

= Milutin Boji? =

Milutin Boji? (Serbian Cyrillic : ??????? ????? ; 18 May [O.S. 7 May] 1892 ? 8 November [O.S. 25 October] 1917) was a Serbian poet , theatre critic , playwright , and soldier .

A native of Belgrade , he began writing poetry at an early age and published a number of literary reviews under a pseudonym while he was still a teenager . He rose to prominence during the Balkan Wars , writing about his experiences in territories newly retaken from the Ottoman Empire . The outbreak of World War I interrupted Boji? 's studies at the University of Belgrade and forced him to postpone marrying his girlfriend , Radmila Todorovi? . The couple were separated in the chaos of war , and Boji? left Belgrade with his family and relocated to Ni? , where he worked as a military censor and wrote articles for a local newspaper to pay his family 's bills . In October 1915 , the Serbian Army was overwhelmed by a combined Austro @-@ Hungarian , Bulgarian and German invasion and forced to retreat to neutral Greece via Albania . Boji? and his younger brother joined the exodus , marching for several weeks through Kosovo , Montenegro and northern Albania , where they were finally reunited with Boji? 's fiancée . Boji? was not allowed to accompany his brother and fiancée on a ship destined for Italy because he was of fighting age , and had to continue marching to Greece without them .

In early 1916 , Boji? reached the Greek island of Corfu , where he was recruited to work for Serbian military intelligence . That summer , he was transferred to Thessaloniki , where he continued working for the military . In August , he was granted leave and sailed to France , where he reunited with his fiancée and his brother . Boji? returned to Greece several weeks later , and was diagnosed with tuberculosis in September the following year . Owing to the political connections of his patrons , he managed to find care at an exclusive military hospital in Thessaloniki , but by late October his condition worsened . He died in early November at the age of 25 . He was initially buried at the Allied military cemetery at Zeitenlik , but in 1922 , his siblings had his remains relocated to Belgrade , where they were reburied beside those of his parents .

Boji? 's popularity grew exponentially following his death . Many of his poems received widespread critical acclaim for their portrayal of the Serbian Army 's retreat during the winter of 1915 ? 16 and its stay on Corfu , where thousands of soldiers succumbed to disease and exhaustion and were buried at sea . Boji? 's work remained popular in Yugoslavia for much of the 20th century , cementing his reputation as one of the greatest Serbian poets of the Romantic period .

= = Life and career = =

= = = Family = = =

Milutin Boji? was born in Belgrade on 18 May [O.S. 7 May] 1892 , the eldest child of Jovan and Sofia Boji? (née Bogojevi?) . His father 's family was originally from Herzegovina . Following the First Serbian Uprising , Boji? 's great @-@ grandfather fled his ancestral homeland and settled in the Austro @-@ Hungarian city of Semlin (modern Zemun) to escape Ottoman persecution . Boji? 's father and grandfather were born in Semlin , and were good @-@ standing members of the town 's fledgling Serb community . In 1875 , Boji? 's father was conscripted into the Austro @-@ Hungarian Army . Shortly afterwards , he entered into an argument with a high @-@ ranking Hungarian officer , insulted him , then fled to the Serbian capital to escape punishment . He attended trade school in Belgrade and became a successful shoemaker .

Boji? 's matrilineal line traces its origins to the town of Tetovo , in what is now northern Macedonia . His mother 's family had fled the town in 1690 as part of the Great Serb Migration and settled in Be?kerek (modern Zrenjanin) . Boji? 's maternal grandfather , Jovan , had lived in the border town of Pan?evo since he was a child , married and started a family there . Much like Boji? 's father , he was a successful shoemaker , and in 1890 he offered to marry his only daughter to him . After initial disagreement over the price of the dowry , Bogojevi? gave the marriage his blessing and Boji? 's parents were soon married .

At the time of Boji? 's birth , his parents were living in a small flat at No. 4 Sremska Street , situated just above his father 's shop in Belgrade 's Stari Grad . Over the next decade , they had four more children ? Jelica (b . 1894) , Danica (b . 1896) , Radivoje (b . 1900) and Dragoljub (b . 1905) . All of their children survived to adulthood . When Boji? was a child , he and his family were frequently visited by his mother 's cousin Jovan Sremac , the brother of humourist Stevan Sremac . Jovan is said to have greatly influenced the young Boji? , having introduced him to Serbian folk tales and medieval legends at an early age .

= = = Education and first publications = = =

Boji? began attending the Terazije Elementary School in 1898 , and finished with excellent grades . He likely began writing poetry between the ages of eight and ten , and this caught the attention of some of his teachers . Jovan Dravi? , who taught Serbian in Boji? 's school , wrote : " One of my pupils has been writing poetry since his first year of elementary school . His father , a shoemaker on Sremska Street , is very proud of his son 's work . He keeps his poems locked away in a safe as great treasures , convinced that they are of immense value and proof of his son 's brilliant future . "

In 1902 , the Boji?es moved into a small house on Hilendarska Street . That autumn , Boji? enrolled into Belgrade 's Secondary School No. 2 , which taught children from the ages of ten to eighteen . Over the next several years , Boji? distinguished himself as an excellent student . In 1907 , he was recognized as the best student in his school , and was exempt from final examinations . By this time , Boji? 's poems started appearing in his school 's periodical . He also began writing literary reviews for Jovan Skerli? and Milan Grol 's Daily News (Dnevni list) , and became the paper 's youngest contributor . All of Boji? 's contributions there were written under a pseudonym because he feared he would not be taken seriously if his true age was uncovered . Boji? also authored articles in the newspapers Artwork (Delo) , Wreath (Venac) and The Serbian Literary Gazette (Srpski knji?evni glasnik) . In 1908 , during the Austro -@- Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina , Boji? penned his first stage play , titled " The Blind Despot " (Slepí despot) . It was meant to be the first play of a trilogy titled " The Despot 's Crown " (Despotova kruna) . Boji? shared the play with his friend Radoslav Vesni? , who then showed it to Rista Odovi? , the director of the National Theatre in Belgrade .

By the end of his secondary school studies , Boji? was elected chairman of his school 's literary club . Upon turning eighteen , in May 1910 , he was deemed unfit to serve in the Serbian Army and excused from mandatory service . After graduation , in the autumn of 1910 , he enrolled in the University of Belgrade 's Faculty of Philosophy , where he studied the works of Immanuel Kant , as well as German , Italian and South Slavic literature with varying rates of success . Shortly after entering the university , Boji? began contributing theatrical reviews to Pijemont , an ultra @-@ nationalist daily strongly opposed to the Prime Minister of Serbia , Nikola Pa?i? , and his People 's Radical Party (Serbian : Narodna radikalna stranka ; NRS) . Pijemont was also the quasi @-@ official paper of the secret organization Unification or Death (better known as the Black Hand) , which played an important role in Serbian political life between 1903 and 1914 .

Milutin K. Dragutinovi? was one of Boji? 's greatest influences during his teenage years . Dragutinovi? was one of Boji? 's former secondary school teachers , as well as a literary critic and member of the National Theatre 's artistic committee . He advised Boji? to continue writing poetry and dramatic verse . In 1911 , Boji? shared the first draft of a stage play titled " Chains " (Lanci) with Dragutinovi? , who encouraged him to submit it to a competition held by the Literary Committee of the National Theatre in Belgrade . Boji? 's play was one of forty @-@ two works that were submitted . A number of prominent writers took part in the competition , including Ivo Vojnovi? , Branislav Nu?i? , Aleksa ?anti? , and Svetozar ?orovi? . " Chains " was rejected as being too " naïve " and " full of youthful exaggerations " , and the prize went to another contestant . In May , Boji? 's father died suddenly of a heart attack , aged 56 .

= = = Rise to prominence and coverage of the Balkan Wars = = =

Despite his busy schedule , during his university years Boji? spent many of his nights in cafés and bars , mingling with other artists in Skadarlija , Belgrade 's Bohemian quarter . He was extremely popular among the writers and artists of his generation .

During this time , many of Belgrade 's merchant elite became art patrons . Boji? 's patrons were Ljuba Jovanovi? @-@ Patak and his wife Simka , who used their power and influence to publicize his works . During the Balkan Wars , Boji? accompanied the Serbian Army as a war reporter and wrote several travelogues about his experiences in Kosovo and Macedonia . The expulsion of the Turks , who had occupied much of the Balkans for 500 years , seemed to fill Boji? with optimism about the future . Helena Malí?ová , a Czech volunteer nurse with the 17th Reserve Hospital of the Serbian Army 's 7th Regiment , recalled : " His spirit was in constant opposition to everything ; at the same time he was an enthusiast . He was bursting with desires , and he drank the sap of life through his senses . " Historian Mihailo ?or?evi? writes :

[Boji?] was an impulsive young man . From rare photographs and the testimony of his contemporaries emerges [...] a figure of medium stature , with slightly drooped shoulders , thick brown hair , and a pale oval face . His eyebrows were dark , and one of them was almost always raised , giving his face an expression of intense irony . His eyes burned with constant passion , and his lips were full and sensuous . There was also something young and vulnerable in his smile . He smiled often , and his conversation was reputed to be brilliant .

As the wars raged , Boji? wrote a historical drama titled " The King 's Autumn " (Kraljeva jesen) , which received considerable praise from Skerli? . The drama premiered at the National Theatre in October 1913 . Another one of Boji? 's works , " Ms. Olga " (Gospo?a Olga) premiered soon after . In early 1914 , publishing magnate Svetislav Cvijanovi? printed Boji? 's first poetry collection , consisting of 48 works .

= = = Outbreak of World War I and retreat to Corfu = = =

At the outbreak of World War I , Boji? was in his final year at the University of Belgrade and had gotten engaged to his girlfriend , Radmila Todorovi? . The war put a stop to his education , and Boji? decided to postpone the marriage until peace was restored . He remained employed at Pijemont until 1915 , when he left Belgrade with his family , never to return . While Todorovi? remained in the city , the Boji?es moved to the town of Aran?elovac in the Serbian interior . Shortly after , they moved to Ni? as it was further from the frontlines . There , Boji? worked as a military censor . He wrote articles for the Ni? Gazette (Ni?ki glasnik) to pay his family 's bills . In early February 1915 , Boji? 's mother died of cancer , leaving him to take care of his younger siblings .

Boji? devoted most of his creative energy to the completion of an epic poem titled Cain , which was published just before the combined Austro @-@ Hungarian , Bulgarian and German invasion of Serbia in October 1915 . A deeply patriotic work , Cain compares Bulgaria 's impending attack on Serbia to the Biblical story of Cain jealously murdering his brother Abel . Upon capturing Ni? , the Bulgarians burned every copy of the poem , and the only one that survived was the one that Boji? carried with him out of the city . Upon leaving Ni? , Boji? and his brother Radivoje joined the Serbian Army in its retreat to the Adriatic coast . Their sisters and infant brother went to live with a cousin in occupied Kraljevo . The Boji? brothers ' journey took them through Kur?umlja , Mitrovica , Pristina , Prizren , ?akovica , De?ani and Pe? , from where they continued to Andrijevisa and Podgorica . The two intended to join retreating Montenegrin Army columns and head on to Scutari , where they hoped that Allied ships would evacuate them and other Serbian troops to Italy .

The Serbs quickly realized that they had no hope of being evacuated at Scutari due to the Austro @-@ Hungarian naval presence off the northern Albanian coast , and the Serbian and Montenegrin military leaderships elected to retreat further into the Albanian interior rather than surrender . The Serbs and Montenegrins marched south , first to Durrës and then to Vlorë . From there , they intended to meet up with a French expeditionary force that was to evacuate them to the Greek island of Corfu . Thousands of soldiers either died of hunger or succumbed to the cold . Many were ambushed by hostile Albanian tribesmen and killed while traversing the countryside . While marching through the wilderness , Boji? began writing a poetry anthology titled " Songs of Pride and

Suffering " (Pesme bola i ponosa) , which would comprise some of his best known works . He also started working on a new drama in verse titled " The Marriage of Uro? " (Uro?eva ?enidba) .

Stojan ?ivadinovi? , a friend who accompanied Boji? on the difficult journey , recalled :

He was dressed in a strange way . A ?ajka?a was pulled to the front of his head and almost completely covered his forehead . His eyebrows were hardly visible . Under its weight , the ears seemed to have collapsed . He wore a kind of long , black coat , covered in mud and held in place by a string . He used another piece of string for a belt , and from it hung a pot for boiling water , a tea strainer , a canteen , and other useful things . He walked slightly bent forward , followed everywhere by the noise of the things clashing at his waist .

The occupation of Serbia by the Central Powers pained Boji? far more than the everyday struggles of the exodus itself . He is said to have slept very little , telling ?ivadinovi? : " You don 't realize what you are missing by sleeping . In circumstances like these , the entire soul must be kept constantly awake . Whole centuries have never painted such a vast fresco . Never has death been so greedy , nor heroes so indifferent to it . " In December 1915 , Boji? reached Shëngjin with the others and reunited with his fiancée . ?ivadinovi? recalled : " I shall never forget the day that we saw the sea . Only then did Boji? begin to speak about the future . He was making plans for a vast novel in verse , for comedies , dramas , tragedies , all intended to bring the great events of our history back to life . " Upon reaching the coast , Boji? was told that he could not board the ship to Italy because he was of fighting age . His fiancée was allowed to board and his fifteen @-@ year @-@ old brother was judged to be too young for military service and granted passage as well . Unable to go with them , Boji? and his companions continued down the length of the Albanian coast until they reached Corfu , where the Allies had sent ships to transport the remnants of the Serbian Army to the Greek mainland .

Upon reaching Corfu , thousands of Serb troops began showing symptoms of typhus and had to be quarantined on the island of Vido , where 11 @,@ 000 died over the span of two months . Seven thousand of these had to be buried at sea because there was not enough space for their remains to be interred on land ; corpses were simply piled onto barges and tossed overboard . Boji? was appalled by the suffering . " Our church bells toll dead instead of hours , " he wrote . Witnessing the disposal of bodies inspired Boji? to write the poem " Ode to a Blue Sea Tomb " (Plava Grobnica) , which ?or?evi? describes as " Boji? 's best ... a masterpiece of Serbian patriotic poetry . " Shortly after arriving at Corfu , Boji? was recruited to work for Serbian military intelligence . In mid @-@ 1916 , he was transferred to Thessaloniki .

= = = Last years and death = = =

Upon reaching Thessaloniki , Boji? spent much of his spare time reading the works of French authors and writing poetry . In August 1916 , he received a month 's leave and sailed for France , where his fiancée and brother had gone to escape from the war , shortly after landing in Italy . Boji? spent the month with his fiancée in Nice . Upon returning to Greece , Boji? resumed his army service , and continued writing poetry . " Songs of Pride and Suffering " was first published in Thessaloniki in mid @-@ 1917 . Nearly every copy of the anthology was destroyed in the Great Fire of Thessaloniki , in August 1917 . The only copy that survived was one sent by Boji? to his fiancée in France and this became the basis for the post @-@ war edition .

In September 1917 , Boji? was diagnosed with tuberculosis . Owing to the influence of his old patron , Ljuba Jovanovi? @-@ Patak , he was admitted to a military hospital in central Thessaloniki which tended exclusively to Serbian Army officers , where Jovanovi? 's wife often visited him . Boji? continued writing poetry , and as his condition deteriorated , his poems began to take a melancholy tone . Nevertheless , he remained optimistic that he would recover from his illness and see his family again . One month before his death , he sent his fiancée and brother a telegram assuring them that he was " ... only slightly ill " and promised they would be reunited . Boji? died of tuberculosis on 8 November [O.S. 25 October] 1917 . Even a few hours before his death , he appeared convinced of his survival . According to a fellow patient , Boji? " ... died choking in half @-@ sleep from a fit of coughing that destroyed the tissues of his lungs . " He was buried at the

Zeitenlik military cemetery in Thessaloniki . His family was shocked by the news of his death , particularly his brother and fiancée , who believed him to be on the road to recovery . In 1922 , Boji? 's remains were exhumed and transferred to Belgrade 's New Cemetery , where they were reburied beside those of his parents .

All of Boji? 's siblings survived the war ; his brother Radivoje became a diplomat and worked in the Yugoslav Ministry of Foreign Affairs until the Axis invasion of the country in April 1941 , when he left Yugoslavia with his family and emigrated to the West . Boji? 's youngest brother , Dragoljub , spent the rest of his life in Belgrade and became a high school geography teacher . His sister Jelica married and lived in Belgrade until her death in 1942 . His youngest sister , Danica , died single in 1952 . Boji? 's fiancée Radmila remained loyal to him and never married after his death ; she returned to Serbia after the war and died in Belgrade in 1971 .

= = Influences , themes and legacy = =

While at the University of Belgrade , Boji? studied The Bible in his free time and read the works of Victor Hugo , Friedrich Nietzsche , Charles Baudelaire , Leo Tolstoy , Anton Chekhov and Sigmund Freud , among others . ?or?evi? notes that Boji? 's early poems reflect the degree to which he was influenced by the " exalted sensuality " of Baudelaire 's works . He contends that Baudelaire 's influence on Boji? 's early work is " rather unfortunate " , as by striving to imitate Baudelaire 's style , Boji? failed to achieve originality and instead merely used Baudelaire as a " crutch in the absence of spontaneous emotion " .

As he matured , Boji? was influenced by the works of Irish writer Oscar Wilde , particularly the play Salome , which was being performed at the National Theatre in Belgrade during Boji? 's university years . The play influenced Boji? to such an extent that he later composed a poem of the same name . According to ?or?evi? , Boji? was " thrilled by the beauty of Wilde 's descriptions " , and reading his work inspired Boji? to use Biblical rhythm and accentuation . ?or?evi? notes that the archaic phrase " thou art " only appears in Boji? 's poems after he began reading Wilde . Wilde 's influence can also be observed in Boji? 's lyric plays , especially " The King 's Autumn " . Boji? was also inspired by French playwright Edmond Rostand , whose play L 'Aiglon was Boji? 's " dramatic ideal incarnate " . Rostand 's influence is most clearly felt in " The Marriage of Uro? " , where Boji? paid homage to Rostand by writing the entire drama in verse , a style that was considered obsolete at the time . Serbian history and medieval legends had the greatest influence on Boji? 's plays ; ?or?evi? notes that " all Boji? 's dramas , published or not , are inspired by Serbian medieval motifs " .

The Balkan Wars inspired Boji? to write his first patriotic poetry , where he attempted to emulate Hugo 's rhetorical verse . By 1914 , much of Boji? 's poetry revolved around patriotic themes , and by 1917 this theme had overtaken all others . In his last months , the only non @-@ patriotic poems that Boji? wrote were about the love he felt towards his fiancée . The historian John K. Cox opines that Boji? 's " personal suffering ... [embodied] Serbian history at the crossroads of greatness and disaster . "

Cox considers Boji? the most famous of the many Serbian artists and writers who perished during World War I. ?or?evi? contends that Boji? achieved more during his short career than a number of other writers and poets who led far longer lives . He writes that Boji? 's influence on Serbian literature would have been even greater had he survived the war , and praises him as " one of the great poets of the 20th century " .

In May 2014 , the inaugural Milutin Boji? Prize was awarded to a student from ?a?ak by the Milutin Boji? Library , a Belgrade @-@ based learning institution dedicated exclusively to studies on Boji? 's life and work . The Library is funded by the Serbian Ministry of Culture , and operates an extensive online database known as the Milutin Boji? Virtual Library . In August 2014 , researchers discovered the original manuscript of " Ode to a Blue Sea Tomb " in the Library 's archives . The yellowed slip of paper was immediately given to experts at the National Library of Serbia , who went about restoring it so as to prevent further decay .

