him skinned and his skin stuffed.

SVETLANA: That does not make any sense! Is it not better to have a living specimen in front of you?

NATHAN: Poor child! Such sentiment is not of this world. Daniel, she does not understand your words.

DANIEL: You horrible woman! (*Falls into his father's arms.*)

NATHAN: Compose yourself, son! Time will ease your pain.

DANIEL: Never! Never! To be humiliated by those who we adore, it is hell! Oh, I wish that we had never surrendered to these monsters!

ZORA (*to Biljan*): You do know why we were sent here from Mercury? We must have at least one of these rare animals.

BILJAN: But you have heard it yourself! They will not give them to us!

ZORA: Svetlana will be travelling again soon. Then we should try to lure them away.

BILJAN: Shh! She will hear us!

ZORA: Are you with me?

BILJAN: Alright. We shall lure them both away. One for you, and one for me. (*A soft melody is heard from the garden.*)

ZORAN: Listen to that. I have created that melody coming from the garden by means of air currents. You can enjoy it even better in the garden, especially its hum blending with the rustle of leaves. If you would like, we can go to the garden.

(*The melody becomes louder, Svetlana and the others sing to it.*)

Everything that is,

And exists;

Everything that circles

To us, it serves.

The whole Universe:

With our hand, we bind,

With our breath, we guide

All the currents' course!

(*Everyone except Biljan, Lagan and Zora exit.*)

SCENE IV

BILJAN: Alright, this is what I have come up with. You, Lagan, will try to lure both creatures to the end of the garden, to "Svetlana's mound". Wait for us under the tall palm tree. In the meantime, Zora and I shall entertain Svetlana and others with our Saturnalia.

ZORA: This will not go easy. Daniel is avoiding you. He will not leave Svetlana's side, even though she has set him free. What if I tried to lure him away myself?

BILJAN: How would you do that?

ZORA: I am not sure yet. But it seems to me that all those things he was shouting about have a certain meaning we cannot fathom. If only I could get some time alone with him, I would soon come to understand him.

BILJAN: Then let us go! We need to lure them away, anyway. It is so exciting to think that, besides a stuffed bear and an ape, I shall soon have two other rare animals, known in zoology as "Men".

ZORA: And if they do suffocate on the Moon's sphere, we shall simply skin them and stuff them.

LAGAN: We must go, someone is coming!

(Everyone exit.)

SCENE V

Svetlana arrives with Daniel following her.

DANIEL: Wait, wait! I do not understand what is happening to me. Tell me, enchantress, who are you? What kind of power lies in your eyes, that they attract me so? Are you a demon which can bewitch a mortal and entice him to follow you, until you ruin him for good?

SVETLANA: Be obedient and submissive, and I shall look after you. Do not leave my side!

DANIEL: Leave your side? Run away? Can a shadow run away from the light? Has the Earth run away from the Sun which lives to warm it? I have renounced my freedom, only to be your slave.

SVETLANA: Good little creature. I shall play with you more often. Follow me!

DANIEL: I shall follow you into eternity itself! *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE VI

Lagan and Zora enter.

ZORA: Get ready, Lagan! I am going to separate them, and you wait for us over there.

LAGAN: Do not worry, just do this properly.

ZORA: Farewell! (*They go their separate ways.*)

SCENE VII

Daniel storms in with a knife, infuriated, Nathan follows him.

DANIEL: Where are we? Is this the new world? Are these the most perfect creatures in the Universe, and yet they cannot understand my feelings? Let us flee, father, flee from this hell or, so help me God, with this very knife I shall end the pain that rips my heart apart!

NATHAN: You are beside yourself. You refuse to accept your position in this world. Both their minds and feelings are completely different from ours. They cannot grasp what any of it means, how it rages horribly within your heart. You must come to your senses and accept once and for all that compared to their much more advanced perfection we are but primitive animals. The ones who live eternally cannot feel like us, nor have such desires as ours. Calm down! Such despair can only harm you, and you will never succeed in what you set out to do.

DANIEL: Oh, father! Father! The whilom Mankind would call you a wise man; but all that wisdom is nothing but a gentle breeze trying to stop the raging sea of my emotions. Do you think I cannot see for myself how futile it is to waste the most sacred of my soul's flames on a cold mummy that could never be warmed? But who can command a heart to becalm itself? Who will stop the storm that tears apart my mind and soul? Is it me? You? Ha! ha! ha! I must be going mad!

NATHAN: You poor child! You do not realize that your sadness shatters my heart. If you do not want to spare yourself, then at least spare me the few remaining days I have left to live. Can you not see how broken I am by this humiliating position we are in and that you are finishing what desperation has already done to me?

DANIEL (*throws the knife*): We are doomed!

NATHAN: Promise me that you will not do anything without me, I beg of you! If you will not spare yourself, then have mercy on this grey hair, on my old age. Have mercy, my son, I implore you! (*Folds his hands and goes to kneel; Daniel quickly pulls him up.*)

DANIEL: Father! Father! You want me to live in agony!

NATHAN: Mercy! Have mercy!

DANIEL (*fighting against himself*): I shall try... but... oh, life is so arduous!

NATHAN: This is the last sacrifice that I am asking you to make, in the name of Mankind, which is dying within us. You need to live and overcome yourself. Thus you will prove yourself worthy of your honoured ancestors, and prove that you are a Man! Give me your hand! Good. You see? That gentle hand should close my eyes when the Almighty decides that my hour has come. There, there, take me out to the fresh air; it is stifling in here. And you? Are you not going to the garden?

DANIEL (*Leading him to the door.*): No, father. I shall come later.

NATHAN: Just do not tarry too long. Solitude is the worst enemy, and it is hard for me to be alone, without you. (*Exits.*)

SCENE VIII

DANIEL (*alone*): I shall try once more nevertheless. It is not possible for her to not know what pain of the heart is. Or perchance the perfection of these creatures is exemplified by the motto “eternity and numbness”. To live and to feel nothing!

SCENE IX

Enter Zora. Zora and Daniel.

ZORA: I have finally found you!

DANIEL: What do you want from me?

ZORA: Let us go.

DANIEL: Where?

ZORA: There, Svetlana is waiting for you under that palm tree.

DANIEL (*to himself*): My evil fate.

ZORA: Will you, then?

DANIEL: No, I cannot! I must not! Oh, dear Lord! Where can I conceal myself? Where can I hide from that iceberg which freezes my life and my hope?

ZORA: What are you thinking about?

DANIEL (*Grasps her hand.*): Tell me, Zora, explain it to me, is there a shred of emotion left in the Spirit-world?

ZORA: Of course there is!

DANIEL: Praise be the Lord! The last beacon of hope will not be extinguished, after all!

ZORA: What hope?

DANIEL: Do you feel love in your heart?

ZORA: What? I do not understand.

DANIEL: Love, love! Or is there another word for it in your world? For instance, you belong to Biljan. What passion impelled you to become his? Did you feel anything strange in your heart, in your soul?

ZORA: I do not know what I should feel.

DANIEL: Do you understand this: did you feel any kind of urge to become his?

ZORA: Undoubtedly, yes!

DANIEL: Thank God! Now tell me, if anyone else, besides Biljan, wanted you to be his, would you leave Biljan? Would you say: "No matter whom I belong to, it makes no difference?"

ZORA: I would. They are all the same.

DANIEL: Still, it is impossible that you do not have any sublime emotions. Perhaps you have not understood me well. Imagine this: night has fallen, a dark night! All is in slumber and it is peaceful. You and Biljan are sitting alone, talking. He puts his arm around you. Can you not feel a flame burning inside you at that moment? A fierce fire is burning on your lips, and you cannot resist touching his lips with that holy fire, the blaze of love. Do you not feel, right then, the heart inside your chest beating stronger, and your bosom rising, wanting to explode? And at that very moment, without knowing why, you embrace him tightly, your eyes are shining, burning, but you see nothing, feel nothing but a desire to kiss him, knowing that you would be the happiest if, having drunk the chalice of love to the lees, you died there in his arms?

ZORA: We do not understand such things! What exactly is this fire burning on the lips? Is it some instinct that exists in you, the animals?

DANIEL (*bitterly*): You mummified corpse! Would you not care if you saw Biljan with another woman?

ZORA: I would not. He is the master of his own destiny, just as I am the master of mine and everybody else is the master of one's own destiny.

DANIEL: That is horrible!

ZORA: Maybe Biljan would understand this better. I do not understand anything.

DANIEL: Woman, ghost, what should I call you? Is there anything at all that drives you in life? Is there anything that attracts you more to one creature than to another?

ZORA: Nothing!

DANIEL (*with painful irony*): And that is perfection!

ZORA: Does anything attract you?

DANIEL: Oh, I wish it did not. That would be my salvation. I would not think any more about those wonderful eyes in which heaven and hell have united to ignite me and reduce me to ashes, only to make me rise again from the ashes. Oh, Svetlana!

ZORA: You are attracted to her eyes, then?

DANIEL (*despondently*): And she is so cold! If only she could understand me, realise what this fire means, I would be the happiest man, even in my pain. But no, she, too, lives without emotions; she does not have them; therefore, she cannot understand them!

ZORA: So, it is the eyes that you find so alluring? Huh, that is strange, for certain. You wish to touch the eyes with your lips? Well then, come and do it to me. I am curious to see what will happen!

DANIEL: You damned creature!

ZORA: Will you, then?

DANIEL: Go away, go away! Your eyes do not allure me. I am a Man, and to me it does matter whose eyes they are.

ZORA (*Grasps his hand.*): Come with me!

DANIEL: Leave me alone! I shall not!

ZORA: I will never leave you ever again. You are mine!

DANIEL: But, what do you want with me? You are not Svetlana; she is the only one I love!

ZORA: I do not care! You must come with me! (*Drags him towards the exit.*)

DANIEL (*struggling*): I shall shout!

ZORA: It will be in vain! By the time they hear it, we shall already be far away. Biljan!

SCENE X

Biljan and Lagan run in.

BILJAN: Have you done it?

ZORA: Hold him!

DANIEL: Let me go! Let me go! Father! Svetlana! Help!

ZORA: Cover his mouth!

BILJAN: Let us kill him. That will be best! (*Grabs a knife.*)

SVETLANA (*from the garden*): Who is there? Make haste to the chamber! (*Clamour. Biljan and Lagan lift Daniel and run towards the exit. The curtain falls.*)

ACT II

ZORAN'S GARDEN. THE GARDEN IS FILLED WITH TROPICAL PLANTS AND FLOWERS. THERE ARE ARBOURS AMONG PALMS AND BUSHES. AT THE BACK OF THE GARDEN STANDS A STATUE OF A WOMAN RESEMBLING VENUS.

SCENE I

Daniel is standing in front of the statue observing it with his arms crossed.

DANIEL: Another one of the relics of Man's art. Ancient artistry reached its peak of perfection in it. How wonderful the petrified goddess is! She could almost speak. It has your face, Svetlana! I know those cold lips bathing in the vermilion of the dawn; that marble forehead where the eternal frost rests. Come down, oh, come down, you cold statue! Is the Promethean fire that burns inside my soul so powerless? Can you not feel it warming you? Here, I shall infuse the cold stone with the fire of life. (*Embraces the statue and kisses it.*) Speak! Lift your arms of stone to push me off. Open your marble lips and shout with burning anger: "Leave, unworthy one! Do not defile this perfect beauty with your lips!" You remain silent? You do not feel? Come down! Ha, ha, ha! Your petrified posterity moves and lives, but it is not human life and human pain. It is sustained by insensitive eternity; it lives in cold death. You cold stone! Can you hear me, can you hear me? These are not the children of Mankind, these are your children. Why are you looking at me with those dead eyes? I want life, and you offer me death! Get away from me, you ugly wraith, or, so help me God, I shall turn you into dust! (*Clasps the statue to knock it down.*)

SCENE II

Nathan, who enters as Daniel speaks his lines, and Daniel.

NATHAN: Stop, you fool!

DANIEL: Ha, ha, ha! The sage. Here comes the wise Man! He is the only one who has got the mysterious book of victory! He learns the delusive magic from it. Man, what do you want from

me? Do you not see this raging tempest hurling enormous waves to sink the fragile boat you have pushed to perdition with your own hand? Heavy clouds roll across the raging skies, thunder booms and echoes throughout the whole Universe. Listen, listen to it rumbling! A horrible beast is riding on the wings of the whirlwind, its jaw open, howling dreadfully while it is beating the angry horses with its fiery whip. That is the horrendous Titan which has thrown the planet Earth down from his back, and having broken the chains that were choking him, he is rushing towards the Earth to break it into pieces. There he is, there! I can feel his sharp claws digging into the Earth's heart. Banish the angry beast! Push him into the bottomless abyss, so he cannot sink the fragile boat wherein your most precious treasure is kept. What? You shall not? Oh, mercy, mercy! Have mercy on poor Daniel! Save him before the raging waves drag him down!

NATHAN: My son!

DANIEL: Father, my poor father! (*Leans onto the statue and starts to cry.*)

NATHAN: Cry, cry your heart out! For a desperate soul, tears are the cure that soothes the pain. Poor child! (*Kisses his forehead.*) Cruel is our fate. You are destined to carry the burden of the whole of Mankind in your soul.

DANIEL: What a heavy burden it is!

NATHAN: Such is our destiny, and we must endure all the pains and misfortunes by relying on the strength of Mankind.

DANIEL: Until those pains push us into the grave.

NATHAN: Until we surmount them.

DANIEL: Oh, God! Is it your will to put me through so much suffering?

NATHAN: Calm down! Do you not see that you are still weak from the wound that Biljan inflicted upon you? If it had not been for Svetlana, you would not be standing in front of me now. She is the one you ought to thank for your new life.

DANIEL: It is rather the new death.

NATHAN: Fool! This is not a Man talking!

DANIEL: Why should she save me when I would much rather die? She has cured one wound, but who will cure the deep wound that she herself has inflicted upon my heart and soul?

NATHAN: Time and knowing yourself.

DANIEL: Slow healers!

NATHAN: Slow but reliable.

DANIEL: I cannot pull through because there is no cure for this pain.

NATHAN: You shall succeed if, in the moments of despair, you think of your old father whose only wish is to die in your arms. You do love your father, do you not? You will, for his sake, overcome this?

DANIEL: Can you not see how hard I am trying?

NATHAN: I do, and may God bless you for it, my son. If you bring consolation to this old man, God will bring consolation to you.

DANIEL: May God hear you!

NATHAN: Zoran sent me to fetch you. Come, my son, for it is dangerous for you to stay alone in the garden. Biljan is looking for an opportunity to catch you again.

DANIEL: Where is Zoran?

NATHAN: In his chamber. He is getting ready for a journey.

DANIEL: All right, I am leaving now. (*Exit.*)

SCENE III

NATHAN (*alone*): Oh, eternal force! You, ruler of the worlds, mover of the Universe, you the Almighty! I asked for you to take me? Now I am begging you: give me strength, lengthen my life for the sake of this tortured soul! Give me just enough power to comfort him and put him on the right track, and then you can take my life! (*Sits under the arbour absorbed in thought.*)

SCENE IV

Enter Svetlana and Sanko.

SVETLANA: So where did Zoran travel to?

SANKO: To Mercury. There has been a debate about these animals of yours there. Biljan and Zora have been trying to prove that those animals are a kind of “parrot-ape”, and that they could not possibly be our ancestors. On the other hand, Lagan says that they are a sort of apes that were the forefathers of our ancestors. Can you imagine? All this fuss about two animals! Nobody is

doing anything, they are divided into two camps and they have been doing nothing but sitting and thinking for the past ten days. All work has stopped because of it; the rain keeps falling, and they do not even consider removing the numerous clouds with the use of Zoran's invention. They said that they would continue sitting and thinking until you delivered the animals to them, so they could resolve this complicated issue.

SVETLANA: But why do they need Zoran over there?

SANKO: They want him to explain everything and calm them down. Besides, I would say that Biljan is behind it all. They thought that it would be easier for them to capture the animals if Zoran were not at home.

SVETLANA: Is Biljan here?

SANKO: Yes. He is hiding among the bushes and palm trees together with Zora.

SVETLANA: Damn Mercurians! They want to grab all of the earthly rarities for themselves.

SANKO: It is in their nature, there is no help for it. Yet, something must be done for them. You see, they abstain from work. They keep sitting and repeating: "Even if Mercury starts crumbling beneath us, we shall do nothing but think."

SVETLANA: All right, all right. I shall give them one of the animals, tell them to be patient.

SANKO: What, have you tamed them already?

SVETLANA: I have tamed Nathan, but, for some reason, I cannot tame Daniel. I keep studying him. I have concluded that their imperfections and their death are the consequences of many inborn diseases, which he calls "love, hate".

SANKO: Has he not specified the meaning of those words?

SVETLANA: He has, but I cannot understand him at all.

SANKO: Be careful tonight. Zora has repeatedly urged Biljan to seize Daniel without delay.

SVETLANA: I am alone tonight, stay with me.

SANKO: I shall stay, Zoran asked me himself to do so.

SVETLANA: Fine, for how long?

SANKO: Only for ten days.

SVETLANA: Do not forget that tomorrow we should go across the sea for a while, and you need to have more people around, in case Biljan proves to be up to something.

SANKO: Do not worry; I shall give orders right away. (*Exit*)

SCENE V

Svetlana approaches the arbour and sees Nathan.

SVETLANA: Oh, it is you, Nathan. Where is Daniel? How is he doing?

NATHAN: He is up and about already. His wound has healed completely.

SVETLANA: So, he does not have trouble walking and talking?

NATHAN: He does not.

SVETLANA: So, he is all right now?

NATHAN: He is cured from the wound Biljan inflicted upon him. Yet, he still suffers badly from the one you have caused.

SVETLANA: What do you mean?

NATHAN: Has he not told you?

SVETLANA: He has, but I have understood very little. I can see that he wants something from me, but he cannot tell me what it is. He says he is going to die because of me, that he is going to end his life.

NATHAN: That is because he loves you.

SVETLANA: That is what he said, but I still do not understand what he wants.

NATHAN: That is the real cause of his pain.

SVETLANA: Perhaps I shall be able to understand him eventually. Where is he?

NATHAN: In his chamber.

SVETLANA: Tell him to come.

NATHAN: Right away. May God nevertheless grant you an understanding of him! (*Exit*)

SCENE VI

Svetlana alone.

SVETLANA: Interesting animals. It is good that Zoran has captured them, so that I can observe them closely. So, is this what our ancestors were like? How strange! They died, they were killed, they feared the lightest breeze! Love, hate, dissatisfaction. These strange, inscrutable words

made them die prematurely, and there was nothing to sustain their life. It is probably the reason why they are not immortal like us.

SCENE VII

Enter Daniel. Svetlana sits in the arbour watching him.

DANIEL (*not seeing her*): And yet the inner voice of hope seems to tell me: "Do not believe it!" Maybe they use different words to express their emotions, maybe something else makes them feel the sea of happiness and pains of love, but I fail to grasp it. Who knows? Maybe I have been wrong up until now. To live and yet not feel anything! Not to know tortures of the soul, that is impossible! No, no, she must be able to feel! If her feelings are dormant, I shall awaken them. With the fire of my love, I shall make her soul burn! If a single sparkle burning inside me managed to touch her heart, I would not mind dying. It is terrible to live among insensitive moving corpses, among statues of stone, eternally cold.

SVETLANA (*keeps watching him*): He looks so wan! Daniel!

DANIEL (*sees her*): You called for me, Svetlana?

SVETLANA: I did. Come here. There, sit there, by my feet. I want to amuse myself a bit with you. (*Daniel sits by her feet.*)

SVETLANA (*Grabs his head with her hands and pulls it upward.*): Look me in the eye; your pupils are so bright; they are on fire.

DANIEL: Do not stop! Please, do not remove those pretty hands. Look at me; keep looking at me; your eyes now burn with such a strange fire. Oh, why will they not burn me, or kill me.

SVETLANA: Is it not better to live than to die?

DANIEL: Not for me! The one who would kill me would be my saviour.

SVETLANA: Your father does not agree. He wants you to live.

DANIEL: That is because he loves me, and because he would die of sadness because of me.

SVETLANA: Love? Grief? How often I have heard about those monstrosities that have brought destruction to your race. These are deadly diseases.

DANIEL (*despondently*): Indeed!

SVETLANA: And now you are suffering both from sadness and from love?

DANIEL (*Looks at her desirously while holding her hand.*): From love, too!

SVETLANA: Why are you looking at me like that? Your face is changing!

DANIEL: Hush, hush, I like it this way!

SVETLANA: Maybe I should ask Sanko, maybe he knows how to cure you from love?

DANIEL: Oh, do not mention his name. He cannot help me. The cure lies only in your hands, Svetlana.

SVETLANA: Then why will you not tell me its name?

DANIEL (*gently*): Love?

SVETLANA: Again love! Where am I supposed to find it?

DANIEL: In the heart, Svetlana! In the hotbed where all dormant passions rest. In the soul, which is the source of life.

SVETLANA: I see, in the heart? Now, I understand! Love and sadness lie in the heart. So, the heart is the source of all your troubles. But how can I save you from your heart? Can I rip it out without destroying you?

DANIEL (*desperately*): You are already ripping it out!

SVETLANA: What ails you now? Why have you become so pale?

DANIEL (*Puts his head on her lap.*): Let me rest here. This is so horrible!

SVETLANA (*Covers his face with her hands.*): Your face is so hot.

DANIEL: That is because I am on fire.

SVETLANA: Is the fire difficult to bear?

DANIEL: It is too difficult! If you do not dampen it, it will burn me up.

SVETLANA: But how? I shall happily agree to do so.

DANIEL (*rises*): You agree? Come here! Let me kiss your eyes. Let me press my lips to the brightest mirror in which your soul is reflected.

SVETLANA: All right, do it.

DANIEL (*happily*): You want me to? I am saved, you can already feel it.

SVETLANA (*Moves her face towards him*): And so? (*Daniel embraces her and starts kissing her.*)

SVETLANA: Daniel, let me go! What is the matter with you?

DANIEL (*still holding her*): Can you feel it? Can you feel it now?

SVETLANA: Let me go! How can I not feel it? There, you want to rip my dress.

DANIEL (*Lets her go, painfully.*): Rip your dress? But that is terrible!

SVETLANA: So, is this a kiss?

DANIEL: A kiss upon a statue of stone!

SVETLANA: And what have you gained from it?

DANIEL: What have I gained? Ha, ha, ha!

SVETLANA: Unfathomable! So much misery over a desire to touch someone's cheek with your lips?

DANIEL: Oh heavens, where am I? Is this a woman?

SVETLANA: The sun has already set. Let us go home.

DANIEL (*excitedly*): Not yet, wait, not now! I do not know how I shall endure an entire night without you. I wish I did not have to leave your side at all.

SVETLANA: Well, that can easily be solved. Let us go to my chamber. I do not want to leave your side tonight either, for I have learnt that Biljan is planning to kidnap you again.

DANIEL (*happily*): To your chamber? Did I hear you correctly?

SVETLANA: Yes. Why do you hesitate? Do you not want to?

DANIEL: Oh, my idol! Oh, how I adore you! Let us go, o, let us go!

SVETLANA: Well then, let us go. (*Takes him by the hand as they go.*)

DANIEL: Have you noticed how the first kiss has relieved my miseries?

SVETLANA: If I had known that it was your cure, I would have given it to you much earlier.

DANIEL: So, I shall not be denied a kiss any time I ask for it?

SVETLANA: Whenever you wish. It costs me nothing.

DANIEL (*Puts his arm around her waist*): Just look, my dear Svetlana, at how the ruddy sunset glow spreads throughout the dark night. That is exactly what my soul looks like right now. It has been living in eternal darkness, and now the first kiss has illuminated it like the ruddy glow of the sun. Behold, and wonder! For this ruddy light that lies over the dreaming nature like the smile of a beautiful goddess, will be extinguished, and instead of it, the night will begin its rule.

SVETLANA: That is quite natural.

DANIEL: But this night will not be filled with darkness, for my love shall set alight two of the brightest stars, whose sweet rays will illuminate the path of my love.

SVETLANA: What stars?

DANIEL (*tenderly*): Your eyes!

SVETLANA: You think they are that bright?

DANIEL: Even brighter.

SVETLANA (*She observes him carefully*): Are you delirious again? What is it now?

DANIEL: Hush, hush! Do not disturb the dreams that have been awakened in my soul. Let me dream on about the things that I saw the day when you were playing with the rose petals by the river. It was then I wanted to fall on my knees and beg you to make me your slave. Oh, how I envied the little rose whose petals your hand was tearing.

SVETLANA: You have changed. You are not as pale as a few seconds ago, and the light in your eyes is softer.

DANIEL: Because you have tamed the beast that was ripping my heart apart with its devilish claws.

SVETLANA: I shall try to tame it completely. Let us go. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE VIII

Enter Nathan. He stops, looking after them.

NATHAN: Foolish child! He is not aware that it is only a deceptive ray of happiness that has smiled upon him. The pain has concealed itself only to erupt in unbridled fury later. No, Daniel! In her soul there is no soothing power. You are dreadfully wrong if you think that you will set fire to this stone, and that your human feelings will awaken your idol's spirit. You are so elated that you do not see that you have embraced the very same marble statue, which, just a moment ago, you wanted to smash to pieces. (*He is about to leave.*)

SCENE IX

Enter Biljan and Zora from the opposite sides.

BILJAN: Stand still!

ZORA: Stop!

NATHAN: What do you want from me?

BILJAN: You know what.

NATHAN (*to himself*): The end is here! Farewell Daniel!

ZORA: We do not need you. Do say, where is Daniel?

NATHAN: I do not know.

BILJAN: We shall do you no harm if you tell us where he is.

NATHAN: What do you intend to do with him?

ZORA: We promised that we would not go back to Mercury without him.

NATHAN: Please, be reasonable! You can only take him there as a dead man.

ZORA: It does not matter! We are going to stuff his skin here anyway.

NATHAN: I do not know where he is.

ZORA: We saw him when Svetlana took him with her. Biljan, keep an eye on this one and I shall go after them.

NATHAN: It will be in vain. She will not let you take him.

BILJAN: Then you should lure him into coming with you.

NATHAN: I shall never do that!

BILJAN: You will not?

NATHAN: Never!

BILJAN: Come to your senses, you stupid animal! We have promised to take him with us tonight.

NATHAN: Promise you will not touch him and you can take me instead. Spare him! He is so young! And what would you do with him? He will not be so interesting as I am because he does not even have a beard or hair like me. Indeed, he is not much different from you. And me? I am completely dissimilar to you. There, you see.

BILJAN: What do you think, Zora?

ZORA: I would prefer the other one. Alas, if there is no other way...

BILJAN: Then we shall take this one. (*Pulls out a knife.*)

NATHAN: Stop, wait a moment! Let me take one last look at the blue sky and the chamber of my son Daniel. Farewell my son! With my own blood I shall redeem your life! This is it! I am finished now. **Hit me!** (*Biljan whips out the knife.*)

SCENE X

Enter Sanko with a few attendants.

SANKO: Huh, Biljan! That is not how the things are done here.

BILJAN: Let me finish my job. I must have him.

SANKO: I know, I know, but Svetlana has not given you permission.

ZORA: If you do not let us have this one, we shall lure Daniel away. I have to tame him for myself.

SANKO: Only Svetlana can do such a thing.

ZORA: I have learned the tricks of her trade. Now I, too, can tame Man.

SANKO: Then try, if you can!

ZORA: A moment ago, at this very place, she was taming him. First she put his head into her lap, then she pressed her face against his lips, and at last she invited him to her chamber to continue the taming there.

SANKO: Let us go to them. I, too, am interested in this young animal, so wild in its frenzy. This one is completely tamed. (*Exeunt.*)

NATHAN: Oh, yes? Now, we are nothing but animals to be tamed!

ACT III

THE SAME GARDEN AS IN ACT II. ENTER SANKO AND ZORA.

SCENE I

Zora and Sanko.

ZORA: I just cannot understand it. How much longer is Svetlana going to be interested in this Daniel. To this day she has not tamed him, even though the entire Spirit-world praises her taming skills.

SANKO: I myself do not know either, but she herself seems to realize that she has not accomplished much.

ZORA: I would have tamed him by now.

SANKO: How?

ZORA: I was watching them last night, too. She was taming him the way she did the other night, when she took him from this garden to her chamber. True, he would become much calmer and quieter for a while, but it was to no avail as his former fury would return again.

SANKO: So, what would you do if you were her?

ZORA: That is my secret. If you give me your word that you will not tell Svetlana, I shall confide in you.

SANKO: I shall not tell her, have faith in me!

ZORA: Then, let us go to that arbour over there. No one will interrupt our conversation there.
(Exeunt.)

SCENE II

Enter Svetlana and Biljan from the opposite sides.

SVETLANA: I shall say it again: drop it.

BILJAN: And I am telling you that I shall not!

SVETLANA: You will not take them without my permission. I have only just started a closer examination of the life and passions of these animals and you keep pestering me to hand them over to you. In truth, I have promised to give one to you, but not now, later.

BILJAN: But tell me why do you need both of them? One animal is enough for examination. Keep Nathan and give me Daniel.

SVETLANA: Why should I give you Daniel?

BILJAN: Because that is the will of my Zora.

SVETLANA: Well, Daniel is the one I shall not give up!

BILJAN: Why?

SVETLANA: Because he is more interesting. There is nothing to be examined in Nathan.

BILJAN: All right, give me Nathan then.

SVETLANA: I shall not give you him either because Daniel would perish without him.

BILJAN: What does it matter? If he perishes, you can stuff him nice and easy.

SVETLANA: It matters. I shall do that only after I have completed my examination of him.

BILJAN: Have you fully tamed him?

SVETLANA: Only just last night. But as soon as day dawns, he grows wild again.

BILJAN: You should not be so preoccupied with an animal!

SVETLANA: Patience is a virtue in science. One who lacks it accomplishes nothing.

SCENE III

Zora and the characters from the previous scene.

ZORA: Svetlana! Svetlana! Daniel is having a fit again. There he is, howling about the garden, and Nathan is running after him, trying to calm him down.

SVETLANA: Where is he now?

ZORA: Here he comes.

SVETLANA: Leave me alone. He is afraid of you! (*Exeunt Biljan and Zora.*)

SCENE IV

Daniel enters delirious and upset.

SVETLANA: You are feeling unwell again?

DANIEL: And look who is asking that question?

SVETLANA: Were you not feeling well for the past five days? Were you not so happy last night that you did not fall asleep until dawn? I have tried everything to tame you and still you rage!

DANIEL: You are killing me!

SVETLANA: Even when I do everything that you wish?

DANIEL (*Takes her hand.*): Come here! Look at this statue! What could it deny me? Here, if I wanted to, I could kiss it, embrace it, caress it, and it would not deny me. Hey, cold stone, I can do with you whatever I wish, and you will not bear a grudge! Is that everything our soul longs for? Is this the realization of the ideal of divine love? No! No! The cold stone does not bear a grudge against me because it cannot feel! How will it know of the pain and mercy that waste the heart of Man, which you do not possess? Tell me, Svetlana, are you not like this cold statue, this icy rock, to which it makes no difference if it is warmed by the heavenly sun or struck by lightning? You have not deprived me of anything. I have been your master in every respect! My innermost desires have been fulfilled, and what has happened? When I thought that the flame of my soul had melted that iceberg in your chest; when I thought that the divine spark would awaken in your heart one day, I saw before me a marble statue. Yes, a marble statue, you, Svetlana!

SVETLANA: Have I not done everything you wanted me to soothe your pain?

DANIEL: Indeed! Indeed! But that was not what I wanted!

SVETLANA: And what did you want?

DANIEL: I wanted you to love me!

SVETLANA: Was that not love?

DANIEL: Do not blaspheme against the divine gift given only to Men, you insensitive rock!

SVETLANA: I have done everything I could. However, I think that you yourself do not know what you want. For you cannot ask of me that which we do not have and which you imagine to have yourself.

DANIEL: What do I need life for, then?

SVETLANA: Strange creature! Your kind should wonder why there is death, why the sudden change that turns *something* into *nothing*, why it is not immortal as well when it already exists in its form.

DANIEL (*painfully*): Oh, Svetlana!

SVETLANA: You are unwell, are you not? Tell me, you do recall your saying last night that you wished for eternal life?

DANIEL: I was deeply wrong about you, and about myself.

SVETLANA: You said you were happier than all your forefathers. You compared me to the sun that wakes the lifeless nature after a long winter and revives everything that was once alive.

DANIEL: Because I was not aware that it was only my deceptive imagination.

SVETLANA: What should I do now? I do not know how to save you from this anger!

DANIEL: Do but one thing and I shall be happy.

SVETLANA: What is it?

DANIEL: Say that you love me!

SVETLANA: What for, when you yourself know that there is no such emotion in the Spirit-world?

DANIEL: Lie to me! Deceive me! So help you God, say it!

SVETLANA: I love you!

DANIEL (*contemptuously*): Ha, ha, ha! Coldness echoes in those words, like the sound of a funeral bell which reminds the deceased that his work on Earth is done.

SVETLANA: I love you!

DANIEL: For the love of God, say no more! Do not utter that word again! Leave it be! Let it rest peacefully in the grave with the rest of Mankind. Can you not feel the dust of Mankind tremble beneath the ground listening to how unlovingly you utter the dearest word of its soul? That is not the sound of love.

SVETLANA: I did what you wanted me to.

DANIEL: And it is not what you felt! That is horrible! My heart longs for the requited love. And she? She stands silently and shatters all hopes created by fancy with her cold reason.

SVETLANA: Come here!

DANIEL (*Pushes her away.*): Leave me alone!

SVETLANA: But why? Here, I shall do whatever you wish.

DANIEL: If it is the truth you speak, then let us leave this place! If there were a spark of feeling in your heart, you would leave both Zoran and Sanko. Oh, let us go, let us go! Far from this enchanted world I shall find the life-giving flame that will melt the frost of your soul.

SVETLANA: But what for? Zoran and Sanko will not bother us here.

DANIEL: I abhor them!

SVETLANA: Why?

DANIEL: Am I to watch indifferently how the one I adore calls herself the wife of Zoran while Sanko is making advances on her?

SVETLANA: It must be so, for it has been decided once and for all.

DANIEL: It must not! Come with me, leave them! Be only mine, and I promise to awaken the feelings lying dormant in you. I shall fill your heart with delight!

SVETLANA: You speak nonsense!

DANIEL: It shall be so, I swear it!

SVETLANA: Out of the question! If I let you go, you will escape! Man is a clever animal, as I can see. I would lose a unique specimen, one for which Earth and Mercury scramble.

DANIEL (*furiously*): Can this be? Am I hearing this right? After all that has happened between us, in your eyes I am nothing but a rare animal?

SVETLANA: It is so.

DANIEL: And yet you allowed an animal to kiss you, to...

SVETLANA (*Interrupts him*): It does not matter! It did not cost me a thing.

DANIEL (*enraged*): Miserable woman! (*Grabs her hand but quickly lets go.*) No! No! You are immortal, I cannot harm you! Oh, if only I could exact revenge on you! Go away! I do not want to see you anymore. My life's journey has come to an end.

SVETLANA: I must guard you lest you flee from me.

DANIEL: Fine! I shall do away with myself then. So, it was all just an examination of a plain animal? Have you studied me well? My life is no longer of value to you! Biljan! Biljan! Come get your prey. They will be pleased to have my carcass on Mercury. Long live science! (*Takes out his knife.*) Farewell now! (*Attempts to kill himself. Svetlana jumps in and grabs his hand.*)

SVETLANA: Sanko, over here!

(*Enter Sanko, Biljan, Zora, and more of them.*)

SANKO: What is it?

SVETLANA: Lock him in the cage. He is delirious.

SANKO: Shall I shackle him?

SVETLANA: If he does not stop raving, you can.

SANKO: Come with me!

DANIEL: Horrible creatures, you shall not keep me for long. (*Daniel and Sanko exit.*)

BILJAN: So, you do see it is impossible to tame him? He will find a way to escape.

ZORA: Still, I could tame him.

SVETLANA: To no avail! Man is a beast that cannot be pleased. Fulfill his wishes and he will still be discontent, without even knowing why. The only thing I have grasped is that “discontent” is as severe a disease as “love”, “sadness”, and “hate”, which used to hasten the death of Man. So, as you see, our ancestors were strange animals indeed.

BILJAN: But who can guarantee that this “Man” is the ancestor of the Spirit-world?

(*The clouds echo with a melody, followed by a song.*)

Through the Universe eternal,

Currents swiftly flow,

Their wings supernal

As the tempest’s blow.

Through the world so endless

Eternity sends us, where?

Who will stop us there?

Our flight is limitless.

SVETLANA: O, look, here comes Zoran. Since he has arrived so quickly, something of importance must have happened.

SCENE V

Enter Zoran.

ZORAN: Do my eyes deceive me? Something must have happened in my home.

SVETLANA: It is so. Daniel is becoming more and more delirious.

ZORAN: Have him locked in the cage.

SVETLANA: It is already done.

BILJAN: And that crowd? Are those the emissaries from Mercury?

ZORA: Yes, Lagan is leading them.

SCENE VI

Enter Lagan and a few attendants.

BILJAN: What is it Lagan? It looks like you are on an important mission.

LAGAN: Hear me now. (*Goes to the centre of the stage; speaks in a solemn voice.*) By the grace of the Spirit-world on Mercury and in accordance with the Intergalactic Treaty signed at the Congress of Uranus, I hereby come to Earth as Chief Emissary to recall Biljan, Mercury's representative on Earth. Having exercised this command, I should also add that yesterday the Glorious Senate issued a decree severing all relations between Mercury and Earth until we are given one of those rare animals called "Man" in accordance with the aforementioned contract.

ZORAN: There is no choice, Svetlana. We cannot sever our relations with such an important centre as Mercury just because of an animal. I think we should give them one of them.

SVETLANA: Go ahead, I have studied them enough. Give them Nathan.

ZORAN (*to the emissaries*): Oh, children of Mercury. It has never been our intention to break our agreement on account of an animal. For the sake of our treaty, Svetlana is willing to give you one of them; but she demands that you accept the one she chooses.

LAGAN: I accept. The negotiations are concluded.

ZORAN (*to Svetlana*): Which one will you give away?

ZORA: I would like to get Daniel. You were unable to tame him, and I think I might be able to do so.

SCENE VII

Enter Sanko in a hurry and looking around.

SVETLANA: Have you locked him up?

SANKO: But where is he? He is gone?

SVETLANA: Do not tell me he has escaped from you.

SANKO: I never thought he would escape. It seemed as though he had calmed down.

SVETLANA: Surround the garden.

ZORAN: No need; here he comes!

SCENE VIII

Daniel rushes in.

DANIEL: In a cage? A man, in a cage? You merciless creature! He who was equal to your Zoran and your Sanko in every respect is now to be locked away as a beast in a cage? Here, behold! Come, ravens! Biljan, you notorious vulture, come and take my carcass, I give it to you.

(Stabs himself and falls down.)

NATHAN *(from outside)*: Daniel, my son!

SCENE IX

Nathan enters running; he takes Daniel and puts his head on his lap.

NATHAN: Daniel! Daniel!

DANIEL *(regaining consciousness)*: There, there. It hurts no longer. I have killed the foe. Forgive me father, I had to...right here...with me! *(Dies.)*

NATHAN: With you, son, I shall go with you! Let these cold statues behold how emotions, the spark of divine mercy, follow Man into eternal bliss. Behold, you children of perfection, devoid of feelings and desires! This ruined life holds the tragedy of the entire Mankind. Death has been more dear to him, for its perfection is more desirable. The harsh tempest of destiny has wrecked

the ship of Mankind; but Mankind would rather fight against the tempestuous waves than sail the stagnant pool of your perfection, which not even a whirlwind could set in motion. Daniel, I am grateful to you! A father did not have the strength to show his son the path to salvation, but the son managed to show it to his father! Here I come, my child! Now! Now! ... (*Stabs himself with Daniel's knife.*)

ZORAN: Who would have thought that this tamed "Man" would do the same?!

BILJAN: Now I am firmly convinced that the tamed Nathan's imitation of Daniel is the best proof that Man is closer to apes than to us.

NATHAN (*Embraces Daniel while dying.*): Locked in an embrace...with my...blessing... (*Dies.*)

BILJAN (*Looks closely at them.*): Such a shame! They have ruined the skin!

SVETLANA (*Looks closely at them.*): Not too badly; it can be stitched up.

ZORAN: Which one will you give us now?

SVETLANA: I shall keep Daniel. You can take Nathan to Mercury.

The end.

REVIEWS

Prevod drame Dragutina J. Ilića *Posle milijon godina*

Drama Dragutina J. Ilića *Posle milijon godina*, nakon više od jednog veka od kako je prvi put objavljena u časopisu *Javor* (1889), prevedena je na engleski jezik. Prevod drame pod naslovom *A Million Years After* potpisuje grupa studenata master akademskih studija Anglistike sa Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu. Prevod ovog malo poznatog teksta, rezultat njihovog rada na predmetu Utopija koji sa velikim entuzijazmom i profesionalnom ozbiljnošću predaje prof. dr Zorica Đergović-Joksimović, poduhvat je vredan pažnje iz najmanje dva razloga.

Odabrani tekst se smatra prvom naučno-fantastičnom dramom ne samo u srpskoj već i svetskoj književnosti. Uprkos činjenici da se u Ilićevom delu fantastično racionalizuje, što predstavlja suštinsku odliku SF žanra, ovo je književno delo živelo nekakvim polu-životom na književnoj margini i podelilo sudbinu uglavnom zaboravljenih dela i nepravedno zapostavljenih srpskih pisaca devetnaestog veka. U mnogo značajnih aspekata, drama predstavlja savršeni uzor za SF koji će uslediti. Dragutin Ilić mudro prepliće utopiju koja preuzima distopijski zadatak i distopiju koja u korak prati utopiju, kao i satiru koja se služi, kako bi to rekao Darko Suvin, jezikom nauke i tehnološkom ekstrapolacijom kao groteskom. Tragikomična, ironično-gorka priča o sudbini poslednjih ljudi starog čovečanstva, Natana i Danijela, u Duho-svetu tehnološki razvijene, racionalne i utilitarne civilizacije besmrtnih ljudi i tuđinca koji dolaze sa udaljenih planeta, zapravo je inverzija značajnih aspekata autorovog sveta ali i anticipacija zastrašujuće, alternativne ljudske budućnosti u kojoj tuđinska i biološki moćna rasa ljudi – bezosećajni, viši proizvodi evolucije – prosuđuje ljude onako kako mi prosuđujemo životinje. Na vešt način neki od najstarijih ljudskih strahova se prenose u evolucijsku perspektivu da bi se ispričala alegorijska priča o ljudskom otuđenju u svetu naučno tehnološke usavršenosti. Zahvaljujući tome, drama nije samo prethodnica kasnijih pokušaja srpskih pisaca da stvaraju slična alegorijska i utopistička dela, već se sa punim pravom može porediti ne samo sa proto naučno-fantastičnim delima kakva su *Guliverova putovanja* Džonatana Sviŕta ili *Frankenštajn* i *Poslednji čovek* Meri Šeli, već i delima autora novije naučne fantastike poput Žila Verna i Herberta Džordža Velsa.

Prevod ovog književnog dela na najbolji način promoviše ne samo marginalizovane srpske pisce, već i književno prevođenje uopšte. Rašireno je shvatanje da je prevođenje, uključujući i književno, tehnika prebacivanja teksta za koje je potrebno poznavanje stranog jezika. Prevodioci Ilićeve drame *Posle milijon godina* pokazali su da književni prevod nije samo zanatski rad, već umetnost; prevodilac re-kreira značenje izraženo u originalu, trudi se da verno prenese stilske osobenosti teksta. Oni su potvrdili da je prevođenje vrsta umetničkog stvaralaštva slična kreativnom pisanju, jedna vrsta književnog oblikovanja koje ima neosporne vrednosti za jezik i kulturu na koje i s kojih se prevodi. Prevodi knjiga su mostovi za susret sa kulturama, oni vode do boljeg razumevanja i povezivanja među kulturama. Ilićeva drama na engleskom jeziku nije dragocen tekst samo za izučavaoce književnosti, već može biti lektira i znatno širem krugu čitalaca. Zato svesrdno preporučujem objavljivanje ovog prevoda, potkrepljujući svoju preporuku rečima Ive Andrića u tekstu pod naslovom „Sa magijom ponekad graniči i na prave podvige liči rad dobrog prevodioca”: „Prevodioci su najbolji tumači i posrednici u ovom oduvek podeljenom svetu. Ako su danas narodi i ljudi bliski jedni drugima, i ovoliko koliko jesu, za to treba zahvaliti, između ostalog, i prevodiocima. Ko se od nas nije njihovim radom i naporom koristio? Šta bi znali o Homeru, Danteu, Geteu da ih ne čitaju u prevodima, a šta o Euripidu, Šekspiru, Rasinu ili Gogolju da ih ne slušaju u pozorištima na svom jeziku? Ništa. A, ako ipak nešto znamo ili bar naslućujemo, to je zasluga prevodilaca. I svi mi, koliko nas ima, njihovi smo dužnici.”

Niš, 18.12.2015.

Prof. dr Milica Živković

English Translation of Dragutin Ilić's play *A Million Years After*

The translation of Dragutin Ilić's play, *A Million Years After* (1889), into the English language, is a noteworthy and commendable effort of a group of M.A. students from the University of Novi Sad, and their professor, Zorica Đergović Joksimović, in presenting a work of great literary-historical significance to a wider, international audience. Written by a nineteenth century Serbian playwright, this work would have continued to exist solely in its national literature as an example of an early attempt in the genre of science fiction; however, with this translation scholars worldwide will be able to refer to it in their studies as well. The curiosity of *A Million Years After* lies in the fact that it is not only the first play written entirely in the SF mode in Serbian literature, but also in the fact that its idea about contrasting the two races – the “old” one, the perishing *homo sapiens*, and the new one, intellectually far superior, which form the “Spirit-world” – appeared six years prior to the similar vision of H. G. Wells in his novel *The Time Machine*.

The translation successfully recreates the atmosphere of gloom, despair and sardonic humor in which the last two members of the old race spend their last days on Earth, being persecuted by those of the new race for whom they are no more than valuable scientific material. The new race knows no feelings, emotions or passion; it possesses superior intellect, and covers interplanetary distances with ease. The love that one of the humans feels for the member of the new race will only speed up their ending.

The result of a workshop held in 2014, the translation of Ilić's play would certainly serve its scholarly purpose besides being a true pleasure to read.

Prof. dr Ivana Đurić Paunović

University of Novi Sad

Dragutin J. Pić: A Million Years After (После милијон година) – рецензија

После милијон година (1889) Драгутина Илића свакако је прва српска научнофантастична драма, а врло вероватно и први светски научнофантастични позоришни комад. У њему аутор приказује зачуђујуће модерну визију будућности у којој ће људску расу сменити потомци на вишем степену еволуције, изузетно дуговечни и интелигентни, али лишени људских емоција. Драма прати последња два представника човечанства, оца Натана и сина Данијела, њихов сусрет са новом, вишом расом који се због потпуног одсуства комуникације завршава њиховим очајањем и двоструким самоубиством. На идејном нивоу, Илић овде први пут разрађује мотиве које ће касније обрађивати научнофантастични аутори попут Артура Кларка (*Крај детињства*) или Станислава Лема (*Соларис, Непобедиви*).

И аутор и његово дело дуго су били занемарени и готово сасвим заборављени. Тек средином осамдесетих година двадесетог века започета је постепена ревалоризација Драгутина Илића и његовог дела, при чему је посебна пажња посвећена овој драми (Сава Дамјанов приредио је фототипско издање 1988. године, док му нпр. Зоран Живковић и Бојан Јовић посвећују стручну критичку пажњу). Надаље, 1995. драма је (под модернизованим насловом *После милион година*) доживела и праизвођење у Народном позоришту у Београду, у режији Саше Латинковића. Године 2008. појавило се и дигитално издање доступно на интернету, у оквиру пројекта Растко. Ипак, шира рецепција, која би укључивала и преводе на стране језике, до сада је изостала.

Овај превод на енглески стога представља важан корак за љубитеље и познаваоце српске научне фантастике. У ретко срећном споју ентузијазма и стручности, под уредништвом Зорице Ђерговић-Јоксимовић, група њених студената англистике са новосадског Филозофског факултета (Марко Ђуришић, Данка Цида, Даниела Ходак, Александра Кокора, Катарина Марковић, Весна Савић, Маријана Стојановић, Јована Зорић) превела је Илићеву драму на енглески језик. Упркос томе што се ради о почетницима, превод је

квалитетан и верно преноси не само садржину Илићевог текста већ и налази енглески еквивалент за помало архаични српски језик оригинала. Са једнаком брижљивошћу пренете су и Илићеве филозофске идеје као и његови лирски пасажии, и можда је једино донекле настрадао дискретни хумористично-сатирични тон у сценама са Данијелом и Светланом.

Будући да ће ова драма у дигитализованом виду сада бити широко доступна и страним читаоцима, може се очекивати повећање интересовања и критичког бављења Илићевим делом, као и прецизније одређење његовог места у историјском контексту научне фантастике. Због свега овога, свесрдно препоручујем *A Million Years After* за објављивање.

У Београду, 20. XII 2015.

др Тијана Тропин,

истраживач сарадник

Институт за књижевност и уметност, Београд

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